

On the “Children of Abraham”

Karen Armstrong in The History of God says:

***“I believe in God” is a statement that only has meaning in context ---
time, culture, personal history ...***

***There is no one unchanging idea contained in the word ‘God’
in terms of its inclusiveness or exclusiveness.***

***Had the notion of ‘God’ not had this flexibility,
it would not have survived the centuries.***

***All the great prophets (Abraham, Noah, Daniel, John the Baptist),
John Wesley, you and me have all experienced the notion of ‘God’ differently.***

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Jews, Christians, and Muslims today all trace the origins of their faith back to the “God of Abraham.” With all their similarities, their differences now threaten us all. The eldest of these faiths, Judaism can be traced to the 6th Century B.C.E with the Jewish return to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon. Christianity dates from the Day of Pentecost in about 33 C.E. The latest of the Abrahamic faiths, Islam occurs in the 7th Century C.E. with the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Jews today accept only the Scriptures ending with Malachi; ***Christians*** accept all the Scriptures through Revelation; and ***Muslims*** accept all the Scriptures through the Qur-an. In other words, Jews believe that God has spoken to them for the first and last time. Christians believe that God has spoken to them for the second and last time. Muslims believe that God has spoken to them for the third and last time.

Jerusalem is a Holy City for all three faiths. Within its old walled city compound lies a most sacred stone, Mount Moriah, now enclosed by the beautiful Islamic “Dome of the Rock,” known to Muslims as the “Haram al Sharif” mosque. On this spot, it is said that Abraham came to sacrifice his son in obedience to God’s command. On this spot, the Jews under Solomon built their Temple which housed the sacred Ark of the Covenant. In this temple, Jesus came to study with the great Jewish leaders as a boy, and later to pray before he went to his crucifixion. And it was to this spot that Muhammad was transported by a winged horse from the “near sacred stone” (Mecca) to the “far sacred stone” (Jerusalem) and taken to speak with the Great Patriarchs and Prophets of God.

Jerusalem has become the most mythical and controversial city in the world today. One visitor said: “The air over Jerusalem is thick with prayers, blood, and dreams. It’s hard to breathe there!” With all the similarities of the three faiths, it is the differences and enormity of the threat that far outweighs any other in our generation. And the solution can only come from the coming back together of the fractured family of Abraham --- Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

Johnnie Hicks - 03/24/14

Children of Abraham

Points About the Origins and Faiths of 3 Western Religions

- *Jews, Christians, and Muslims all claim to be children born of the same God and heirs to the Promise made to Abraham:*
 - **To the Jews:** *“Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and he who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves.” (Genesis 12:1-3)*
 - **To the Christians:** *“And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.” (Galatians 3:29)*
“For the Promise (to Abraham) is to you and to your children and to all are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.” (Acts 2:39)
 - **To the Muslims:** *“Strive in the way of God with a service worthy of Him. He has chosen you and laid no hardship on you in the way of faith, the faith of your forbear Abraham.” (Al-Qur’an 22:78)*
- *Jews, Christians, and Muslims all have shared histories and the same prophets as revealed in all three of the Holy Scriptures that include:*
 - *The creation story of Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden*
 - *The story of Noah and the Great Flood*
 - *Acknowledgement of Moses as Lawgiver of the Ten Commandments*
 - *Promised lineage of Abraham’s heirs including Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, David, Solomon, Elijah, Jonah, Daniel, and others.*
- *Additionally, Al-Qur’an acknowledges John the Baptist and holds Jesus (PBUH) to be one of the greatest of God’s Prophets. Islamic scriptures further confirm the virgin birth of Jesus through Mary, who is considered the purest woman of all creation. An entire Sura (chapter) of Al-Qur’an is dedicated to Mary.*
- *Muhammad (PBUH) is revered but not worshipped as the last (therefore, the Greatest) in the lineage of Prophets, bringing the last of the revelations, which are contained in Al-Qur’an.*
 - *“We sent down The Torah which contains guidance and light, (which) ... gave instructions to the Jews ... Later, We sent Jesus, son of Mary, confirming The Torah which had been sent down before him, and gave him The Gospel*

containing guidance and light ... And to you, We have revealed The Book containing the truth, confirming the earlier revelations, and preserving them.” (Al-Qur’an 5:44-48)

- *“If God had pleased He could surely have made you one people, professing one faith. But He wished to try and test you by that which He gave you. So try to excel in good deeds. To Him will you all return in the end when He will tell you of what you were at variance.” (Al-Qur’an 5:48)*
- *“Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?” (Malachi 2:10)*
- *For the most part of Middle Eastern history since the 7th Century C.E., followers of all three faiths have been referred to as “People of the Book.” Each community believes that God has spoken to them:*
 - *To the **Jews** through The Torah – for the first and last time ...*
 - *To the **Christians** through The New Testament – for the second and last time ...*
 - *To the **Muslims** through Al-Qur’an – for the third and last time.*
- *In addition to relationship with the same lineage of Prophets, all three faiths believe in angels as God’s messengers. The four archangels that are mentioned in scriptures and/or religious tradition are:*

Uriel Michael Gabriel Raphael

“For He will give his angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways.” (Psalms 91:11)

The God of Abraham

- *In the earliest writings having to do with the God of Abraham, the name “El” is used, referring to the High God, or “Sky God” of the Canaanites. Some examples of this are “Elohim” (All-powerful One); “El-Shaddai” (All-sufficient One); and “El-lah” (the One and Only).*
- *Names and places containing “El” or “el” refer to this earliest “Sky God” of Abraham: For example: Isra(el); Beth(el); Gabri(el); (El)-ija); (El)-isha; Dani(el); Ezeki(el); Samu(el); Ishma(el); Bab(yl)on; ang(el); etc..*
- *The Aramaic name for God in Jesus’ time was “El-ah;” Muslims use this term with its Arabic spelling “Al-lah” to refer to this same High (Sky) God of Abraham.*

- The name “YHWH” was given to Moses at the Burning Bush and is said to be the God of the Jews. “Jehovah” is another form of this name, meaning: “I am who I am.”
- To the **Jews**, beliefs about God are that:

God is One: Creator of everything; Incorporeal (not of a physical nature); Without Gender; Omnipresent (in all places); Omnipotent (can do anything); Omniscient (transcends time); Eternal; Just and Merciful; Holy and Perfect; and ‘Avinu Malkeinu’ (our Father and King).

“Hear O Israel, the Lord our God; the Lord is One.” (Deuteronomy 6:4)

To most **Christians**, beliefs about God are that:

God is the Godhead of Three Divine Beings known as The Trinity: God, the Father; Jesus, the Son; and the Holy Spirit (Giver of Life).

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

The Nicene Creed states that:

“We believe in One God the Father Almighty ... and in One Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God ... and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Life-Giver, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified.”

(Some Eastern Christians do not subscribe to the idea of The Trinity; Jesus is thought to be one hundred per cent God).

- To the **Muslims**, beliefs about God are that:

There is only One God, and He is “Al-lah” (“the God”). He is the same God of Abraham, Moses, and all the Prophets and also affected the Virgin Birth of Jesus, who set the perfect example for which all mankind should live.

“Al-lah” is Merciful and Just and requires nothing less than total submission (the meaning of “Islam”) to Him. He is known by His 99 Attributes that are often named in prayer.

Muslims believe that God revealed His Last Prophecy to Muhammad, His servant, naming the Children of Ishmael as God’s chosen heirs to the Promise. However, God promises salvation for all the Children of Promise: Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

“In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful; Praise be to Al-lah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds; Most Gracious, Most Merciful; Master of the Day of Judgment.”
(Opening verses of Al-Qur-an)

“God is most great. God is most great. I testify that there is no god but God. I testify that Muhammad is the Prophet of God. Arise and pray. God is most great. God is most great. There is no God but God.”
(Muslim call to prayer)

“The Promise” to Abraham

(God said): “I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you, and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves.” (Genesis 12:2-3)

“The Call” to Follow God

“Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.’” (Genesis 12:1)

With this call, faith is born for all three religions. One must give up all personal attachments and follow God. He will show the way.

“The promise to Abraham and his descendants, that they should inherit the earth, did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith.” (Romans 4:12)

“Peter began to say to him, ‘Lo, we have left everything and followed you.’” (Mark 10:28)

“The Binding” of Isaac (or Ishmael)

(God tested Abraham and said to him): “Take your son, your only son ... whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.” (Genesis 22:2)

- *To the Jews, “the Binding” is a prophecy of the bondage they will endure as God’s Chosen People.*
- *To the Christians, “the Binding” is a prophecy for the crucifixion of Jesus, when God offered His Only Son for the sins of the world.*
- *To the Muslims, “the Binding” is symbolic of the submission with which Ishmael willingly went to the altar. “Islam” means “submission” and calls for one’s total submission of one’s life to the Will of Al-lah.*

It is believed by Jews, Christians, and Muslims that Mount Moriah in Jerusalem is the site where Abraham went to offer his son. The Jewish temple was built here which housed the Ark of the Covenant. Jesus is thought to have studied in this temple during his youth. Later, Muhammad is said to have been led to this site by the Angel Gabriel where he ascended through seven heavenly realms where he met Adam, Jesus and John, Joseph, Noah, Aaron, Moses, and Abraham, all of whom confirmed that the revelations he had received from the Angel Gabriel were true.

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