



“If you were Abraham’s children, then you would do the things Abraham did. As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth ... Abraham did not do such things.”

As the discussion continued it turned into a debate. The Jews claimed God was their Father and Jesus replied,

“If God were your Father you would love me... Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day. He saw it and was glad.”

“You are not yet 50 years old,” the Jews said to him, “and you have seen Abraham!”

Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, before Abraham was born, I am.” (John 8:39, 40, 56-58)

When Jesus claimed that Abraham had ‘seen’ his day, the Jews were perplexed. They wondered, how it was possible that Abraham saw Jesus since he lived and died 2,000 years before Jesus came.

Perhaps this question also puzzles you. Maybe you would like to explore this further by reading the story of Abraham’s sacrifice as recorded in Genesis 22:1-14? You will also find helpful insights in *The Mystery of Abraham’s Sacrifice*.³

If you want to order this booklet or if you wish to ask any relevant questions contact me at starsign77@hotmail.com

Bible quotations are taken from the New Living Translation unless otherwise noted.

- 1 *Jihad Today* by Menahem Milson The Middle East Media Research Institute, December 21 2007
<http://www.memri.org/bin/latestnews.cgi?ID=IA41107>
- 2 http://www.injil.org/clarke/peace_on_earth.pdf
- 3 <http://www.injil.org/clarke/sacrifice.pdf>



Peace and Hospitality

by

Roland Clarke

Insights that Inspire Hope



The Missing Peace

But how can followers of the Messiah be peacemakers?² Peacemaking can involve intervening between arguing or fighting parties. Another way to pursue peace is by praying “for the peace of Jerusalem” (Psalm 122).

A best-selling book, *Light Force*, recounts the true story of a follower of Jesus who risked his life on many occasions while working for peace in the Middle East. Brother Andrew’s example provides a glimmer of hope in the midst of an otherwise gloomy situation. His story is widely available in bookshops.

Many people who have read this inspiring story do not live in the Middle East. How can people living far from the centre of conflict contribute in a meaningful way towards making peace? One example was reported in a London, Ontario, newspaper story entitled, *Blossoming Christian-Muslim Friendship in London* (Al-Bilad, June 2004).

The writer tells how, shortly after 9/11, certain mosques were desecrated and prejudice against Muslims increased dramatically. Seeing this, Christians held hands around the mosque – a symbolic gesture that “protected the Muslim community from the fringe elements of the society.” The story continues by explaining how Christians have been invited to mosques for ‘Open Houses’ to become better acquainted with Muslim culture and belief. Likewise, Christians have invited Muslims to meet with them, thus fostering friendships.

Building bridges of friendship can be illustrated in a simple way by greeting one’s neighbor with a friendly smile. We might imagine a typical scenario where an Arab immigrates to England and occupies a house next door



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Each year various Olympic and international sporting events are held where people from different nationalities and cultures mingle. Athletes test their sportsmanship on the field, and then, off the field, their personal relationships are enriched as they engage with each other – sometimes forming real friendships.

Unfortunately, there have been a few times when tensions and conflicts have marred these multicultural events but organizers work hard to prevent such disruptions. In recent years, security measures have been intensified so as to prevent terrorist attacks. Those in charge of these events encourage tolerance and harmony. Citizens of the host nation are urged to show hospitality to visitors and foreigners, thus making them feel truly welcomed as guests.

Abrahamic legacy?

In many cases (e.g. the 2010 Soccer World Cup in SA) the host country, has a sizable population of Jews, Christians and Muslims, all of whom revere the patriarch Abraham. Interestingly, one of the lasting legacies he left was hospitality. Before we take a closer look at Abraham’s example of hospitality, let us review some of the Abrahamic heritage that many have had the privilege of sharing.

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Published by

AcadSA
PUBLISHING

AcadSA Publishing Tel +27 11 976 4044
PO Box 12322 Fax +27 11 976 4042
Edleen, Kempton Park Email info@acadsa.co.za
1625, Rep South Africa Web www.acadsa.co.za

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to a traditional Englishman. Because of a stereotypical mindset, the Englishman stays aloof, suspecting that this bearded neighbor wearing a turban is a radical.

On the other hand, we could just as easily imagine a different scenario: Suppose the Englishman is a Messianic Jew who takes Jesus' teaching seriously, i.e. about giving a friendly greeting to those who aren't our brothers. (Matthew 5:46) In a sense one could say this is simply hospitality – philoxenia – a biblical Greek term which literally means 'love of strangers'. (Luke 14:12-14) Indeed, this is the example Jesus set for us to follow. Notice how he greeted a despised Samaritan in John chapter 4.

Incidentally the traditional greeting used throughout the Middle East is "Peace be with you" ("Shalom alekhem" and "Salaam u laikum"). What a pity that these small everyday expressions of goodwill often become superficial and lack heartfelt sincerity.

Hospitality

Near Eastern cultures are noted for being hospitable to strangers, but it seems many 'westerners' are not so inclined. However, true sons of Abraham are well aware of his noble example and legacy of hospitality. As it is written,

Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. (Hebrews 13:1,2; compare Genesis 18:1-8)

Considering the polarized state of our modern world, it is a matter of urgency that everyone who reveres Abraham should emulate him and thus show that they are his true 'children'. In fact, this is how Jesus appealed to the Jews,

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For thousands of years parents have proudly named their children 'Avraham', 'Abraham' or 'Ibrahim' in memory of the patriarch. Abraham has become a spiritual icon because of the remarkable faith he showed when God tested him in regards to sacrificing his son. Tragically, however, Jews, Christians and Muslims have not always tolerated each other. During the Middle Ages they were caught up in a long conflict called the Crusades that stained the pages of human history.

One thousand years later our modern world is embroiled in a so-called 'War on Terror' which seems to have no end in sight. Interestingly the two flash points of this conflict are Iraq and Israel – one being Abraham's birthplace, and the other, the promised homeland for Abraham's descendants .

Sadly, it seems that the storm clouds of another war are looming on the horizon as Ahmadienejad seems determined to wipe Israel off the map. Moreover, Hamas, Hizbullah and even Fatah have similar plans for the Jews. They aspire to take possession of the entire area between Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea and make it Palestine, if necessary, in stages.

Other Islamist groups like Al Qaeda and the Taliban should not be overlooked. They aim to rid the world of Jews and Christians.¹ If we underestimate these extremists and see them as merely a fading fringe of the Muslim world we are burying our heads in the sand. These radicals are resurgent in Afghanistan and, more recently are causing much bloodshed in Pakistan as well as many other places.

To be sure, there are many Muslims who view the atrocities committed by these radicals as a disgrace on

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their religion, in much the same way that Christians express horror at seeing the atrocities committed by so-called Christians in the crusades.

If Abraham were here today, no doubt he would be heart-sore to see how people who have inherited his legacy and claim allegiance to his God are not getting along with one another. As godfearing people we should be sensitive to how these conflicts hinder others from turning to the one true God. When people of other religions look at our lives they should be able to see our peace-loving behavior. Indeed, this kind of behavior is a reflection of the God whom we claim to believe in, the One who is called in the Bible, *Yahweh Shalom* - the LORD our peace (or *As Salaam*, a similar title for Allah as seen in the 99 beautiful names).

Dr. Tony Maalouf, an Arab theologian, wrote,

The biblical legacy of Arabs and Jews has the potential to reconcile both parties under the Abrahamic umbrella and to offer the hope of the gospel of peace in an area tyrannized by war.

Zechariah prophesied that Messiah will "*guide us to the path of peace*".(Luke 1:79) This is in keeping with the earlier prophets who foretold that the Messiah would be Prince of Peace. Furthermore, scripture says "*His government and its peace will never end...*" (Isaiah 9:6,7) It is not surprising to see how peace was a recurring theme in Jesus' teaching.

"Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called the sons of God." (Matthew 5:9, NIV)

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