**In the footsteps of Abraham/Islam as the Religion of Abraham**

**-Ustadh Nouman Ali Khan**

**Host:** Welcome back. Millions of pilgrims are now returning home after journeying to Makkah for the Hajj pilgrimage. The Hajj commemorates events in the life of Prophet Abraham. Why do Muslims consider Abraham to be such an important figure? Recently Ilyas Ally sat down with Nouman Ali Khan at the Islamic center of Canada to talk about Abraham’s legacy. Take a look.

**Ilyas Ally:** Prophet Abraham(peace be upon him), is a pivotal figure in three major world religions –Judaism, Christianity and Islam. What makes Abraham so unique? and why is he considered so important to Muslims in particular. To discuss these Questions, we have with us Nouman Ali Khan. He is the founder and CEO of Bayyinah Institute in Texas and a frequently sort after lecturer all around the world.

Brother Nouman, we are very pleased to have you. Thank you for joining us.

**Nouman Ali Khan:** Very happy to be here. Thank You.

**IA:** We know that Prophet Abraham is...is... is widely revered in Christianity and Judaism but many people might not know that he is also a central figure in Islam

**NAK:** Yeah, very central.

**IA:** And …and for Muslims, uh…they really…uh…we really... you know, umm. Have a particular affection for him. Can you tell us yourself personally how you relate to the Prophet Abraham?

**NAK:** Yeah, sure…umm. I mean, growing up we learned the story of Abraham and it’s very…something very close to our hearts our daily prayers include Abraham in them as we send peace and blessings upon our own messenger. We associate those peace and blessings to Abraham and say send them upon our messenger as you sent them upon Abraham. Ah But I really felt a personal connection to…to Abraham in a way like never before when I got to make the pilgrimage, the Hajj pilgrimage which is obligatory upon Muslims that are capable once in their lifetime this year. So I went with my wife and it was probably the most exhilarating experience of my life to go to this incredible gathering of millions of people at least 2, some estimate, say even up to 4 million of people in one place dressed entirely the same way you know performing this ultimate ritual of Islam in the city of Makkah and as you go you realize how pretty much every ritual you perform is directly tied to the legacy of Abraham that the entire pilgrimage itself is actually a celebration of the Abrahamic legacy and as I started doing that , I realized how closely we are supposed to be affiliated emotionally, spiritually, intellectually to the legacy of Abraham and so it’s such a central part of our faith and hopefully we can have some discussion about that in this conversation.

**IL:** yea so it seems that you know whenever a Muslim goes there to fulfill this…this obligation that they require to do they…they trace the steps of Abraham (NAK: yeah) and his family and so they really get that sense of a connection (NAK: yeah, so you know), so what are the rituals that they actually perform there?

**NAK:** From the very get go, the idea of leaving your family and going out there, right, for no other sake and…sake, but no other purpose but for the sake of god is itself is a commemoration of the Abrahamic legacy as he left his family for the sake of god. He was expelled from his home for the sake of god. So we expel ourselves in a sense and go on this pilgrimage for the sake of god. The other is that you know, Abraham build this house in our creed for the worship of one god alone in Makkah, you know, millennia ago and made prayer as he was building this house with his son. He prayed, not only that the house be populated, at that time it was nothing but a dessert, there was nobody there it wasn’t in the city or anything, and he’s building, he’s making this prayer that it be turn into a thriving city and people should come here, to get rewarded for coming here and get closer to god. Umm… and we actually see ourselves as fulfilling that prayer. That entire ritual is a fulfillment of that prayer. He…as he is building the house he also asks for a messenger that would purify the people. Now there are two things, you’re… you’ve got a house that’s supposed to purify people because it’s the house for the worship of god and he asked for a messenger that would purify the people, right. The two are connected. You can’t purify people until you purify the house. Historically, the house got corrupted, idols were placed there. It became the place for you know, hedonism and idol worship and so we see the legacy of our own prophet as cleaning up that house that was originally built by Abraham. We see the mission of our prophet as reviving the legacy of Abraham. You know, on that note, if…one Muslim feel a close connection to their own prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), then he’s the one that’s told being the leader of all messengers, being the final messenger, he’s told interestingly enough that he is to follow the legacy of Abraham. We follow our prophet and he’s told he should follow the legacy of Abraham,

**(16:123)**

حَنِيفًا إِبْرَاهِيمَ مِلَّةَ اتَّبِعْ

***…Quran says “ follow the legacy of Abraham sincerely and holy”.***

So now, we go there, we perform this ritual, we’re looking at the same house that he built, right, which is awesome and then we are told in our tradition, that there’s a special marking, there’s a place where you’re supposed to go and that prayer counts extra, right, it’s one mark, one spot and that’s the spot where it’s called the station of Abraham, it’s literally, that’s what it’s called. And the purpose of it is actually to commemorate the stone in which he… on which he stood to build the house. And so you can’t help but remember god through remembering the sacrifice and the building of this house and the prayer that he made for you and me to be able to do this one day, so it ties you directly to his legacy as our father in one sense, you know.

**IA:** So we know that…that Abraham is…is both, you know, the father…or…the…the forefather of Prophet Muhammad in terms of lineage itself (NAK: that’s right) but also in terms of we’re learning in terms of the religious lineage you can say, in terms of that…that…ah you know…that prophet Muhammad fulfilled or continued the mission that Abraham started.

**NAK:** Exactly. And this is so awesome, and so powerful to the Muslim that…obviously the name of our religion is Islam, one of its nicknames in the Qur’an is the legacy of Abraham. The…the religion of Abraham, **إِبْرَاهِيم مِلَّةَ,**

**مِلَّةَ** is used in Arabic word for religion, when you have a… an emotional attachment to it. So it’s the…it’s the legacy of Abraham that should be loved and one should…one should have loyalty to it and one should affiliate themselves to it. Then what’s beautiful is as we go to that pilgrimage, you know, the famous story of Abraham, of course, is the sacrifice, right. And so he is willing to sacrifice his son. His son is incredible enough that he is willing to be put to sacrifice, if it’s from god, that you know, that the dreams must be revelation. And as they are going…they are…you know the mother, daughter…uh uh…mother and father and son are going , they are each tempted by the devil to stop and to not go forward with this sacrifice, this is insane. And so three times, they shoo the devil away. And symbolically he literally threw pebbles, the family threw pebbles to shoo them away. At the Hajj, there’s a…a ceremony in which millions of people go throw that same walk and as they are going, they throw pebbles at these 3 marked spots that actually reminds them that as we make sacrifices we are going to be tempted by the devil to walk away from sacrifice as Abraham himself was and he was able to successfully shoo the temptations of the devil away. Then even before…uh…uh…you know, you’ll…you’ll…if you see any footage of the…the pilgrimage from Makkah, you’ll see the people are running from one end to other, right, 7 times, and this is actually ah…the mother of Ishmael, Hager, when… when she…when they were left in the desert by themselves and he’s in the middle almost ah…umm…you know, dying of dehydration, the baby, she just…she’s dried up, she hasn’t had anything to drink herself, she can’t feed her milk…feed him milk. She’s desperately looking for water and so she’s going back and forth. Her sacrifice is celebrated. It’s not just Abraham’s; his wife’s sacrifice is celebrated. And then the baby kicks the sand and miraculously Water comes out which is actually the reason for which in the middle of a desert, you have a thriving city. It’s because there’s a water supply now and we’re supposed to ritualistically even drink that water for blessings, the water of Zamzam. So, pretty much everything we do at that occasion, that life…that life event is reviving the legacy and celebrating the legacy. At the end of it all, what do we do, ultimate celebration, sacrifice an animal. So when we make our sacrifice, to go to the pilgrimage, the celebration of it is sacrificing an animal. When Abraham made his ultimate sacrifice, he was willing to slaughter his son, god told him he has proven himself and how was he supposed to celebrate passing the test? Sacrificing an animal. So that…Sacrifices is actually a… again a celebration of the Abrahamic legacy and finally I wanna add here that it’s not just limited to just that one ritual. You know, a fifth of the world’s population almost, Muslims all over the world pray in the direction of the House that Abraham built. You know, how much more can you say that we are, a people tied to the legacy of Abraham.

**IA:** Yea and…and I think a lot of Muslims oft…often see Islam and see the Prophet Muhammad’s legacy as an answer to Abraham’s prayers. (NAK: that’s right). Ah…Can you tell us what Abraham prayed for because the Qur’an details many of his prayers and they are very beautiful, what…Why was…What was Abraham praying for?

**NAK:** So Abraham has many prayers in the Qur’an. And …uh… Particularly what’s highlighted in his prayers are common theme, among many of his prayers, is concern for the future. Okay. So he’s concerned about his children, their children’s children and their children’s children. And he sees that, the teachings of the true faith, of belief and sacrifice for one god may weaken over generations. So he says:

**(2:129)**

**مِنْهُمْ رَسُولًا فِيهِمْ وَابْعَثْ رَبَّنَا**

Master, appoint among them a messenger whose from… among themselves.

Raise among them a messenger from among themselves.

**(2:129)**

**آيَاتِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ يَتْلُو**

That will reach your rese…revelations to him. It’ll… he’ll read upon them your miracles, your messages.

**(2:129)**

**وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ**

And he will cleanse them…or uh…He actually says

**(2:129)**

**وَالْحِكْمَةَ**  **الْكِتَابَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ**

He’ll teach them the law, he’ll teach them wisdom and he will cleanse them. And so we see that fulfilled because it literally, the prophet came to cleanse the legacy of Abraham at that place, at that same house and he himself…uh…uh… when we actually uh…commemorate and praise our own messenger, we actually make mention of the fact that Abraham prayed for him.

**السلام عليه إبراهيم بعثتهي ودعالی**

That you know,

May Allah send peace upon the messenger for whom Abraham prayed, for his coming, you know. And he would often refer to him as his father Abraham… as his father Ibrahim. This is very beautiful as we see that connection between Abraham and our own faith. The other…uh… interesting new ones is that Allah highlights… the Qur’an highlights… umm… special places. So… There are messengers that are associated with certain locations, like Mount Sinai for Moses, right. And then when He talks about Makkah, He says this entrusted house

**(95:3)**

**الْأَمِين الْبَلَدِ وَهَٰذَا**

This entrusted house and that oath when god swears by this entrusted house, meaning this beautiful city, He’s actually referring to 2 messengers in one location. He’s referring to the one who began and inaugurated this city, Abraham and the one who finally came and made it a legacy for the true faith until the end of times and that is Muhammad. So He associated both of them with that city. So when we think of Makkah we don’t think of Muhammad , we think of Abraham and Muhammad

**IA:** How can those of us who revere Abraham… uh…you know, learn from him and emulate him more in our daily lives in addition to the Hajj, just more on a practical level.

**NAK:** Sure. I think probably the most powerful legacy of Abraham is inquiry. Genuinely searching for the truth. And believing that… that God will not leave you without guidance. And, you know… this require… it’s a 2 part thing. When you have to have faith in god himself and the other you have to have faith in the fact that god will guide you if you are sincere. That is the legacy that he truly left behind. That we should not think of ourselves as abandoned. We should think of ourselves as in the care of god, right. So I personally believe that the legacy of Ibrahim or Abraham is for one to turn to god in all of their sincerity and ask Him for guidance and then be willing emotionally and physically, be ready, to take that guidance when it comes and to be willing to do what it takes to accept it. Because you don’t ask for a gift and then throw it away once it’s given, right. So that is the …that is the… the legacy of Abraham to all human beings. And that’s the beautiful thing was he built this house, he didn’t say make this a place for just those who believe in me, he said **للناس**, for all people. Make this place special for all people. Make it a…He sends the invitation to all of humanity and that’s why even if we are not genetically tied to Abraham, we are still calling him our father, because of that legacy. He became the father figure in Islam.

**IA:** Okay. Thank you very much. It’s… it’s a…There’s so much more we can say about Prophet Abraham and his legacy. So thank you very much Brother Nouman for joining us to talk about that.

**NAK:** I appreciate the opportunity and I hope this was beneficial to people.

**IA:** Okay, that was Nouman Ali khan, founder of the Bayyinah Institute in Texas.

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