204341 - Does the Bible Mention Ibrahim’s Building of the Ka`bah?

the question

Recently one of my Uncle, who is not a Muslim and he is doing research on islam at the moment and he is currently living in California USA . He studied both Bible, Torah and Quran. He asked me a question to which I don't know any satisfactory answer, since I am not qualified.

Can you please HELP me answer his question.

Here is the Question:

It says in the Quran that Abraham was a Muslim and along with his son,they built the Kaba. According to the Torah and Bible, Abraham never went to Mecca.

So why the differences?

Summary of answer

While the Bible does not explicitly mention Ibrahim building the Ka`bah, some scholars believe that references to Paran (Genesis 21:21) and the Valley of Baca (Psalms 84:6) may indicate Makkah, aligning with the Islamic narrative of Ibrahim’s journey.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The Quran Confirms Previous Original Scriptures

We Muslims do not believe that there is any contradiction between the Glorious Quran and the original Torah and Gospel, because we believe that they are all divinely revealed books that were sent down from Allah, may He be Glorified. Thus they came from the same source, and as that is

the case there cannot be any contradiction or conflict between them, as Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{Do they not then consider the Quran carefully? Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much contradictions.} [An-Nisa' 4:82]

Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted, describes the Glorious Quran as "confirming" the Books that came before it, and that which confirms something cannot contradict or conflict with it. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{It is He Who has sent down the Book (the Quran) to you (Muhammad) with truth, confirming what came before it. And he sent down the Taurat (Torah) and the Injeel (Gospel).

Aforetime, as a guidance to mankind, And He sent down the criterion (of judgement between right and wrong (this Quran)).} [Al `Imran 3:3-4]

{And We have sent down to you (O Muhammad) the Book (this Quran) in truth, confirming the Scripture that came before it and Mohayminan (trustworthy in highness and a witness) over it (old Scriptures).} [Al-Ma'idah 5:48]

Distortions in the Torah and Gospel over Time

As for what we see nowadays of contradictions in the copies of the Torah and Gospel that are extant today, the reason for that is clear and obvious. It is because these two Books have fallen prey to distortion and alteration, with things being taken away, added and changed. That is in addition to the fact that the sources and manuscripts that have come down to us today cannot be trusted.

This is what explains any differences that researchers or students find between these two Books and the Glorious Quran which has been transmitted to us in a Mutawatir fashion (i.e., narrated by so many from so many that it is inconceivable that they could all have agreed upon a lie), as is attested by both believers and nonbelievers.

Biblical Mentions of Ibrahim’s Journey to Makkah

Nevertheless we say that Ibrahim’s arrival in the land of Makkah Al-Mukarramah – and indeed his building of the Sacred House – are historical events that are attested to in the Torah and other ancient historical books.

We cannot deny the fact that there are different interpretations of these texts of the Torah and so on, and that the context is open to different interpretations. Our aim here is to confirm that such indications exist. However, the matter should be left to scholars to examine the story in the Old Testament, in order to reach a definitive conclusion.

These references include the following:

- In the book of Genesis 16:7 it says, after mentioning the story of Ibrahim (Abraham) going in unto Hajar (Hagar) and her becoming pregnant, then Sarai’s [Sarah’s] complaint to Ibrahim about her:

[Biblical quotations in English are taken from the King James Version (KJV); some place names have been changed, followed by the place name, in brackets, that is mentioned in the KJV. This is done in line with the point the author is making – see below]

And when Sarai [Sarah] dealt hardly [harshly] with her, she fled from her face.

7 And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain [spring] of water in the wilderness, by the fountain [spring] in the way to the Hijaz (Shur).

8 And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai.

…

13 And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?

14 Wherefore the well was called Be’er lahai roi (Well of the Living One Who sees me); behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.

See how the name of the Hijaz is mentioned, and Hajar’s departure to that place, after which the blessing of the “Well of the Living One Who sees me” is bestowed by Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted; this is the Well of Zamzam.

- In Genesis 13:1-18 it says:

And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, towards the Qiblah (into the south).

2 And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.

3 And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai;

4 Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the Lord.

…

18 Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord.

- In Genesis 20:1 it also says:

And Abraham journeyed from thence towards the land of the qiblah (the south country), and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar.

We have quoted these texts [in the original Arabic of this article] from the Torah as translated into Arabic by Sa`id Al-Fayyumi, (d. 943 AH); the King James Version of the Bible has been used here].

He was the first one to translate the Old Testament into Arabic. He also wrote a commentary for

most of its books. We have not found this Torah anywhere else except in the book of Idris `Abizah entitled Madhkal ila Dirasat at-Tawrat wa Naqdiha ma`a Tarjamatihi Al-`Arabiyyah li Sa`diyya Ka'un Al-Fayyumi (Introduction to the Study and Critique of the Torah, accompanied by its Translation into Arabic by Sa`diyya Ka'un Al-Fayyumi).

In other well-known translations of the Torah [into Arabic], instead of the Hijaz it mentions "by a fountain [spring] of water in the wilderness, by the fountain [spring] in the way to Shur" (Genesis 16:7), and instead of the Qiblah it mentions "the south" (Genesis 13:1).

[Translator's note: some English translations say "Negev" instead of "the south'; in the Bible, this word is used for the direction "south"]

For more information please see (in Arabic): Nabi Ard Al-Janub (Prophet of the Southern Land) by Jamal Ad-Din Ash-Sharqawi, p. 18-109)

- In Genesis 21:21 it says of Isma'eel (peace be upon him):

21 And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.

This is how it appears in the Samaritan Torah (also known as the Samaritan Pentateuch), and in Al-Fayyumi's translation of the Torah.

Although many passages in the Torah suggest that Paran is in Palestine, Imam Al-Qarrafi said in his book Al-Ajwibah Al-Fakhirah (p. 165): Paran is Makkah, according to the consensus of the People of the Book. Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah said in Al-Jawab As-Sahih liman baddala Din Al-Masih, 5/200):

There is no difference of opinion between the Muslims and the People of the Book concerning the fact that Paran is Makkah. But if they say that it is not Makkah, there is nothing strange in that, because they are known for their distortions and fabrications.

He (may Allah have mercy on him) also said concerning the region around Mount Hira' in Makkah:

That place is called Faran (Paran) to this day. (End quote)

Abdul Haqq Vidyarthi (d. 1978 CE) stated in his famous book Muhammad in World Scriptures:

In the Arabic translation of the Samaritan Pentateuch (Torah), which was published in 1851 CE, it says that Paran is located in the Hijaz, as follows:

“And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt” (Genesis 21:21).

This translation remained in circulation for a long time, but when the Muslims alerted the Christian world to this prophecy, and that it constituted testimony to the truth of this Noble Prophet, the translation was changed. End quote

- In the Old Testament, in Psalms 84:5-6, 10, there is mention of the valley of Baca. This passage, in the King James Version (KJV), reads as follows:

5 Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them.

6 Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.

…

10 For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand (elsewhere).

There is no valley on earth called Baca (or Bakkah) that contains a house of worship and a spring of water (Zamzam), in which one prayer is better than a thousand prayers offered anywhere else, other than Makkah Al-Mukarramah.

Baca (Bakkah) is one of the names of Makkah. This name is mentioned in the Glorious Quran, where Allah, may He be Exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning)”

{Verily, the first House (of worship) appointed for mankind was that at Bakkah (Makkah), full of blessing, and a guidance for Al-`Alamin (the mankind and jinns).} [Al `Imran 3:96]

But the translators and commentators of the Old Testament distorted the word Baca to buka' [weeping or crying; the Hebrew cognate denotes the same meaning], even though the meanings of place names should not be translated; rather the name should be transliterated, and even though the meaning of the (original) name has nothing to do with crying or weeping, as a result of their desire to eliminate all references to anything that is proven in the Glorious Quran, such distortions occurred.

In conclusion, we say:

Even if nothing was mentioned in the Old Testament concerning Ibrahim's journey to the Hijaz, that does not indicate that this journey did not happen at all.

The well-known academic principle says that the fact that a thing is not mentioned does not mean that it did not happen. In other words, denying that something happened should take the form of a negative statement.

The fact that no mention is made of its happening does not necessarily mean that it did not happen; rather the reason why it was not mentioned may be that it was omitted, forgotten, summarized in brief, and the like.

If you find news of something in one newspaper, then you find that it is not mentioned at all in another newspaper, the fact that it is not mentioned in the latter does not mean that it did not happen. Whoever thinks in such terms is lacking in reason and is making no sense.

This is also applicable in the case under discussion here.

Furthermore, if we were to quote the words of non-Muslims who have investigated the story of the Ka`bah and who really built it, and have determined that Ibrahim (peace be upon him) is the one who built it, this article would become far too long. But we will limit ourselves to quoting one of the most famous of contemporary history books, The Story of Civilization, by Will Durant. This book is composed of forty-two volumes in which the author discusses the history of most civilizations, including the history of the Arabian Peninsula, concerning which he says: "It (the Ka`bah) was built

the fourth time by Abraham and Ishmael, his son from Hagar. (End quote from Qissat Al-Hadarah, 13/18 (The Story of Civilization).

Examine these answers for more details: (14527, 13932, 36644, 210145, 7100, 109315, 3748, 106598)

And Allah knows best.