

# **Isaac and Ishmael**

## **Opportunities for Peace within Religious Narrative**

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The present conflict within Israel/Palestine between the Israeli state and Palestinian Arabs living in territories occupied by Israel during the 1967 Six Day War is often pictured as mirroring a "sibling rivalry" that has been a part of biblical history for centuries. But while the Genesis story of Isaac and Ishmael is painful reading today for anyone sensitive to the emotional well-being of the other, the narratives that have grown up around this story in Judaism and in Islam are markedly different! What constitutes an expulsion within Jewish tradition, and thus evokes a concern for the trauma visited upon Hagar and Ishmael, actually marks the beginnings of the Islamic tradition and is accepted as the action of an unfathomable and all-knowing God/Allah.

As children of Abraham, Jews and Muslims draw upon rich moral traditions embedded within a shared past recorded in Genesis of the Hebrew Bible and referenced in the Qur'an.<sup>[1]</sup> It is a past that identifies Ishmael as the father of the Arabs, while his half-brother Isaac becomes the progenitor of the biblical Israelites. What we read in the Genesis account, however, is not an idyllic story, but as Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin observes, the story of a dysfunctional family: "It is the eternal pattern of the book of Genesis: damaged, shattered relationships between siblings and within families."<sup>[2]</sup> Indeed, the great drama of Genesis, according to Salkin, is the battle between brothers, whether we talk about Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, or Jacob and Esau:

The Jewish scholar Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi suggests that the Oedipus complex—the battle between father and son—is not at the heart of civilization. No, Yerushalmi says, it is the Cain complex—the battle between siblings. ... each one battling for the exclusive love of God. In her book *The Curse of Cain*, Regina Schwartz bemoans what she calls the Torah’s scarcity principle—this painful idea that there can be only one land, one covenant, one blessing. It is, as she suggests, the dark side of monotheism.<sup>[3]</sup>

The present conflict within Israel/Palestine between the Israeli state and Palestinian Arabs living in territories occupied by Israel during the 1967 Six Day War is often pictured as mirroring a “sibling rivalry” that has been a part of biblical history for centuries. But while the Genesis story of Isaac and Ishmael is painful reading today for anyone sensitive to the emotional well-being of the *other*, the narratives that have grown up around this story in Judaism and in Islam are markedly different! What constitutes an expulsion within Jewish tradition, and thus evokes a concern for the trauma visited upon Hagar and Ishmael, actually marks the beginnings of the Islamic tradition and is accepted as the action of an unfathomable and all-knowing God/Allah.

Such narratives grow out of the sociopolitical contexts of our lives and reflect those realities. When Aristotle spoke of “legitimate” governance in Book III of his *Politics*, he introduced the concept of “constitution” by which he meant that a government serving the interests of its people must also derive from the set of historical experiences and sociopolitical institutions they have shared—in a word, their political culture. He understood that a community lives together within a context that both brings meaning to its members and serves to define itself as unique from other communities. Athenians and Spartans constitute such examples. As English School proponent Scott Thomas explains, individuals come to understand themselves as embedded within linguistic traditions and social practices that are “passed on through the narratives that shape the identity of the community.”<sup>[4]</sup> Drawing upon Alasdair MacIntyre’s Aristotelian-centered social theory as a means of integrating the study of religion into the study of international relations today, Thomas further explains that,

In MacIntyre’s account of social action, the self has a life story, embedded in the story of a larger community from which the self derives a social and

historical identity. The life stories of members of the community are intermingled with the stories of others in the story of the communities from which they derive their identity. Thus it follows from MacIntyre's narrative construction of the self that human actions, such as the construction of state practices, become intelligible only when they are interpreted as part of a larger narrative of the collective life of individuals, communities, and states.<sup>[5]</sup>

Indeed, it is this notion of narrative that is at the heart of a project between Israeli and Palestinian peace advocates, presented in the 2006 work edited by Robert I. Rotberg, *Israeli and Palestinian Narratives of Conflict: History's Double Helix*. Introducing the project, Rotberg writes,

*History's Double Helix* is an apt metaphor for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and the way that their intertwined reckonings of the past provide fodder and direction for the tit-for-tat battles of the intifada and its inevitable response. . . . A greater appreciation of the separate truths that drive Palestinians and Israelis could plausibly contribute to conflict reduction.<sup>[6]</sup>

It's not an easy undertaking, however, as psychologists Daniel Bar-Tal and Gavriel Salvendy intimate:

The collective memory narrative has a number of characteristics. First, it does not necessarily tell a true history but rather describes a past that is useful for the group to function and even exist. It is a story that is biased, selective, and distorted, that omits certain facts, adds others that did not take place, changes the sequence of events, and purposely reinvents events that did take place. In short, it is a narrative constructed to fit the current needs of the group. ... The narrative of past events, moreover, not only undergoes major revisions to suit present day needs, but is often invented years after the events have taken place.<sup>[7]</sup>

Which is to say, collective narratives are functional. That collective narratives are functional, however, is what gives them potential within the peace community. As MacIntyre argues, tradition does not mean stagnation; rather, historically driven understandings must be revisited to make palpable "those future possibilities which the past

has made available to the present.” Can the religious imaginings of two peoples, then, be brought to bear on the discourse concerning political identity today? Using secondary sources—I am a political scientist, not a theologian—I will examine first the Genesis narrative of the Jewish *midrashim* (body of Jewish rabbinical commentary and interpretations) surrounding the Isaac/Ishmael story and then the Qur’anic narrative of this same story as understood in Islamic exegesis.

## The Genesis Story

Briefly, the story of Isaac and Ishmael that is found in Genesis 16-21 introduces us to Abram and Sarai, who will later be re-named Abraham and Sarah, the world’s first Jews. As the story goes, they have moved to Canaan from Mesopotamia. Being old and childless, Sarah gives her Egyptian maid, Hagar, to Abraham in hopes the couple will have a child by the maid. When Hagar becomes pregnant, her continued presence in their house becomes intolerable to Sarah, who complains to Abraham. “Do with her what you want,” he tells her. Sarah treats the maid badly and Hagar escapes into the wilderness. There she is met by an angel of the Lord, who tells her to return to her mistress and submit to her authority—that the Lord

will so greatly multiply your descendants that they cannot be numbered for the multitude. ... [that] you are with child, and shall bear a son; you shall call his name Ishmael; because the Lord has given heed to your affliction. He shall be a wild ass of a man; his hand against every man, and every man’s hand against him; and he shall dwell over against all of his kinsmen. (Gen. 16:9-12)

More than ten years later, Sarah becomes pregnant and has a son Isaac, whom Abraham fetes with a great celebration at the event of Isaac’s weaning. Genesis 21:9 tells us that “Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing [*metzachek*] with her son Isaac.” There have been countless rabbinical explanations of what Ishmael might have been doing, but whatever it was, Sarah appeals to Abraham, demanding that he send her away (Gen. 21:10). Abraham is not happy to hear this, but when God tells him to do what Sarah asks, he consents, and the two are cast into the wilderness alone, Abraham giving them bare provisions when he sees them off. At one point a spring of water miraculously wells up in the desert and revives them. An angel appears to confirm God’s earlier message to Hagar that Ishmael would be the father of a great nation (Gen. 21:14-21).

The next time we read of Ishmael, he and Isaac are coming together to bury their father, after which follows a list of Ishmael's twelve sons (the number twelve representing a sign of nationhood), who survived him after his death at 137 years of age (Gen. 25:9-18)

## **Jewish Narratives**

The Isaac/Ishmael story of Genesis is a problematic one for Jews, whose ethical center is grounded on a caring egalitarian ethic and the command to take care of “the widow, the orphan, and the stranger” that is found in Exodus 22:21-24 and Deuteronomy 10:18. Indeed, when Rabbi Milton Steinberg discusses what it means to be a religious Jew, he quotes the succinct statement of the famous Palestinian sage Hillel: “That which is harmful to thee do not to thy neighbor. That is the whole doctrine. The rest is commentary.”<sup>[9]</sup> Sarah's relationship with Hagar, which results in the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael to the wilderness, and the characterization of Ishmael in this story are especially troublesome passages that, on the face of it, violate this “Golden Rule.” How have these events been explained in the Jewish narrative tradition?

### **Sarah and Hagar**

As Elie Wiesel painfully observes: “How can Jewish history begin with a domestic quarrel between a rich elderly mistress and her young servant?”<sup>[10]</sup> He continues,

If only Sarah could have shared her love between Isaac and Ishmael! If only she could have brought them together instead of setting them apart! Maybe some of today's tragedies would have been avoided. The Palestinian problem is rooted in the separation of these two brothers. As always, we must ask, Is it the mother's fault?<sup>[11]</sup>

It is true that the relationship between Sarah and Hagar reflects one set of issues that have spawned a number of midrashim over the centuries. The most ancient of these sought to protect the image of Abraham and Sarah, who were seen to constitute a new beginning in God's creation. Kathryn Pfisterer Darr quotes Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann in explaining that,

In light of the preceding eleven chapters [of Genesis], then, the singling-out of

Abram and Sarai appears as still another attempt by God to set things right, “to fashion an alternative community in creation gone awry, to embody in human history the power of the blessing.” [Gen.12:1-3]<sup>[12]</sup>

Thus, Sarah’s infertility was variously explained in the *Midrash Rabbah* as being God’s way of ensuring that Sarah’s prayers would not cease; that since she was beautiful and rich, she might have become too independent had she immediately been blessed with sons; and that “[she] might give the greatest possible pleasure to [her] husband, since pregnant women are bloated and inelegant.”<sup>[13]</sup> However, for the rabbis, Darr contends that Sarah was foremost a symbol of hope: “certain of their elaborations upon the Sarah stories indicate that they perceived in Sarah a presage of the world to come.”<sup>[14]</sup> This was larger than imagining the future of Zion, however—symbolizing how God could bring a people out of a barren matriarch; it served as an example of how God’s people, living in a difficult present, ought to live in order to bring about such a future. Darr continues,

More than a Bronze Age relic or a portent of the future, Sarah was a model for faithful Jewish living. When Abram and Sarai were in Haran, for example, and Abraham busied himself converting the heathen to Judaism, Sarai was right beside him converting the women. Despite her great beauty, she remained modest and loyal to her husband. Moreover, in times of trouble she, like other biblical matriarchs, prayed to God, and the Lord took pleasure in her prayers. It was on account of her good deeds, therefore, that Sarah was relieved of the onus of barrenness and granted a child.<sup>[15]</sup>

Although it conforms to such legal standards of the day as the Hammurabi Code in terms of a moral reckoning, Sarah’s treatment of Hagar and Ishmael borders on cruelty. And while rabbinical interpretations of the past tended to exonerate her actions by focusing on the insubordination of Hagar and Ishmael, more recent interpreters do criticize her harsh demands. For example, Darr quotes from Renita Weems’ essay, “A Mistress, A Maid, and No Mercy,” saying,

Taking advantage of Hagar’s slave woman status, exploiting the fact that the woman who tended to her house was vocationally limited and her financial options virtually non-existent, Sarai took advantage of her status over Hagar. She knew that the way to enslave a slave—all over again—was to humiliate

her, to destroy her (newfound) sense of self-worth, to dehumanize her.<sup>[16]</sup>

Elie Wiesel condemns her actions as well, but draws upon earlier tradition for support that also seeks to explain Jewish history:

The great Rabbi Moshe ben Nahman—the Ramban–Nahmanides—comments that when our ancestress Sarai (or Sarah) persecuted Hagar, she committed a sin. Abraham, by not preventing her, became an accomplice to that sin. That is why God heard the lament and the tears of Hagar and gave her a wild son whose descendents would torment in every way the descendents of Abraham and Sarah. The sufferings of the Jewish people, said the Ramban, derive from those which Sarah inflicted upon Hagar.<sup>[17]</sup>

Phyllis Trible, in *Texts of Terror*, also sees a foreshadowing of Jewish history in her condemnation of Sarah's actions:

As the life of the mistress has prospered, the lot of the servant woman has worsened. With a disturbing twist, the words of Sarah anticipate vocabulary and themes from the Exodus narrative. When plagues threatened the life of his firstborn son, Pharaoh cast out (*grš*) the Hebrew slaves. Like the monarch, Sarah the matriarch wants to protect the life of her own son by casting out (*grš*) Hagar the [Egyptian] slave. Having once fled from affliction (Gen. 16:6b), Hagar continues to prefigure Israel's story even as Sarah foreshadows Egypt's role. Irony abounds.<sup>[18]</sup>

Finally, Darr draws our attention to the patriarchal stage upon which the Genesis drama is being played out. If we see Sarah and Hagar as actors “under the direction—indeed the total control—of a director: the anonymous, omniscient biblical narrator,”<sup>[19]</sup> we may be predisposed to thinking about Sarah, Hagar, and Abraham in certain ways. For example, this narrator does not question the institution of slavery or the pain caused by the institution of patriarchy; rather, he blames the victims. “He suggests, for example, that if females suffer in polygynous relationships, it is not because such relationships are likely to be oppressive, but rather because women are vicious and competitive.”<sup>[20]</sup> Feminist scholar Esther Fuchs adds to this with her criticisms that,

Hidden in the background of the power struggle between these women

[however] is the male protagonist for whose approval both women are vying. In this manner biblical ideology shifts our attention away from the source of the problem to its symptoms, blaming ... the female victims of polygyny for its unsavory aspects.<sup>[21]</sup>

In Genesis 16:2 we hear Sarai tell Abram, "Because Yahweh has prevented me from bearing children, go to my maid. Perhaps I shall be built up from her." Things do not go as planned. Tribble suggests that when Hagar learns she is pregnant,

Hagar acquires a new vision of Sarai. Hierarchical blinders disappear. The exalted mistress decreases, while the lowly maid increases. Not hatred, but a re-ordering of the relationship is the point. ... This unexpected twist provides an occasion for mutuality and equality between females, but it is not to be. If Hagar has experienced a new vision, Sarai remains within the old structures.<sup>[22]</sup>

What we are told in Genesis 16:4 is that for Hagar, Sarai was "lowered in her eyes." Darr relays that "the rabbis, motivated no doubt by a desire to exonerate Sarah as much as possible, explained it very much at Hagar's expense:" and quotes the following from Louis Ginzberg's *The Legends of the Jews*:

No sooner had Hagar's union with Abraham been consummated, and she felt that she was with child, than she began to treat her former mistress contemptuously, though Sarah was particularly tender toward her in the state in which she was. When noble matrons came to see Sarah, she was in the habit of urging them to pay a visit to "poor Hagar," too. The dames would comply with her suggestion, but Hagar would use the opportunity to disparage Sarah.<sup>[23]</sup>

Abraham gives Sarah complete authority over Hagar, and we are told by the Genesis narrator that "Then Sarah dealt harshly with her" (16:6). Hagar flees to the wilderness where a number of very interesting things happen. First, she is confronted by the Lord's angel, who tells her she must return to her mistress' authority. Then Hagar receives a divine promise: "I will greatly increase your offspring and they shall be too many to count" (16:10). Lest this seem like a small thing, Darr quotes Jo Ann Hackett's "Rehabilitating Hagar": "This is the only case in Genesis where this typical J-writer promise is given to a woman rather than to a patriarch, and so we sit up and take notice."<sup>[24]</sup> Third, Hagar



receives a speech concerning her unborn child (Gen. 16:9-12). While technically this is not an annunciation speech since Hagar already knows she is pregnant, Darr explains in a footnote that

The rabbis believed ... the angel's words were a true annunciation speech, for they claimed that Hagar's first conception ended in miscarriage before her escape, when her jealous mistress "cast an evil eye on her." Ishmael, about whom the angel spoke, was not conceived until after Hagar returned to Sarai and Abram.<sup>[25]</sup>

Finally, Hagar's encounter with the divine is a singular event for another reason: "So she called the name of the Lord, who spoke to her, 'Thou art a God of seeing'; for she said, 'Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?'" (Genesis 16:13). Thus, Hagar's response is to name God—"an astonishing act undertaken by no other person in the Hebrew Bible. 'You are El-roi ["God of seeing"],' she says."<sup>[26]</sup> Tribble comments on Hagar's exceptional insight:

The expression is striking because it connotes naming rather than invocation. In other words, Hagar does not call upon the deity ... instead, she calls the name, a power attributed to no one else in all the Bible. ... The maid ... after receiving a divine announcement of the forthcoming birth, sees (*r'h*) God with new vision. Hagar is a theologian. Her naming unites the divine and human encounter: the God who sees and the God who is seen.<sup>[27]</sup>

## **The Expulsion**

Hagar returns to Sarai and Abram, whence Hagar gives birth to Ishmael. Fifteen years later, when Isaac is roughly three, at the time of his weaning, Sarah demands that her husband "Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac" (Gen. 21:10). The story continues,

But God said to Abraham, 'Be not displeased because of the lad and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your descendents be named. And I will make a great nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring.' So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent

her away. (Gen. 21:12-14)

The tough questions? Why would Sarah demand this? Why would God side with her? Why didn't Abraham do more to help Hagar, such as provide her with real provisions, guards, a camel? Tribble notes the language of distance and separation in the Genesis narrative, which serves to reinforce the terror of the expulsion of this mother and son into the unknown:

To minimize Abraham's relationship to Ishmael, God calls him "the lad" rather than "your son." Moreover, the deity describes Hagar not as "your wife" but as "your slave woman," a description that tellingly emulates the vocabulary of Sarah (Gen. 21:10). If Abraham neglected Hagar, God belittles her.<sup>[28]</sup>

Once in the desert, the water runs out and both Hagar and Ishmael are near death. Hagar is distraught:

She left the child under one of the bushes, and went and sat down at a distance, a bowshot away; for she thought, "Let me not look on as the child dies." And sitting thus afar, she burst into tears. God heard the cry of the boy, and an angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not; for God has heeded the cry of the boy where he is. Arise, lift up the boy, and hold him by the hand, for I will make a great nation of him." Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. She went and filled the skin with water, and let the boy drink. God was with the boy and he grew up; he dwelt in the wilderness and became a bowman. He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt (Gen. 21:15-21, Hebrew Bible).

Hagar moves away from her child so as not to see him die? Elie Wiesel tries to explain such un-motherly behavior. Perhaps "she distances herself so she can cry out loud. As long as she is near her son, she manages to hold back her tears—so as not to frighten him, not to distress him. What could be more natural, more human, on the part of a mother?"<sup>[29]</sup>

Hagar weeps, but God responds to Ishmael. The rabbis explain this by saying that Hagar was praying to idols, while Ishmael's cries were to God. Indeed, we learn from Ginzberg's collection of Jewish legends that Ishmael cried: "Oh Lord of the world! If it be Thy will that I should perish, then let me die in some other way, not by thirst, for the tortures of thirst are

great beyond all others.”<sup>[30]</sup> Darr observes that the narrator’s patriarchal lens may be at work here—Hagar’s personhood is not as significant as saving the life of the male heir, destined to be the father of a nation. She also quotes Elsa Tamez, a Latin American liberation theologian who sees in Ishmael’s name a reason for the change in focus:

God has heard the cry of Ishmael; he is called Ishmael, because God is, and always will be, ready to hear the cries of the son of a slave. Ishmael signifies in Hebrew ‘God hears,’ and God will always listen to children such as Ishmael who are the victims of injustice.<sup>[31]</sup>

### **Ishmael’s Character**

A third troublesome aspect of the Isaac/Ishmael story that we consider here is the description of Ishmael provided in two separate Genesis accounts and the inferences that have been drawn from them within Jewish tradition. The first description of Ishmael comes from the angel who first meets Hagar when she is pregnant in the wilderness. Hagar is told that “He will be a wild ass of a man; his hand against everyone, and everyone’s hand against him; he shall dwell alongside all of his kinsmen” (Gen. 16:12). As Salkin observes, this portrayal suggests that

Ishmael is less than fully human; he is like a boy reared by wolves in the wilderness. He is destined to be violent, confrontational, an archer, a warrior, a loner. He will dwell *al penei kol echav*, “alongside all his kinsmen.” [That is, not *with* them.] But the phrase *al penei* can also be translated as “in the face of.” Ishmael will get into people’s faces, which is precisely what gets him and his mother thrown out of Abraham and Sarah’s household.<sup>[32]</sup>

Darr quotes Gerhard von Rad, who finds in this Genesis verse, “a worthy son of his rebellious and proud mother! In this description of Ishmael there is undoubtedly undisguised sympathy and admiration for the roving Bedouin who bends his neck to no yolk.”<sup>[33]</sup> Wiesel tells us how the earlier rabbis interpreted this, and with his own commentary, provides us with a more sensitive perspecti

He would be wild. ... He would have his fingers in everything. The commentators did not hesitate to explain: He would be a thief. Violent. Poor

thing: he isn't even born yet and already he is being accused of crimes and sins as vague as they are unfair. He is not even born yet and already he is being made an antisocial being. From the moment he arrives, what does he see? Helpless, he is witness to some painful scenes: His mother is humiliated without end. What must he think of the system in which he grows up? What must he think of the patriarch Abraham whose reputation transcends borders? Or of God who permits so much injustice within His human family?<sup>[34]</sup>

Arthur Waskow wrestles with this text from God as a Fabbranganer, a member of a community of Jews that comes together on a weekly basis to discuss Torah using a midrashic style of learning. He focuses on Ishmael's name rather than the descriptive passage provided by God's angel:

Literally, the Hebrew *Yishma El* means "God heard," and the name is given first by God directly to the pregnant Hagar when God hears her sorrow over Sarah's harsh treatment of her. Then the name is confirmed in the desert when *God hears* the despairing cry of Ishmael and Hagar and offers them life and water. But this name also has echoes in the other line of Abraham's seed; for at the crossroads moment of Jewish history, the moment of deepest despair and suffering in Egypt, the people cried out and their cry came up to God, and *God heard* their groaning and began the process of their deliverance from Egypt. Again so like! The cry of despair rises from the exiles of the Land, both sets of exiles, both seeds of Abraham: the cry rises from the child of Hagar and from the children of Sarah. And the cry is heard.<sup>[35]</sup>

The other troublesome Genesis passage (21:9) depicts an Ishmael who, on the day of his brother's weaning celebration, *metzachek* (laughs or plays) on the sidelines. Waskow tells us, "The word is usually translated 'making sport.' The rabbis, clearly concerned over the seeming injustice of the expulsion, have argued that it means Ishmael was engaged in idolatry, or violence, or sexual license."<sup>[36]</sup> As Salkin explains,

The rabbis imagined that Ishmael committed every classic sin. Maybe Ishmael was "fooling around" violently. One midrash portrays Ishmael as shooting arrows at Isaac ... (*Genesis Rabbah* 53:11). The midrash foresees that he will become a highwayman and a robber. Ishmael will use his archery skills to hunt

defenseless animals (*Genesis Rabbah* 49:5). Maybe Ishmael was "fooling around" sexually. The midrashim suggest that he is polymorphously perverse--sexually violating married women *and* Isaac. Maybe Ishmael was "fooling around" religiously by worshiping idols. A midrash suggests that Ishmael used to catch locusts and sacrifice them to idols as "make-believe sacrifices" (*Genesis Rabbah* 53:11). Ishmael is like the wilderness, which is his home. He is open to everything—a man with no boundaries, a man untouched by civilization.<sup>[37]</sup>

Darr notes that “the participle *metzacheq* is a form of *tczHQ*, the same Hebrew root underlying Isaac’s name (*Yitzchaq*),” which in itself, connotes nothing bad, simply a young boy having fun.<sup>[38]</sup> She quotes Gerhard von Rad, who runs with this; however, “What Ishmael did need not have been anything evil at all. The picture of the two boys playing with each other on an equal footing is quite sufficient to bring a jealous mother to a firm conclusion: Ishmael must go!”<sup>[39]</sup> Salkin reinforces this interpretation when he asks: “Is it, as Norman Cohen, professor of Midrash at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, has suggested, that Sarah notices that Ishmael resembles Isaac more than she would have liked to admit, even to herself?”<sup>[40]</sup>

## **Islamic Interpretive Literature: Isaac/Ishmael Story**

Muhammad was born in Mecca around 570 CE and began receiving divine revelations in 610, revelations, which continued for 22 more years until his death.<sup>[41]</sup> Transmitted orally to Muhammad, God’s final prophet, and from Muhammad thence to his followers, these revelations were transcribed into written form, collected, and compiled into the collection called the Qur’an within 30 years of Muhammad’s death. Unlike the texts of the Hebrew and Christian Bibles, which are generally believed to reflect the inspired word of God, received and recorded by a number of authors over a span of centuries, Muslims believe the Qur’an to be the actual word of God. Indeed, God’s original “book,” which is written in gold, exists in Heaven, and was the source from which all God’s revelations have been given. Since both Jews and Christians misconstrued the original message, it is by means of the Qur’an that He has presented His final message to mankind.

From the Muslim perspective, then, it is to be expected that many of the biblical stories are

also reflected in the Qur'an, however, often with variations. As well, since both Jews and Christians were well-represented in the Arab world in the pre-Islamic centuries and had broad discourse with each other through trade and social interactions, many of the biblical stories are not entirely "filled out" in the Qur'an, the assumption perhaps being that they were already known. Reuven Firestone writes that during the first century or so of Islam's beginnings, Muslims were encouraged to explore these stories with Jews and Christians, "to learn traditions about the biblical and extra-biblical pre-Islamic prophets, though they were apparently forbidden to study or copy Jewish or Christian scripture or learn their religious practices."<sup>[42]</sup> By the time of the Abbasid Caliphate, beginning in 750 CE, such consultation was discouraged, when not forbidden. However it must be recognized that Jewish and Christian converts to Islam often brought their own knowledge and interpretations with them when they joined the Islamic faith community, further contributing to variations in the narrative storyline

Firestone highlights three primary types of literature identified in his study of Islamic exegetical literature:

The first category of ideal types is Biblicist—that is, those traditions that evolved out of a biblically based religious milieu. The second category we call Arab. This refers to traditions that had evolved out of a pre-Islamic Arabian environment independent of Biblicist influence. The third ideal-typical category is Islamic, referring to material reflecting Islamic world views that would appear independent of the first two categories.<sup>[43]</sup>

Since this part of my research relies extensively on Firestone's work, it is important to know that, by his own appraisal,

the Muslim exegetical works examined in this study represent a small sample of the hundreds if not thousands of medieval works of this type available in printed editions and manuscripts. ... The investigation is therefore limited to a sample of twenty medieval works which represent some of the major genres of medieval Arabic literature and major approaches to medieval Qur'anic exegesis. ... They represent Sunnī, Shi'ite, mystical, and Mu'tazilite exegesis as well as major legal schools of Islam, thus typifying the most common and influential medieval Islamic worldviews.<sup>[44]</sup>

He also notes that these are sources that are available and widely read today throughout the Muslim world. Most of the ones I draw upon in his examples would be traced to sources from within one hundred years of Muhammad's death.

From the Muslim standpoint, Abraham was not the world's first Jew—rather, he was a good Muslim. As the Qur'an tells us: "Abraham was not a Jew nor yet a Christian; but he was true in Faith, and bowed his will to Allah's (which is Islam), and he joined not gods with Allah" (Q 3:67). His story is critical to the story of Muslims, as Ingrid Mattson relates:

According to the history of the pre-Islamic Arabs, Mecca was founded as a settlement by Abraham, his concubine-wife Hajar, and their son Isma'il. It was Abraham and his son who built a simple structure, the Ka'ba (literally 'the cube') as a center for the worship of God. Other traditions traced the founding of Mecca as the primordial and most sacred of holy sites to Adam, the father of humanity, but credited Abraham and his family with establishing a permanent settlement there.<sup>[45]</sup>

The Qur'an, which addresses fundamental aspects in the relationship between God and humanity—such as the meaning of life and death, social and economic justice, issues of war and peace, and the significance of community—does not present a narrative history as one finds in the Hebrew Bible. In short, we do not see the "troubling passages" regarding the Isaac/Ishmael story that are found in the Genesis narrative. In fact, Ishmael, the father of the Arab peoples, is only mentioned twelve times in the Qur'an, none of which have evoked the kind of commentary found in the Jewish tradition. These would include Q 2:127, Q 2:133, Q 2:140, Q 6:84-87, Q 14:39, Q 21:85, and Q38:45. Four additional representative samples would be:

Remember We [the divine] made the House a place of assembly for men and a place of safety; and take ye the station of Abraham as a place of prayer; and we covenanted with Abraham and Isma'il that they should sanctify my House for those who compass it round, or use it as a retreat, or bow, or prostrate themselves (therein in prayer). (Q 2:125)

Say ye, "We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us, and To Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob, and the descendents (children of Jacob) and that given to

Moses and Jesus and that given to (all) Prophets and their Lord: we make no difference between one and another of them: and we bow to Allah (in Islam).”  
(Q 2:136)

We have sent thee inspiration, as we sent it to Noah and the messengers after him: We sent inspiration to Abraham, Isma’il, Isaac, Jacob and the descendents, to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon, and to David We gave The Psalms.  
(Q 4:163)

Also mention in the Book (the story of) Isma’il: he was (strictly) true to what he promised, and he was a messenger (and) a prophet. He used to enjoin on his people prayer and charity, and he was most acceptable in the sight of his Lord.”  
(Q 19:54-55)

Firestone notes that, while most of the Qur’anic passages merely include Ishmael with the historical rendering of God’s chosen prophets and messengers—one to be revered, as one reveres his father, Abraham—Q 19:54-55 would seem to offer the opportunity for extensive exegetical commentary:

But here we find an extreme scarcity of traditional material. Most likely, this is due to the simple lack of reports available that would paint Ishmael in a favorable light. By the sixth century CE, Jewish exegesis had already long considered Ishmael an enemy of the Jews and contained few traditions that would supply positive information. Pre-Islamic Arabian traditions had virtually nothing to say about Ishmael, since we see no Arabian material about him among the exegetes.<sup>[46]</sup>

Interestingly, Q 21:85 has spawned several variations on the characterization of Ishmael as being a man of extraordinary patience. Firestone quotes al-Tabarī:

He cites a tradition ... on the authority of Sahl b. ’Uqayl that Ishmael promised a man to meet him at a [certain] place. He came but the man forgot. Ishmael remained and stayed there all night until the man came the next day. He said: “You did not leave?” Ishmael said: “No.” He said: “But I forgot!” He replied: “I would not leave until you came.” Thus, he was true and sincere (*sādiq*).<sup>[47]</sup>



In other versions, being a man of his word—and great patience—Ishmael stays for as long as three days, waiting until the man finally shows up. Other character traits we learn from these mostly descriptive passages from the Qur'an point to Ishmael as being one of God's inspired prophets, a righteous, pious, and generous man; and the one who, with his father Abraham, was commissioned by God to build (or re-build) the Ka'ba in Mecca.

or do we learn much about Sarah beyond what we read of her in the biblical Genesis passages. Firestone posits that “the most interesting rendition of the birth of Ishmael is found in Ibn Kāthir,” who gives us a lengthy story, sandwiched within which are his (Ibn Kāthir's) own explanatory notes. For example,

The People of the Book [Jews, Christians] say:

Abraham requested a sound progeny from God, and God gave him good news about having descendents. After Abraham had been in the Holy Land for twenty years, Sarah said to Abraham, “God has forbidden me from having a child. Go in unto my maidservant; perhaps God will provide you with a son through her.”

When she gave her to him, he had sexual relations with her and she became pregnant. When she became pregnant her soul was exalted and she became proud and arrogant to her mistress, so Sarah became jealous of her. Sarah complained to Abraham, who said to her, “Do with her as you desire.” Hagar was frightened and fled. She stopped at a spring.

An angel said to her, “Do not fear, for God will do good for this boy that you are carrying.” He commanded to her that she return and announced to her that she would give birth to a boy whom she would name Ishmael. He would be a wild man. His hand would be over everyone, and the hand of everyone would be against him. His brethren would rule over all the lands. Then she thanked God.

[This prophecy is appropriate for his offspring, Muhammad, for he was the one through whom the Arabs ruled. They ruled all of the lands throughout the east and west. God bestowed upon them useful knowledge and virtuous acts which were not given to any of the people before them. This is because of the honor of

their messenger above all of the other messengers, the blessing of his mission, the good fortune of his revelation, the perfection of that which he brought, and the universality of his mission to the people of the earth.]<sup>[48]</sup>

That is referred to as the “expulsion” in Genesis narratives is a “beginning” in Islamic exegesis. However, the Qur’an only tells us that Abraham and Ishmael (thence, presumably Hagar) are in Mecca and that father and son build the Ka’ba. It does not say anything about how they got there. Hence it is through exegetical narratives that these blanks are filled in. Firestone cites three primary storylines, each told on the authority of a separate traditionist: Ibn ‘Abbās, ‘Alī, and Mujāhid.<sup>[49]</sup> The Ibn ‘Abbās version “exhibits all the earmarks of a Biblical tradition that has evolved to the point where it is acceptable to an Arab Islamic milieu.”<sup>[50]</sup> Firestone counts nineteen full and partial renditions of this story, which proceeds as follows:

1. The narrative takes place subsequent to Sarah’s behavior to Hagar. Sarah’s jealousy of her handmaiden after the birth of Ishmael causes conflict and strife between the two women.
2. Hagar lets down her dress or soaks the bottom of her dress to hide her tracks from Sarah.
3. Abraham gives Hagar and Ishmael a saddlebag of dates and a water skin (or a water skin only).
4. Abraham personally brings Hagar and Ishmael to Mecca, to the House [the Ka’ba] or to the location of Zamzam [the well of water provided to Hagar], and leaves them under a large tree (in all versions Abraham brings them to Mecca without God commanding him to do so and without any supernatural assistance).

After depositing them there, Abraham departs on his return to Syria, and arrives at Kadā.

6. Hagar follows him and asks him to whom he is entrusting them in that desolate place. When he finally answers, “To God,” or that God commanded him, Hagar is satisfied. Abraham then recites Qur’an 14:37 (or Q 14:38).

7. Ishmael was still being suckled at the time. The water in the water skin runs out and Hagar's milk stops flowing for her son. Ishmael gets thirsty and begins writhing or having a seizure. Hagar cannot bear to see him die.

She climbs the nearby hills of Şafā and then Marwa and runs between them seven times like someone exerting himself (or in distress, or like someone *not* exerting himself).

A comment is asserted here on the authority of the Prophet or Abū al-Qāsim that this is why people run between Şafā and Marwa [as part of the ritual of the Islamic *Hajj*].

10. Hagar is desperate because of the worsening condition of her son. She thinks she hears a voice, which turns out to be an angel (or Gabriel), who scratches on the ground with his heel, which brings forth the water.

11. Hagar immediately dams up the flow or scoops water into her water skin (or both).

2. A second comment is inserted here on the authority of the Apostle, Abū al-Qāsim or the Prophet or Ibn 'Abbās, to the effect: "May God have mercy on the mother of Ishmael. If she had not done that, then Zamzan would be flowing forever with a great volume of fresh water."

13. The angel tells Hagar not to worry about perishing, for the boy and his father will build the House of God there.<sup>[51]</sup>

side from the obvious Biblicist parallels in this rendition, Firestone notes that there are also elements of Arab lore and Islamic attempts to explain common pre-Islamic traditions. For example, the pre-Islamic tradition of running between the idols adorning the two hills of Şafā and Marwa is here reconfigured into part of the ritual that becomes the Islamic Hajj. Additionally, the miracle of the Zamzam (*zammāt*, "she collected") well in Mecca is explained—as well the reason why it contains so little water!<sup>[52]</sup>

Firestone finds the 'Alī version of this story to have little grounding in the Biblicist tradition aside from the names of the characters, and writes that it "most likely originated as an Arab or otherwise non-biblically oriented legend that evolved into a hybrid containing some

components of Biblicist as well as pre-Islamic Arabic material.”<sup>[53]</sup> While a number of variants can be found on the ‘Ali version, the main elements of the story that differentiate it from the Ibn ‘Abbās would be the following. First, in this version, God commands Abraham to establish a site of worship at the Ka’ba and he brings Hagar and Ishmael with him: there is no mention of discord between Sarah and Hagar. Second, a supernatural being, the *sakīna* [in Jewish tradition the *shekhinah* is God’s spirit], guides him to the delegated place and points out the exact location for the building of God’s House. Third, after Abraham builds the house, he leaves, though Hagar and Ishmael begin to follow him. When she asks who will take care of them, Abraham replies that he is entrusting them to God, which satisfies Hagar. Finally, when Ishmael becomes thirsty, Hagar runs between Şafā and Marwa seven times, looking for help. When she returns, she finds Ishmael scratching his heel into the dirt and the presence of the angel Gabriel. Gabriel asks who she is and she tells him she is the mother of Abraham’s son. When he wants to know

“To whom did he entrust you?” She answers, “To God.” Gabriel is satisfied, the boy scratches the ground with his finger, and the water of Zamzam flows out. Hagar begins to hold back the water and is chastised by Gabriel, who says: “Stop that, for the water is fresh!” or in another rendition, “for it quenches thirst!”<sup>[54]</sup>

s recounted by Firestone, the Mujāhid version, while it contains a number of renditions and, hence, variations, differs from the ‘Alī version in two essential aspects. First, it tells us that the angel Gabriel accompanies Abraham, Hagar, and Ishmael as their guide to locate the place where God wants his House built. Second, they all travel by means of the legendary supernatural steed, Buraq. Additionally, only a couple renditions mention the Şafā and Marwa excursions or the Zamzam event.

So Ishmael and Hagar arrive in Mecca. How does Abraham’s eldest son—who comes to the area speaking Hebrew—become the progenitor of the Northern Arabs and ultimately, of Muhammad? Firestone provides us with a body of narratives that explain this. According to traditional Arab genealogical reckonings, the Original Arabs arose from tribes long extinct, but whose descendents included the ancient tribe, the Jurhum, who “migrated from Yemen to Mecca, where they are assumed to have controlled the religious rites of the Ka’ba or even to have built it, but were eventually forced to concede control of the holy city and then died out long before the beginning of Islam.”<sup>[55]</sup> Firestone identifies Ibn ‘Abbās as the primary

authority with respect to the Jurhum narratives, which tell us that the Jurhum either lived near Mecca or were passing by when they realized there was water in the Meccan valley—the miraculous Zamzam well. They come to check it out, find Hagar and Ishmael as the inhabitants, and ask permission of her to allow them to live there also. She agrees, but retains the water rights. Thus, Ishmael grows up with the Jurhum: he learns Arabic from them, learns to hunt from them, and eventually marries a Jurhumite woman.<sup>[56]</sup>

Nor, according to Islamic exegesis, is Ishmael bereft of his father's love and care. Indeed, Abraham comes to visit Hagar and Ishmael a number of times. Several of the later traditions say that his travel was expedited because he rode the Buraq provided him by Gabriel from Paradise.<sup>[57]</sup> Again, it is Ibn 'Abbās who provides us with the principal narrative, a story that serves to extend the biblical story that ends abruptly in Genesis 21:21. But Islamic elements also enter the narrative that show Abraham giving guidance concerning what would be considered a “proper wife” for Ishmael, and “ensures that the second generation matriarch of the leadership of Islam is fitting for her role.”<sup>[58]</sup> The narrative also depicts Ishmael as a dutiful son who obeys his father's wishes, is a good provider for his family, and is a man who observes the religious sanctity of the Sacred Precinct of Mecca. As Firestone writes:

he Islamic version affirms that Ishmael was never rejected in favor of his younger half brother Isaac. The forbear of the northern Arabs and the Quraysh [Muhammad's tribe] continued to receive his father's blessing; his second wife, befitting the Arab matriarch and the progenitor of Muḥammad, received explicit approval from father Abraham. Ishmael remains closely connected with his father and in so doing, remains firmly within the Abrahamic monotheistic tradition.<sup>[59]</sup>

## Discussion and Conclusions

This paper argues that the narratives by which a community defines itself have everything to do with the social and cultural realities in which the community finds itself embedded. That the narrative may change to mirror changing conditions is the means by which identity and tradition are maintained over time; indeed, the resilience of a community's identity might be measured by its ability to reconcile itself to social and political change. The Jewish

midrashic tradition, by which rabbinical authorities struggled with the difficult texts of the Hebrew scriptures, has demonstrated the vibrancy of such a process. In considering the explanations surrounding the Isaac/Ishmael stories found in Genesis, it is apparent that the harshest accounts of Hagar and Ishmael are found in the earliest rabbinical writings. These were times—following the Babylonian exile (586 BCE) and, later, the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by the Romans (70 CE)—when the political world of Jews was one of living in minority status. The necessity of promoting a clear distinction between *us* and *them*, of explaining the concept of being *chosen*, of clarifying what it meant to be a Jew in the face of political persecution and turmoil, would have certainly impacted the development of the narrative. Later reflections—certainly those promoted since the founding of the state of Israel—have spawned more generosity. Indeed, we find both rabbis and scholars interpreting these stories in light of the “caring ethic” promoted by Judaism from its beginnings. As well, we find Jewish feminists challenging exploitative or dehumanizing characterizations deriving from what they see as patriarchy-centered narrators.

However, from the perspective of Islamic exegesis, the trauma of Isaac and Ishmael seems to be non-existent! Abraham obeyed God. Hagar and Ishmael show no sense of loss, no anger at having been expelled from Abraham’s house. Indeed, in following God’s commands, Abraham was making it possible for Islam’s groundwork, the lineage of Muhammad, to be laid. Ishmael and Hagar, under God’s protection, moved to the Meccan Valley, became integrated with the Jurhum, one of the tribes of the Original Arabs, and thence, *arabized*. Abraham never abandons his older son, but returns on many visits, and bestows his love and blessing on Ishmael. It is not inconsequential that these narratives arose within a century or so of Muhammad’s death (d. 632 CE), at a time when the Islamic Empire was on the ascendancy. That is, Muslims could afford to be “generous” in their understandings—they were to be in power for much of the next one thousand years.

Such generosity may be difficult to imagine with respect to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict at this point in time. While Israeli historian Ilan Pappé hopes for the emergence of a “bridging [political] narrative,” such as that used in literary and dramatic works, as a means by which Palestinians and Israelis might come together to develop a single narrative that today accommodates the collective histories of both peoples,<sup>[60]</sup> the political realities are not presently conducive to such a project. Believing such a goal can only come about when each

party respects the collective narrative of the other, Dan Bar-On and Sami Adwan have sought to impact such perceptions through the public education curricula of Israelis and Palestinians.<sup>[61]</sup> Citing observations of Emmanuel Levinas, who recognized that “the totality of the self cannot contain the infinity of the otherness of the other,”<sup>[62]</sup> Bar-On and Adwan were prepared for resistance, as their participants sought to determine within themselves how much, and to what extent, they were able to accept the collective history of the other as part of the representation of their own reality today. While the Israeli high school students and their teachers were more willing to accept a side-by-side set of narratives representing an Israeli narrative and a Palestinian narrative, young Palestinians still living under the hardship of Israeli occupation found it much more difficult to be so open to the story of the other. It would seem the actions of individuals here can only, as MacIntyre suggested, be interpreted as part of the larger collective narrative:<sup>[63]</sup> if the politics change, then so, perhaps, will the political narratives. But perhaps there is an opening for exploring the religious narratives of two brothers separated in their youth.

1. 1. Quotations from the religious scriptures will be found in the Hebrew Bible and the Qur’an.
2. 2. Rabbi Jeffrey K. Salkin, *Searching for My Brothers: Jewish Men in a Gentile World* (New York: The Berkeley Publishing Group, 1999), 15.
3. 3. Rabbi Jeffrey K. Salkin, *Searching for My Brothers: Jewish Men in a Gentile World* (New York: The Berkeley Publishing Group, 1999), 16. Salkin references two other sources: Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud’s Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991); Regina Schwartz, *The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).
4. 4. Scott M. Thomas, “Taking Religious and Cultural Pluralism Seriously,” in *Religion in International Relations: The Return from Exile*, edited by Fabio Petito and Pavlos Hatzopoulos (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2003), 28.
5. 5. Scott M. Thomas, “Taking Religious and Cultural Pluralism Seriously,” in *Religion in International Relations: The Return from Exile*, edited by Fabio Petito and Pavlos Hatzopoulos (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2003), 38. Thomas references MacIntyre

within this passage: Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd ed. (London: Duckworth, 1985), 205-210.

6. 6. Robert I. Rotberg, "Building Legitimacy through Narrative," in *Israeli and Palestinian Narratives of Conflict: History's Double Helix*, edited by Robert I. Rotberg (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 2.
7. 7. Daniel Bar-Tal and Gavriel Salomon, "Israeli-Jewish Narratives of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Evolution, Contents, functions, and Consequences," in *Israeli and Palestinian Narratives of Conflict: History's Double Helix*, edited by Robert I. Rotberg (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 23. In this discussion, the authors also cite Patrick Wright, *On Living in an Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain* (London, 1985), 142, 165.
8. 8. Alasdair MacIntyre, "After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory (extracts)," in *The MacIntyre Reader*, edited by Kevin Knight (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1998), 94.
9. 9. Rabbi Milton Steinberg, *Basic Judaism* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, Inc., 1947), 12.
10. 10. Elie Wiesel, "Ishmael and Hagar," in *The Life of Covenant: The Challenge of Contemporary Judaism (Essays in Honor of Herman E. Schaalman)*, edited by Joseph A. Edelheit (Chicago: Spertus College of Judaic Press, 1986), 236.
11. 11. Elie Wiesel, "Ishmael and Hagar," in *The Life of Covenant: The Challenge of Contemporary Judaism*, edited by Joseph A. Edelheit (Chicago: Spertus College of Judaic Press, 1986), 248-249.
12. 12. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Far More Precious than Jewels: Perspectives on Biblical Women* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 93. Also: Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, Interpretation Series (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1982), 105.
13. 13. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Far More Precious than Jewels: Perspectives on Biblical Women* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 93.
14. 14. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Far More Precious than Jewels: Perspectives on Biblical Women* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 116.
15. 15. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Far More Precious than Jewels: Perspectives on Biblical Women* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 116. In this paragraph, Darr also references Mary Calloway, *Sing, O Barren One: A Study in Comparative Midrash*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, no. 91 (Atlanta, GA:



- Scholars Press, 1986), 5-12, 123-130; and *Genesis* (Lech Lecha) XXXIX 14, 324.
16. 16. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Far More Precious than Jewels: Perspectives on Biblical Women* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 153. Darr quotes from Renita Weems, *Just a Sister Away: A Woman's Vision of Women's Relationships in the Bible* (San Diego, CA: LuraMedia, 1988), 10.
  17. 17. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Far More Precious than Jewels: Perspectives on Biblical Women* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 151. Darr quotes Elie Wiesel, 248.
  18. 18. Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 21.
  19. 19. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Far More Precious than Jewels: Perspectives on Biblical Women* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 154.
  20. 20. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Far More Precious than Jewels: Perspectives on Biblical Women* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 155.
  21. 21. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Far More Precious than Jewels: Perspectives on Biblical Women* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 155. Darr quotes Esther Fuchs, "A Jewish Feminist Reading of the Hagar Stories."
  22. 22. Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 12.
  23. 23. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Far More Precious than Jewels: Perspectives on Biblical Women* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 136. The author quotes Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, Vol. 1, translated by Henrietta Szold (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1909), 238. For this passage, Darr also references *Genesis* (Lech Lecha) XLV 4, 382.
  24. 24. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Far More Precious than Jewels: Perspectives on Biblical Women* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 139. The author quotes Jo Ann Hackett, "Rehabilitating Hagar: Fragments of an Epic Pattern," in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, edited by Peggy L. Day (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 15.
  25. 25. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Far More Precious than Jewels: Perspectives on Biblical Women* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 159, note 23. The author also quotes Ginzberg, *Legends*, 239; and cites Rashi (Rabbi Shelomoh Yitschaki, Solomon ben Isaac), *Commentaries on the Pentateuch*, translated by

Chaim Pearl (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1970), quoted in *The Soncino Chumash*, 77.

26. 26. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Far More Precious than Jewels: Perspectives on Biblical Women* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 141.
27. 27. Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 18.
28. 28. Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 21-22.
29. 29. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Far More Precious than Jewels: Perspectives on Biblical Women* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 149. Darr quotes Wiesel, 240, 245.
30. 30. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Far More Precious than Jewels: Perspectives on Biblical Women* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 146. Darr quotes Ginzberg, *Legends*, 265.
31. 31. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Far More Precious than Jewels: Perspectives on Biblical Women* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 146. Darr quotes Elsa Tamez, "The Woman Who Complicated the History of Salvation," translated by Betsy Yeager, in *New Eyes for Reading*, edited by John S. Pobee and Bärbel von Wartenberg-Potter (Oak Park, IL: Meyer Stone Books, 1986), 16.
32. 32. Rabbi Jeffrey K. Salkin, *Searching for My Brothers: Jewish Men in a Gentile World* (New York: The Berkeley Publishing Group, 1999), 29-30.
33. 33. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Far More Precious than Jewels: Perspectives on Biblical Women* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 140. Darr quotes Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis*, Old Testament Library, translated by John H. Marks (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 189.
34. 34. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Far More Precious than Jewels: Perspectives on Biblical Women* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 140-141. Darr quotes Wiesel, 240.
35. 35. Arthur I. Waskow, *Godwrestling* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 25.
36. 36. Arthur I. Waskow, *Godwrestling* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 24.
37. 37. Rabbi Jeffrey K. Salkin, *Searching for My Brothers: Jewish Men in a Gentile World* (New York: The Berkeley Publishing Group, 1999), 30.
38. 38. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Far More Precious than Jewels: Perspectives on Biblical*

- Women* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 142-143.
39. 39. Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, *Far More Precious than Jewels: Perspectives on Biblical Women* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 142-143. Darr quotes von Rad, 227.
40. 40. Rabbi Jeffrey K. Salkin, *Searching for My Brothers: Jewish Men in a Gentile World* (New York: The Berkeley Publishing Group, 1999), 29.
41. 41. For a more complete discussion of the genesis of the Qur'an, the reader is referred to the following: Ingrid Mattson, *The Story of the Qur'an: Its History and Place in Muslim Life* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008); M. M. Al-Azami, *The History of the Qur'anic Text from Revelation to Compilation: A Comparative Study with the Old and New Testaments* (Leicester, UK: UK Islamic Academy, 2003).
42. 42. Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 8. Firestone quotes M. J. Kister, "Haddithu 'an banī isra'īla wa-ḥaraja: A Study of an Early Tradition," *Israel Oriental Studies II* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1972), reprint edited by M. J. Kister, *Studies in Jahiliyya and Early Islam* (London, 1980), 218-222.
43. 43. Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 9.
44. 44. Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 20-21.
45. 45. Ingrid Mattson, *The Story of the Qur'an: Its History and Place in Muslim Life* (Malden, MA: Blackstone Publishing, 2008), 4.
46. 46. Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 45.
47. 47. Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 46.
48. 48. Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press,

1990), 42.

49. 49. Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 63-71. Ibn ‘Abbās: ‘Abdullah b. ‘Abbās b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, died in 687 CE. He is considered “an excellent commentator and the originator of Islamic exegesis,” having learned most of the traditions from the Companions of the Prophet. Firestone also notes that he has been referred to as the “rabbi of the community,” and “the interpreter of the Qur’an.” ‘Alī: ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib died in 660 CE. ‘Alī was the cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad and the last of the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs (successors) of the Prophet. He is a well-respected transmitter of the tradition. Mujāhid: Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makhzūmī, died in 722 CE. According to Firestone, he was a great authority on Qur’an commentary and recitation and a respected transmitter of tradition, “though he has been criticized for taking traditions from the People of the Book.”
50. 50. Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 64.
51. 51. Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 63-64. The reader is invited to consult Firestone, who identifies the various renditions throughout this passage.
52. 52. Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 65.
53. 53. Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 69.
54. 54. Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 68.
55. 55. Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 72.

56. 56. Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 73.
57. 57. Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 76-79.
58. 58. Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 77.
59. 59. Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 78-79.
60. 60. Ilan Pappé, "The Bridging Narrative Concept," in *Israeli and Palestinian Narratives of Conflict: History's Double Helix*, edited by Robert I. Rotberg (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 194-204.]
61. 61. Dan Bar-On and Sami Adwan, "The Psychology of Better Dialogue between Two Separate but Interdependent Narratives," in *Israeli and Palestinian Narratives of Conflict: History's Double Helix*, edited by Robert I. Rotberg (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 205-224.
62. 62. Dan Bar-On and Sami Adwan, "The Psychology of Better Dialogue between Two Separate but Interdependent Narratives," in *Israeli and Palestinian Narratives of Conflict: History's Double Helix*, edited by Robert I. Rotberg (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 206. The authors cite Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* (Pittsburg, 1969) on page 222.
63. 63. Alasdair MacIntyre, "After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory (extracts)," in *The MacIntyre Reader*, edited by Kevin Knight (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1998), 93.