

 **AIM:** faith and scriptural texts

 **Participants:** 8 - 30

 **Duration:** 30 minutes

 **Required Material:** print the two texts from the Bible and the Quran (Annex)

 **Category:** Dialogue exercise / inter-faith

## THINGS TO CONSIDER

- A. You could consider printing out the texts and letting the participants read them on their own.
- B. You could consider dividing the group into smaller groups to discuss the questions.

## STEPS

### Preparation (5 minutes)

Print the handout for all participants.

### Activity (45 minutes)

Give a copy of the texts to the participants. Place yourself in a circle with the participants. Sit on a chair or on the floor.

Everyone reads a verse or a piece of the text. Read the following texts: (you can choose to read both texts from the Quran or just use one)

Our messengers came to Abraham with good news, and they greeted him with: "Peace." He said, "Peace," and did not delay in bringing a roasted calf.

When he saw that they gave no sign of modesty, he had a feeling of alienation and fear towards them.

But they said: "Fear not, we have been sent to the people of

Lot." His wife was also there, and she laughed. Then we announced to her Isaac and then Jacob. And she said: "Comfort me, shall I give birth while I am an old woman, and this man is an old man? This is indeed a strange thing." "They said, 'Do you find God's decision strange? God's grace and His blessing is upon you, the people in this house! To him be glory and honour."

When the terror left Abraham, and he took part in the good news, he began to discuss with us about Lot's people. Abraham was gentle, compassionate and apologetic.

Sure 11, 69-75 ("Hood"). The Holy Quran

Has the story of Abraham's honoured guests reached you? When they came to him, they saluted him with "Peace," and he replied 'Peace'. Then he went to his house, and came with a fatted calf, put it before them, saying: 'Will you not eat?' Then he was seized by fear of them, but they said:" Fear not. "And they announced him a bright boy. So his wife came forward, hitting her face saying, "An old, infertile wife?" They said, "Thus says the Lord! He is the Wise, the all Knowing. "

Sure 51, 24-30 ( "adh-Dhariyat").The Holy Quran

The Lord appeared to Abraham in the oak grove plains, once he sat in his tent when the day was at its hottest. He looked up and saw three men standing before him. When he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, bowed to the ground and said, "Lord, if I have found mercy in your eyes, do not go past your servant! Let me get some water so you can wash your feet and rest ye under the tree! And let me make some food, so you can strengthen yourself before you move on, since you now have past your way of your servant." They said, "Yes, we will do as you say!"

Then Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, "Hurry and get the flour and bake bread!" Abraham even ran to the cattle and got a tender and good calf.

He gave it to his servant, and he hurried to prepare it. And he took butter and milk and the calf which the boy had prepared, and set it before them. And he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" Abraham said, "There, in the tent." He said, "I will return to you when the time is right, and then your wife Sarah will have a son." Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him.

	<p>Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years, and Sarah was not of childbearing age. And Sarah laughed to herself, "Should I feel desire, exhausted as I am? And my Lord being old also."</p> <p>Then the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I really bear a child, old as I am?'"</p> <p>Is there anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you when the time comes. Sarah shall have a son." Sarah denied: "I did not laugh." For she was afraid. He answered, "Yes, you laughed."</p> <p>Genesis 18, 1-15</p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b> (20 minutes)</p>	<p>Engage the participants in a dialogue by asking them the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The texts are taken from at least three religious traditions. Which?</li> <li>• What are the similarities and differences in the texts?</li> <li>• Why do you think the Qur'an has its own version of this story? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the relationship between hospitality and fear in the story?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How do the guests act in front of Abraham and Sarah?</li> <li>• Who are the guests?</li> <li>• Is there anything that violates what we would normally think about the relationship between guests and hosts?</li> <li>• Point out the main power relations in the story and discuss which of them is most important.</li> </ul> <p>*NOTE Further reading and considerations: The text is the beginning of the story about the people of Abraham, who are going to be great when Sarah begets his son Isaac. For more, read the story of Hagar and Ishmael.</p> <p>(Genesis 16, 1-14 and 21, 8-21).</p> <p>Have you heard of Hagar and Ishmael before?</p> <p>Background:</p> <p>Hagar is not mentioned in the Quran but is nevertheless a very important person in Islam. Ismael is mentioned many times and has the same role in Islam that Isaac has in Judaism and Christianity: he is the one who is about to be sacrificed to God by Abraham.</p> <p>Why do you think we don't find out any more about what</p>

	happens with Ishmael?
<b>Conclusion</b>	We find similar concepts of hospitality within the three Abrahamic traditions

## **'God on visit' – Annex**

Texts:

### **Text 1**

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But they said: "Fear not, we have been sent to the people of Lot." His wife was also there, and she laughed. Then we announced to her Isaac and then Jacob. And she said: "Comfort me, shall I give birth while I am an old woman, and this man is an old man? This is indeed a strange thing." "They said, 'Do you find God's decision strange? God's grace and His blessing is upon you, the people in this house! To him be glory and honour."

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### **Text 2**

Has the story of Abraham's honoured guests reached you? When they came to him, they saluted him with "Peace," and he replied 'Peace'. Then he went to his house, and came with a fatted calf, put it before them, saying: "Will you not eat?" Then he was seized by fear of them, but they said: "Fear not. "And they announced him a bright boy. So his wife came forward, hitting her face saying, "An old, infertile wife?" They said, "Thus says the Lord! He is the Wise, the all Knowing. "

### **Text 3**

The Lord appeared to Abraham in the oak grove plains, once he sat in his tent when the day was at its hottest. He looked up and saw three men standing before him. When he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, bowed to the ground and said, "Lord, if I have found mercy in your eyes, do not go past your servant! Let me get some water so you can wash your feet and rest ye under the tree! And let me make some food, so you can strengthen yourself before you move on, since you now have past your way of your servant." They said, "Yes, we will do as you say!"

Then Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, "Hurry and get the flour and bake bread!" Abraham even ran to the cattle and got a tender and good calf.

He gave it to his servant, and he hurried to prepare it. And he took butter and milk and the calf which the boy had prepared, and set it before them. And he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

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son." Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him. Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years, and Sarah was not of childbearing age. And Sarah laughed to herself, "Should I feel desire, exhausted as I am? And my Lord being old also."

Then the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I really bear a child, old as I am?'

Is there anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you when the time comes. Sarah shall have a son." Sarah denied: "I did not laugh." For she was afraid. He answered, "Yes, you laughed."