

HIJRAH TO NEGASH

**THE WORLD'S FIRST INTERFAITH
UNION THAT ESTABLISHED THE
WORLD'S FIRST MUSLIM
FREE COMMUNITY**



**PROF. SANI ABUBAKAR LUGGA, MFR
THE 5TH WAZIRI OF KATSINA**

When early Muslims in Mecca were being persecuted and could not openly and freely practice Islam, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) sent a first and a second batch of them on Hijrah to Habasha where there is a Christian King under who no one was wronged. The migrant Muslims were well received and protected by the King who settled them in Negash Town where they freely practiced Islam and established the World's First Muslim Community; not in Arabia (the birth place of Islam) but in Africa! This book chronicles the two migrations to Habasha and the first Muslim Community the migrant Muslims founded in that Christian Kingdom. That pioneer "Interfaith Union", personally sealed by the Highest Authority in Islam, Prophet Muhammad (SAW), and the most powerful Christian King in the World at that time, Negus Armah, clearly demonstrates Islam's and Christianity's deep rooted and faith-based attributes of peace, love and respect for one another's beliefs.

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APPRECIATION

My special gratitude is to Allah (SWT), who gave me the strength, the health, the endurance, the wisdom and the ability to write this Book on a very important aspect of Muslim and Christian inter-Faith relationship.

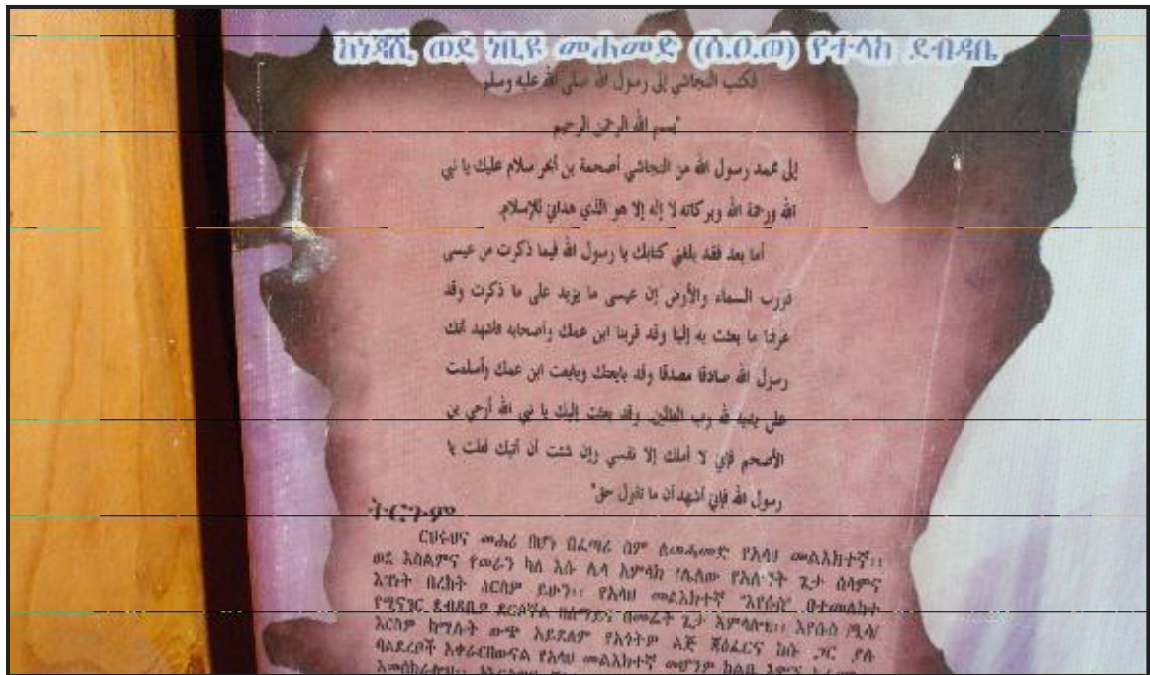
I wish to appreciate the special inspiration I always get from His Eminence, the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar, CFR, mni, and His Royal Highness the Emir of Katsina, Alhaji (Dr) Abdulmumini Kabir Usman, CFR. I would like to thank the President of the Ethiopian National Regional State of Tigray, where Negash is located, His Excellency, Abey Woldu Hagos, whose words of wisdom to me in the plane en-route Addis Ababa from Makele boosted my resolve to see to the publication of this Book.

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Lastly, and by all means not the least, I extend my love and profound gratitude to my wives, Binta, Hadiya and Azhar, and my children and other members of my family for their continued obedience and respect. May Allah bless all of you, *ameen*.

I pray to Allah to have mercy and to bless the souls of my late parents, Abubakar and A'isha, and the souls of my late wife Ummah and my late daughter Fatimah. We pray to Allah that we shall all join them in Paradise. *Ameen*.

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A copy of the letter from Negus Armah to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in both Arabic and the Ethiopian Amharic language being hung at the Negash Mosque



A map showing the route taken by the Muslims on Hijrah from Mecca to Negash



The Negash Mosque, reputed to be the first Mosque in Africa. This is a popular online picture



**The Negash tomb of Negus Armah
(www.africaimagelibrary.com)**



**The Author and some Negash Compound officials
in front of the Negus Armah tomb on
Friday, 30th October 2015**



**The Author and the Chief Imam of Negash Mosque offering
prayers for the souls of Negus Armah and others in the tomb
on Friday, 30th October 2015**



**Jumu'at Prayer in the temporary Negash Mosque
as photographed by the Author on Friday,
30th October 2015**



**The Author having lunch with the Chief Imam and other
officials of Negash Mosque after Friday Jumu'at
Prayer on 30th October 2015**



The Author with Negash Compound officials inspecting the Compound grounds on 30th October 2015



Some graves of the Migrant Muslims as photographed by the Author on Friday 30th October 2015

Chapter One

PERSPECTIVES TO THE HIJRAH

“Hijrah” is the Arabic word for emigration, which ultimately means to separate, to leave or to abandon. In religious terminology however, it means to move from a non-Muslim place of abode, or a place where Muslims are persecuted or Islam is not allowed to be practiced freely as ordained by Allah (SWT); to a place where there is a presence of Islam or Islam is allowed to be practiced freely. Therefore, Muslims were forbidden to remain in countries or communities where Islam is of no account, except when they are able to freely practice their religion and to observe it without any impediment, and without any fear that their presence there could harm them in any way. If this is not the case, then they must migrate to a better place where the authority of Islam accounts or Islam is allowed to be practiced freely as ordained by Allah.

The first and second Hijrah (migration) in Islam were from Mecca to Negash, while the third Hijrah, that instituted the beginning of the Muslim calendar was from Mecca to Medina. The two migrations to Negash have been subjects of extensive research and publications by both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars and in so many languages of the World. The most important aspect of the Negash migrations is that no well known scholar, Muslim or non-Muslim, has denied their occurrence. This would have been because of the wide-spread discussions over generations and the very numerous publications on the two events in recorded literature. What seems to be in dispute however is, whether the Habasha King who received the migrants later converted from Christianity to Islam or not? As expected, Muslims aver that he converted to Islam while non-Muslims aver that he did not.

The importance of the two migrations is best exemplified with a click on the words “**Hijrah to Negash**” on an internet search engine. For instance, on 16th May 2016, at 11 hrs Nigerian time, this Author clicked the words “Hijra to Negash” on the Yahoo search engine where 1,270,000 (one million and two hundred and seventy thousand) results of **mention of the words** were shown. On the same day, at 11.20 hrs Nigerian time, the Google search engine showed a result 78,100 (seventy eight thousand and one hundred) **published literature and postings** on the subject.

THE PROPAGATION OF ISLAM IN MECCA

Immediately after being ordained by Allah (SWT) as a Prophet and Messenger of Allah, Muhammad (SAW) rose and engaged himself in the propagation of Islam. His first convert was his wife, Khadijah (RLA), whose support and companionship provided necessary reassurance and strength for the great mission. His second convert was his close friend and cousin, Abubakar (RLA), whose support equally boosted the mission. He also won the support of some of his relatives, friends and a few others.

Four basic themes of the early message were,

- (1) The Majesty of the One, Unique God – Allah.
- (2) The futility of idol worship.
- (3) The Judgment in the Hereafter.
- (4) The necessity of Faith, justice, fairness, compassion and morality in human affairs.

All these themes represented an attack on the materialism and idolatry prevalent in Mecca at that time. So, the elites of Mecca rejected him and his message. He and his group of followers were subjected to bitter persecution, which grew so fierce that he sent

some of his followers on two migrations to Habasha (Abyssinia, today's Ethiopia) in 615 AD.

PERSECUTION OF MUSLIMS IN MECCA

As Muhammad (SAW) made efforts at preaching the message of Islam to the people, the pagan Arabs, particularly the wealthy and the powerful in the society, felt threatened. Muhammad (SAW) realised that his work was not going to be easy. He knew that he would encounter many obstacles, and that he would have to contend with fierce and sustained opposition from the idolaters. But he relied upon Allah (SWT) to enable him to overcome the opposition.

To the pagan Arabs of Mecca, the message of Islam was a misnomer. Muhammad (SAW) told them to stop the worship of the multitudes of inanimate objects made of stone or wood which they themselves had curved, and which had no power either to give anything to them or to take anything away from them. They should, instead, worship one God, Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful. They ought to give their obedience to Allah, the One Lord of the whole universe. Muhammad (SAW) also told them that in Allah's sight, all humans are equal, and if they became Muslims, they would all become brothers and sisters of each other, in Islam. Muhammad (SAW) also told them that in Islam, Faith, instead of Blood, bonds the society. But the Arabs were bred in the code of pagan custom and convention; they believed in the basic tribal and kinship structures. For them "Blood" was the only basis of social relationship. In their perception, if Faith were allowed to supplant Blood in this equation, it would wreck the whole structure of the Arab society. Muhammad (SAW) also said that, Islam prescribed upon the rich to give a certain share of their wealth to

the poor and the under-privileged, in some form of “wealth tax” called “Zakat”. Such sharing would guarantee the equitable distribution of wealth in the community. Many of the rich pagan-Arabs were money-lenders who had grown rich by lending money to the poor at exorbitant rates of interest. The poor could never repay their debts, and were thus held in economic servitude and bondage. Sharing their ill-gotten wealth with the same people they had been exploiting was to them, inconceivable. For the pagan-Arabs, all these were new and revolutionary ideas. By preaching such revolutionary ideas, Muhammad (SAW) was upsetting the old establishment. Most furious amongst them were the leading usurers and exploiters of Mecca and the high priests of the pagan gods of the Ka’aba. In Muhammad (SAW) and the message of Islam, they saw a threat to their social and economic systems which were based on privilege and coercion. They, therefore, resolved to maintain the status quo and to form and spearhead an implacable war against Islam and die-hard opposition to Muhammad (SAW).

According to Encyclopaedia Britannica Online under the topic, *Muhammad*, when Muhammad (SAW) preached in Mecca, his message was mostly religious, although there was implicit critique of the conduct and attitudes of the merchant class. Some of the Quraysh, the ruling tribe of Mecca into which Muhammad (SAW) belonged, started a campaign to discredit and depose him, as they regarded him as an enemy of the profitable pilgrimages to the then pagan Mecca. Attempts were made to convince his uncle and head of his clan, Abu Talib, to withdraw the traditional Arab clan protection (*awliya*) from Muhammad (SAW). Without protection, he could be killed with impunity. Abu Talib was told that,

Muhammad has cursed our gods, insulted our religion, mocked our way of life and accused our forefathers of error; either you must stop him or you must let us get at him... and we will rid you of him.

When it became evident that Abu Talib would not remove the clan protection, the Quraysh offered bribery. Muhammad (SAW) was offered a fuller share in trade, and a marriage alliance with one of the wealthiest families if he softened his criticism. These offers were decisively rejected by Muhammad (SAW) who responded by saying,

By Allah, if they put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left hand, on condition that I abandon this cause, until Allah has made it victorious, or I perish therein, I will not abandon it in or by anyway.

Karen Armstrong (1992), states that, subsequent to Muhammad's message to the people, there commenced the general persecution of the followers of Muhammad, particularly against those who were more vulnerable, such as slaves and those without the traditional Arab clan protection. The sentiment of the merchant-lords of Mecca was well depicted by Abu Sufyan who said,

Doesn't Muhammad realise that we live by giving housing to the gods. We own the Ka'aba. Every year the tribes of Arabia come here to Mecca to pray and to buy from us. Now were we to replace three hundred gods with just one, where would Mecca be then?

Pagans of Mecca had transformed the Ka'aba, a building built by Prophet Ibraheem (Abraham) (AS) as the "House of God", into a house of idolatry, keeping inside over three hundred statues of various gods. It was visited annually by many pilgrims for prayer, and an armistice was necessary due to the intermixing of so many

beliefs. That provided a perfect environment for trade, tying Mecca to the religious significance of the Ka'aba. By preaching monotheism and criticising the merchants, Muhammad (SAW) appeared to threaten the economic stability of Mecca. The Quraysh and other pagans of Mecca responded by bringing economic pressure to bear on Muhammad's supporters and in some families there was harassment of junior members who followed him.

The pagans of Mecca resolved not only to oppose Muhammad (SAW), the Prophet of Islam, but also to destroy Islam itself before it could strike roots and become viable. They were driven by pride and by lust for power and wealth to make such a resolve against Muhammad (SAW) and Islam. With this resolution, the Quraysh and other pagans of Mecca declared their intention to fight in the defence of their idols and fetishes as well as in the defence of their economic interests and their infidel social system. They opened the campaign against Islam by harassing and persecuting the Muslims. At the beginning, persecution was confined to jeers, jibes and insults. But as time went on, it moved from the violence of words to the violence of deeds and horrible acts and actions. They refrained from inflicting physical injury on Muhammad (SAW) for fear of provoking reprisals; but they had no inhibitions in hurting the rank-and-file Muslims who bore the brunt of the wrath of the Quraysh and their allies. But the fear of torture or even murder by the opponents of Islam did not deter heroic and noble people, the lowly and the highly, from accepting Islam.

As the persecution became intense, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) decided that his people need to go on Hijrah to a safe place until Islam grows stronger, by the will of Allah. He therefore commanded the first batch to go on Hijrah to Habasha.

Chapter Two

THE HIJRAH TO NEGASH

The famous film, THE MESSAGE, gave an excellent picture of early Islamic history (including the Hijrah to Negash). A proclamation at the beginning of the film states that, “*The scholars and historians of Islam - The University of Al-Azhar in Cairo and The High Islamic Congress of the Shiite in Lebanon - have approved the accuracy and fidelity of this film*”. The film, THE MESSAGE, has been used by thousands of authors in their publications. In addition to the film, the following sources also gave excellent write-ups on the Hijrah to Negash:- Ibn Ishaq (2004, p.146); Montgomery Watt (1980, pp.110-111); Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library posting of 18th December 2015; John L. Esposito (ed. 2003, p. 351); Rafiq Zakaria (1991, pp. 403-4) and Aisha Stacey (2012). This Author visited Negash, Aksum and neighbouring historical places twice (in August and in October/November 2015) to collect first hand data on the areas and on the two migrations. Therefore, the sources mentioned above and the Author’s visits were relied upon as major sources of data and information.

As stated earlier, in this Chapter, the pagans of Mecca resolved not only to oppose Muhammad (SAW), the Prophet of Islam, but also to destroy Islam itself before it could strike roots and become viable. They were driven by pride and by lust for power and wealth to make such a resolve against Muhammad (SAW) and Islam. With this resolution, the Quraysh and other pagans of Mecca declared their intention to fight in the defence of their idols and fetishes as well as in the defence of their economic interests and their infidel social system.

They opened the campaign against Islam by harassing and persecuting the Muslims. At the beginning, persecution was confined to jeers, jibes and insults. But as time went on, it moved from the violence of words to the violence of deeds and horrible acts and actions. They refrained from inflicting physical injury on Muhammad (SAW) for fear of provoking reprisals; but they had no inhibitions in hurting the rank-and-file Muslims who bore the brunt of the wrath of the Quraysh and their allies. But the fear of violence and torture or even execution by the opponents of Islam did not deter heroic and noble people, the lowly and the highly, males and females, the young and the old, from accepting Islam.

The persecutions became intense, and made a Hijrah to a safe Land inevitable. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) therefore commanded the first batch of Muslim Converts to go on Hijrah to HABASHA, present day Ethiopia.

TOWN OF NEGASH, WHERE THE MIGRANTS SETTLED

Negash is a town in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia, which lies along the Adigrat-Makele road (Ethiopian Highway-1). Negash is located on a mountain plateau that is 2,391.81 meters (7,892.97 feet) above sea level. One of the mountains in the Negash area, the Amba Alage, rises to 9,773 feet (about 3,000 meters) above sea level.

This Author visited Negash, Aksum and neighbouring historical places twice (in August and in October/November 2015) to collect first hand data on the areas and on the first and the second Muslim Hijrah to the Kingdom. During the first visit in August 2015, he travelled from Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital, to the medieval capital of Habasha, Aksum, by air. From Aksum, he travelled to Negash, a distance of 184 kilometres, by road. But due to the mountainous terrain of the road, it took him and his driver four

hours and eighteen minutes to cover the distance with a stop of only about 15 minutes for tea. The journey from Negash to Makele, the capital of the Tigray Region, took the Author one hour forty minutes to cover the 59 kilometres distance due to the same terrain problems. On his second visit in October to the beginning of November 2015, the Author travelled from Addis Ababa to Makele by air, and then went by road from there to Negash and back. In addition, the Author made the journey from Makele to Aksum by air and from Aksum back to Addis Ababa by air.

This Author has never travelled on such high altitudes by road, as in some areas, the car will be travelling on mountain peaks clearly very much above the clouds. At some points, the Author witnessed rains falling on some fields below the roads they were travelling on, meaning that they saw rains falling while they were above the clouds! Another interesting thing is that the topography of the Aksum and Negash areas and their distances from the Red Sea are almost the same. Both cities are located in mountainous regions and are parallel to the Red Sea ports. Both are around 200 kilometres each from the Sea. This makes speculations ripe on whether the Muslims on Hijrah met the Habasha King in Aksum or in Negash. This issue shall be treated later in this Chapter. Negash is known as the earliest Muslim settlement in Africa and the excavation of the seventh century AD cemetery inside the town's boundary has started to yield valuable historical artefacts that would certainly lead to a clearer picture of the Hijrah to Negash.

KING ARMAH, SAHAMA OR ASHAMA?

Islamic tradition avers that the King of Habasha who received the Muslim migrants is called **Aṣḥama ibn Abjar** (Arabic), the King or Emperor (Arabic: *al-Najashy*) of Aksum. Gianfranco Fiaccadori

(2005) states that the term “al-Najashi” (or al-Najashy) has the variant *al-Negashi*; which corresponds to the ancient Aksumite title “Negus” with the variant “Negash”. The name “Ashama” seems to correspond to the original Ethiopian Ge’ez language name, *Ella-Seham*, variant ***Sahama***, who was an Aksum King known from coinage discovered in the Aksum region. According to Sergew Hable Sellassie (1972, p.185), Ashama may have been the same person as King Armah or his father or his son.

King Armah, Sahama or Ashama, was renowned to be a devout Christian who upheld the tenets of Christianity as enshrined in the Holy Bible and the teachings of Jesus Christ (in Islam: Prophet “Isa” may Allah’s peace be upon him) and the teachings of the disciples of Jesus Christ. King Armah was just in his judgements, fair in his dealings, honest in his leadership, incorruptible in his transactions and a lover of peace. Those qualities endeared him to the hearts of all those who live in his Kingdom and all those who came in contact with him, or heard about him, all over East and North Africa, Arabia, Asia, etc. The Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (SAW), indentified and respected those qualities thereby sent the first and second sets of persecuted Muslims from Mecca to the King in Habasha for refuge.

WAS THE NEGUS MET IN THE CAPITAL OF AKSUM OR IN THE TOWN OF NEGASH?

As stated earlier in this Chapter, the topography of the Aksum and Negash areas and their distances from the Red Sea are almost the same. Both cities are located in mountainous regions and are parallel to the Red Sea ports. Both are around 200 kilometres each from the Sea. This makes speculations ripe on whether the Muslims on Hijrah met the Habasha King in Aksum or in Negash.

A cursory look at the map covering ancient Habasha and ancient Arabia may suggest that the most likely route to have been taken by the Mecca Muslim migrants to Habasha would have been Mecca to Jeddah by road and then crossing the Red Sea by boat/ship to Adulis. Jeddah (said to have been established as a fishing hamlet in 522 BC by the Yemeni Quda'a tribe) and Adulis (said to be one of the oldest sea ports on the Red Sea that was established around 600 BC) have been agreed by a vast majority of writers on ancient Habasha and ancient Arabia as the main Red Sea ports on the two shores of the Sea. From Adulis Port, the migrants then would have travelled by road to either Aksum or Negash to meet the Habasha King. Islamic tradition however has it that the migrants met the King in his Negash Palace.

Stuart Munro-Hay (1991) states on page 56 that Aksum has been abandoned as the capital of Aksum Kingdom by the time of Negus Armah. Page 76 of the same book states that another possibility was that, as at the time of the Muslims' migration, the capital of the Aksum Kingdom might have moved from Aksum to a new site, yet undiscovered. This seems to justify the Islamic claim that the Muslim migrants met King Armah in Negash and not in Aksum.

In a discussion with this Author on Friday, 30th October, 2015, the Chief Imam of Negash Mosque, Sheikh Muhammad Zeinu Isma'il, the elderly Chief Historian of the Mosque, Suleiman Adam and two guides, Muhammad Omar and Abdulqadir Ibrahim, narrated that the Muslim migrants met King Armah in his Negash Palace. According to them, Aksum Kings mainly lived in the City of Aksum but frequent Negash as their second command post therefore had an elaborate Palace there. In particular, King Armah was said to have had a vision/premonition that he was going to have visitors from a new religion in Arabia that is a sister to

Christianity and that he was to receive them at Negash and not at Aksum. The King therefore moved his entire Cabinet to Negash awaiting the arrival of the visitors. So, the Muslim migrants travelled from Mecca, crossing the Red Sea at Jeddah to Adulis, and then to Negash, where they met King Armah of Aksum Kingdom.

King Armah's Palace Complex in Negash is, as at October 2015, being reconstructed/renovated by the Turkish Government with the expressed approval of the Ethiopian Government and work had reached about 60% completion as at that date. The Complex under reconstruction includes the main Palace, the Grand Mosque, the Tombs of King al-Negashi and those of some of the migrants buried within the Complex precincts and the surrounding areas that housed servants and workers.

Chapter Three

THE FIRST AND SECOND HIJRAH TO NEGASH

THE FIRST HIJRAH

As the persecution became intense, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) decided that his people need to go on Hijrah to a safe place until Islam grows stronger, by the will of Allah. He therefore commanded the first batch to go on Hijrah to Habasha as follows:-

قال ابن إسحاق: فلما رأى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم، ما يصيب أصحابه من البلاء... وأنه لا يقدر أن يمنعهم مما هم فيه من البلاء، قال لهم: "لو خرجتم إلي أرض الحبشة فإن فيها ملك لا يظلم عنده أحد، وهي أرض صدق، حتى يجعل الله لكم فرجا مما أنتم فيه"

Ibn Ishaq said, when the Prophet (SAW) saw the persecution which his companions were suffering from; and that he could not protect them from being persecuted, he said to them "If you were to go to the Land of Habasha (it would be better for you), for therein is a King before whom none is treated unjustly and it is a Land of honesty, until such time as Allah shall relieve you from the distress you are in." (Ibn Hisham, Siratun Nabawiyyah, Vol.1, page 206; quoting Ibn Ishaq, Sīratu Rasūlillāh).

The Prophet (SAW) appointed Usman Bin Affan (who later became the third Caliph in Medina) as the leader of the first migrants. Usman went along with his wife, Rukayya, the daughter of the Prophet (SAW). The Prophet (SAW) urged the migrants to go in peace on that Hijrah hoping that Allah will soon bring victory to Islam and they will return home to the Holy Land of Islam. Muslim scholars generally agree that those who made the first Hijrah consisted of eleven men and four women as follows:-

1. Usman Bin Affan (leader and the third Caliph in Medina)
2. Sa'ad Bin Abi Waqqas
3. Jahsh Bin Riyab
4. Abdullah Bin Jahsh Bin Rebab Bin Yeimer
5. Abu Huzeyfa Bin Utba Bin Rebia
6. Zubair Bin Al-Awam
7. AbdurRahman Bin Awf Bin Abdawf
8. Abu Salamah Bin Abdullah Bin Abdel Asad
9. Usman Bin Mazun
10. Amir Bin Rebiah Bin Kaib Bin Malik
11. Mus'ab Bin Umair Bin Hashim
12. Rukayya, the Prophet's daughter (wife of Usman Bin Affan)
13. Ummu Salamah- (wife of Abu Salamah)
14. Sahlat Bint Suhail (wife of Abu Hudhayfa)
15. Layla Bint Abi Asmah (wife of Amir)

Equally, Muslim scholars generally agree that the first migrants travelled in the Islamic month of Rajab, during the seventh year before the commencement of the Muslim calendar that is based on the Hijrah from Mecca to Medina. That is, the first Hijrah to Negash was undertaken in Rajab, 7 BH (before Hijrah), which tallies with June/July, 615 AD.

The Hijrah was planned in absolute secrecy and therefore the migrants sneaked out of Mecca in the middle of the night in order to avoid detection by the pagan Arabs of Mecca who would surely disrupt the journey and further persecute the intending migrants. They left Mecca by road to the ancient Port of Jeddah, on the Arabian side of the Red Sea. Before reaching Jeddah, information leaked on their migration to the pagan Arabs of Mecca who

immediately organised a pursuit team that moved to stop the migration. But the migrants were lucky to find a ship that has almost fully loaded and was sailing to the then most important sea port on the Red Sea, the Port of Adulis, on the Habasha side of the Red Sea.

They immediately boarded the ship that left before the arrival of the pagan pursuers. Jeddah (said to have been established as a fishing hamlet in 522 BC by the Yemeni Quda'a tribe) and Adulis (said to be one of the oldest sea ports on the Red Sea that was established around 600 BC) have been agreed by a vast majority of writers on ancient Habasha and ancient Arabia as the main Red Sea ports on the two shores of the Sea.

From Adulis Port, the migrants travelled by road to Negash to meet the Habasha King. Islamic tradition has it that the migrants met the King in his Negash Palace and not at his Aksum Palace.

On arrival in Negash, the 15 migrants were well received by King Armah who was a fair and just Christian King whose land progressed and prospered due to his accommodating nature for indigenes and for visitors. His hospitality was shown to the 15 Muslim migrants, who clearly saw what Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said to them before departing from Mecca, that:

If you were to go to the Land of Habasha, it would be better for you, for therein is a King before whom none is treated unjustly and it is a Land of honesty, until such time as Allah (SWT) shall relieve you from the distress you are in.

The migrants were given land not far from the Palace where they settled. After some few months, the migrants received information that all the people of Mecca had accepted Islam. They therefore bade farewell to their host and returned to Mecca. When they

arrived in Mecca, they found out that Ja'afar ibn Abi-Talib and Umar ibn al-Kattab accepted Islam. The influence of those two great men of Mecca gave a great boost to the spirit of the Muslim community. Stunned by that conversion, the pagan Arabs of Mecca needed a respite to re-strategise against the Muslims. Therefore, for a time, an atmosphere of calm and restraint prevailed. That encouraged some Muslims who migrated to return to Mecca and be with their people instead of living in far way places. But after some months, the persecution of Muslims restarted with a greater vigour than before.

THE SECOND HIJRAH

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) once again told his followers, especially those who were not under the traditional Arab protection, to migrate to Habasha. That decision was encouraged by the story of the returnee-migrants who narrated the wonderful magnanimity of the Christian King Armah of Habasha. This time around, the migrants numbered more than 150 and the Prophet (SAW) gave them a Letter to the King of Habasha whom he addressed as, “*Al-Najashy, King of Habasha*”. The Letter read,

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

من محمد رسول الله إلى النجاشي ملك الحبشة

سلام عليك إني أحمد الله وأشهد أن عيسى بن مريم روح الله وكلمته ألقاها إلى مريم البتول الطيبة الحسنة فحملت به عيسى فخلق الله من روحه كما خلق آدم بيده. وإني أدعوك إلى توحيد الله وحده لا شريك له، والموالاة على طاعته وأن تتبعني، وتؤمن بالذي جئني فإني رسول الله. بعثت إليك عمي جعفر مع عدد من المسلمين فأكرم منزلهم وأحسن إليهم الضيافة إذا وصلوا. وقد بلغت ونصحت فاقبلوا نصحي والسلام على من اتبع الهدى.

In the Name of Allah (God), the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

From Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah to the Al-Al-Najashy, King of Habasha. Peace be upon you, I praise (thank) Allah (God) and I bear witness that Jesus, son of Mary, is the servant of Allah (God). He was created by the command of God and Mary the virgin, the good, the pure, conceived Jesus. As Allah (God) created Adam, He created Jesus. I call you to Allah (God), the Unique without partner, and to His obedience, and to follow me and believe in that which came to me, for I am the Messenger of Allah (God). I send to you my cousin Ja'afar with a number of Muslims, and when they come, I please ask you to entertain and receive them. Peace be upon all those who follow True Guidance.

NOTE: There are several other versions of this Letter, but having the same message.

Some scholars record that the above Letter was given by the Prophet (SAW) to the first migrants. But a close look at the Letter shows that the Prophet (SAW) states that,

*“I send to you my cousin **Ja'afar** with a number of Muslims, and when they come, I please ask you to entertain and receive them”.*

The generally accepted list of the first 15 migrants does not include the name of Ja'afar; therefore, the letter must have been given to the second migrants and not the first ones, as Ja'afar was among the second migrants.

Muslim scholars do not seem to have unanimity in a definite total number of migrants in the second Hijrah to Negash, as they did for the first Hijrah. Scholars have given numbers of new migrants ranging from 101 to 120 for the second Hijrah. When these figures are added to the 15 of the first Hijrah (who also went back for the second Hijrah) a total of between 116 and 135 migrants is expected. However, most Scholars ignore the children of the

migrants and concentrated on the adults only, thereby making the total migrants' figures lower than they actually were.

The knowledge of the exact figure of the total migrants for the Hijrah remains with Allah (SWT). This Author was however able to compile a list from the following sources:- Ibn Hisham (p.206); Ibn Ishaq (2004, pp.526 to 530), Selahadin Eshetu (2009) and Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library. The Author's final list came up with 132 males and 30 females (adults and children) for the second Hijrah, totalling 162 migrants as follows:-

Male Migrants

1. Usman Bin Affan (later the third Caliph in Medina)
2. Jafa'ar Bin Abu-Talib (holder of the Prophet's letter and group's spokesman at the King's Palace)
3. Abdullah Bin Abdel Ased Bin Hilal
4. Abdullah Bin Haris Bin Qays Bin Adey
5. Abdullah Bin Huzafah Bin Qays Bin Adey
6. Abdullahi Bin Jahsh
7. Abdullah Bin Jahsh Bin Rebab Bin Yeimer
8. Abdullah Bin Makharamah Bin Abduluzza
9. Abdullah Bin Mas'ood Bin Gafil Bin Hubeyb
10. Abdullah Bin Mazoon Al-Jumi (brother of Uthman).
11. Abdullah Bin Meziun Bin Habib Bin Wehib
12. Abdullah Bin Mugerah Bin Muaykeb
13. Abdullah Bin Sahil Bin Amr
14. Abdullah Bin Sufyan (nephew of Abu Salama).
15. Abdullah Bin Suhayl Al-Amiri Bin Luayy.
16. AbdurRahman Bin Awf Az-Zuhri

17. Abu Fekiha Mewla Bin Abdedar
18. Abu Hatib Bin Amr Bin Abdshams (he was the first to arrive in Habasha)
19. Abu Huzeyfa Bin Utba Bin Rebia Bin Abd Shams (brother of Abu Sufyan's wife, Hind Bint Utba)
20. Abu Musa Abdullah Bin Qays al-Ashaari
21. Abu Qays Bin Hirs Bin Qays Bin Adiy Bin Seid
22. Abu Rum Bin Umeyr Bin Hashim Bin Abdmenaf
23. Abu Sabra Bin Abi Ruhm Bin Abdel Uzza
24. Abu Salamah Abdullah Bin Abdul Asad
25. Abu Ubayda Bin Al-Jarrah Al-Harithi
26. Abul-Rum BinUmayr Al-Abduldari.
27. Adiy Bin Nedlah Bin Abdeluzza Bin Harsan
28. Al-Haris Bin Abdu Qays Al-Harithi (brother of Sa'ad)
29. Al-Haris Bin Al-Haris Al Sahmi
30. Al-Haris Bin Hatib Al-Jumi (son of Hatib).
31. Al-Haris Bin Khalid al-Taymi
32. Al-Haris Bin Khalid Bin Suhir
33. Al-Miqdad Bin Amr Al-Bahri
34. Amir Bin Abdullah Bin Al-Jerrah Bin Hilal
35. Amir Bin Malik Bin Uhaib Bin Abdmenaf
36. Amir Bin Rebiah Bin Kaib Bin Malik
37. Amir Bin Abi Waqqas Al-Zuhri.
38. Ammar Bin Yasir Bin Amir Bin Malik Bin Kinanar
39. Amr Bin Abi Sarh al-Harithi Bin Fihir.
40. Amr Bin Jahm (son of Jahm and Umm Harmala).
41. Amr Bin Said Bin Al-As Bin Umayya

42. Amr Bin Umeya Bin Huweylid Bin Abdelah
43. Amr Bin Usman Bin Keib Bin Seid Al-Taymi
44. Arbed Bin Humeyr
45. Aswad Bin Nawfal Al-Asadi
46. Ayyad Bin Zehir Bin Abi Shedad Bin Rebiah
47. Ayyash Bin Abi Rabea al-Makhzumi.
48. Ayyash Bin Amr
49. Bashir Bin Al-Haris Al-Sahmi
50. Firas Bin Nadir Bin Haris Bin Ilkima Bin Kuldah
51. Habbar Bin Sufyan Al-Makhzumi (nephew of Abu Salama).
52. Haibar Bin Sufian Bin Abdel Asad Bin Hilal
53. Hajaj Bin Haris Bin Qays
54. Halid Bin Hazam Bin Huweylid
55. Halid Bin Seid Ibnul-Aas
56. Haris Bin Abd Bin Qays
57. Hatib Bin Al-Haris Al-Jumi (brother of Hattab)
58. Hatib Bin Amr Al-Amiri (brother of Salit and Sakran).
59. Hatib Bin Amr Bin Abdushams
60. Hattab Bin Al-Haris Al-Jumi (brother of Hatib).
61. Hisham Bin Abi Huzayfa Bin Mahishem Bin Mugira
62. Hisham Bin Al-As Bin Wail Bin Hisham
63. Hunais Bin Huzafa Bin Qays
64. Iyad Bin Zuhayr Al-Harithi
65. Jabir Bin Sufyan Al-Jumi (son of Sufyan and Hasana).
66. Jahm Bin Qays Bin Abduldari
67. Jahsh Bin Riyab

68. Junada Bin Sufyan Al-Jumi (son of Sufyan and Hasana).
69. Khalid Bin Said Al-Umayyi (brother of Amr).
70. Khuzayma Bin Jahm (son of Jahm and Umm Harmala).
71. Kudamah Bin Mezun Bin Habib
72. Ma'amar Bin Abdullah Al-Adawi.
73. Ma'amar Bin Al-Haris Al-Sahmi.
74. Mahmiya Bin Al-Jazu Al-Zubaydi
75. Maimar Bin Abdelah Bin Nedlah Bin Abdel Uzaz
76. Maimea Bin Al-Hirs Bin Qays
77. Malik Bin Wehib Bin Abdemenaf
78. Malik Bin Zama'a Al-Amiri (brother of Sawda).
79. Malik Bin Zemah Bin Qays Bin Abdushams
80. Mikdad Bin Amr Bin Seileba Bin Malik
81. Muattib Bin Awf Bin Amir Bin Al-Fedl
82. Muaykib Ibn Abi Fatimat
83. Muhammad Bin Hatib Al-Jumi (son of Hatib).
84. Muhamyia Bin Juzi Bin Abdyegus
85. Mus'ab Bin Umair Bin Hashim
86. Mutallib Bin Azhar Bin Abdawf
87. Muwayqib Bin Abi Fatima
88. Nebih Bin Usman Bin Rabiah
89. Nu'uman Bin Adiy (son of Adiy).
90. Qays Bin Abdullah
91. Qays Bin Huzafah Bin Qays Bin Ady
92. Qudama Bin Mazoon (brother of Usman)
93. Sa'ad Bin Abdu Qays al-Harithi

94. Sa'ad Bin Abi Waqqas
95. Sa'ad Bin Khawla
96. Sahl Bin Wehib Bin Rabiah Bin Amr
97. Saib Bin Al-Harith Al-Sahmi.
98. Saib Bin Mezur Bin Habib
99. Saib Bin Usman (son of Usman).
100. Said Bin Abdeyn Qays Bin Lukeyt
101. Said Bin Al-Haris Bin Qays Bin Seid
102. Said Bin Amir At-Temimiy
103. Said Bin Hewla Bin Amir
104. Sakran Bin Amr (brother of Salit).
105. Sakran Bin Amr Bin Abdushams
106. Salama Bin Hisham (son of Hisham).
107. Salit Bin Amr Bin Abdushams
108. Shammās Bin Usman Bin Sherid Bin Haremiyi
109. Shejai Bin Abi Wehib Bin Wehib Bin Rabia
110. Shurahbil Bin Abdullah Al-Ghauthi
111. Sufyan Bin Amir Bin Rezik
112. Sufyan Bin Ma'amar Al-Jumi
113. Suhayl Bin Bayda Al-Harithi Bin Fihri.
114. Suweybit Bin Said Bin Hermelah Bin Malik
115. Talib Bin Azhar Bin Abd
116. Temin Bin Al-Haris
117. Tulayb Bin Umayr Bin Wehil Bin Abd
118. Ubaydulah Bin Jahsh Bin Rebab
119. Umar Bin Abi Serh Bin Rabiah

120. Umar Bin Reyab Bin Huzeyfah
121. Umar Bin Sufian Bin Abdelased
122. Umar Bin Umeya Bin Hirs
123. Urwat Bin Asaseh Bin Abduluzza
124. Usman Bin Abd Bin Genem Bin Zehir
125. Usman Bin Abdu Ghanm Al-Harithi
126. Usman Bin Mazoon (uncle of Hafsa Bint Umar)
127. Usman Bin Rabiah Bin Ahban Bin Wehib
128. Usman Bin Sherid Bin Suweyd
129. Utbat Bin Gezwan Bin Jebir Bin Wehif
130. Utbat Bin Mas'ood d Bin Gafil Bin Habib
131. Yazid Bin Zama'a Bin Al-Aswed Bin Mutallib Al-Asadi
132. Zubair Bin Al-Awwam Al-Asadi

Female Migrants

1. Rukayya, the Prophet's daughter (wife of Usman Bin Affan)
2. Amra Bint Saadi Al-Amiriya (wife of Malik Bin Zama'a).
3. Asma'u Bint Salama Bin Mehrem Bin Jendel
4. Asma'u Bint Umeys (wife of Ja'afar Bin Abi Talib)
5. Barakat Bint Yasir (wife of Qays Bin Abdullah)
6. Fakiha Bint Yasir
7. Fatimat Bint Al-Mujelil (wife of Hatib Bin Al-Haris)
8. Fatimat Bint Sofwan (wife of Amr Bin Seid)
9. Fukayha Bint Yasar (wife of Hattab Bin Al-Haris)
10. Hamiyat Bint Khalid
11. Hamnat Bint Jehsh Bin Rebab
12. Hasana Ummu Shurehbil (wife of Sufyan Bin Ma'amar)

13. Hawlat Bint Aswed Bin Huzeyman
14. Layla Bint Abi Asmah (wife of Amir Bin Rebiah)
15. Qehtom Bint Alkemah Bin Abdelah Bin Abikeys
16. Ramlah Bint Abi Awf (wife of Muttalib Bin Azhar)
17. Ramlah Bint Abu Sufyan Bin Sohir Bin Harb
18. Rayta Bint Al-Harith (wife of Al-Harith Bin Khalid)
19. Sahlat Bint Suhail Bin Amr
20. Sawda Bint Zama'a (wife of Sakran Bin Amr Al-Amiri)
21. Shelet Bint Seid (wife of Abu Huzeyfa)
22. Umeyma Bint Halef (wife of Khalid Bin Said)
23. Ummu Aymen Barakat Alhabeshiya
24. Ummu Habiba Bint Abi Sufyan (wife of Ubaydullah Bin Jahsh)
25. Ummu Harmala bint Abdul Aswad (wife of Jahm Bin Qays)
26. Ummu Kulsum Bint Suhail (wife of Abu Sabra Bin Abi Ruhm)
27. Ummu Salamah Hind Bint Abi Umeyah (wife of Abu Salamah)
28. Ummu Yakezot Bint Alkima
29. Umra Bint Sedy Bin Wekdan Bin Abdshems
30. Zainab Bint Jehsh Bin Reyyab

The second Hijrah had a large number of migrants who followed the same route with the migrants of the first Hijrah. Indeed, the travel was smooth as those who undertook the first Hijrah became effective guides to the new migrants. On arrival in Negash, and just as he did to the first migrants, the 162 migrants were well received by King Armah. His hospitality was shown to the 162 migrants, who he settled not far from the Negash Palace.

Negus *Al-Ashama*, King Armah of Aksum, *al-Najashy* of Habasha, received the letter from Prophet Muhammad (SAW) that

was read and translated to him by the Palace interpreters. He expressed his happiness that a religion has emerged in Arabia that preaches the Oneness of God just as his religion of Christianity does. He stated that he preferred to interact and deal with those who believe in, and worship one God than with those who believe in, and worship hundreds of gods that they “created” themselves!

The migration of the Muslims to the Aksum Kingdom, and their warm reception at the friendly Court of that Kingdom, frightened the Pagan Arab Rulers of Mecca. They entertained the fear that the Muslims might grow in strength, or find powerful allies, and then, some day, might return to Mecca to challenge and crush them. They further expressed the fear that if such a ruler as that of the Aksum Kingdom welcomed the Muslims it would give credence to the new religion of Islam and legitimise it. They planned to convince the King to expel the Muslims by giving him expensive gifts, and by spreading gossip and slander about the new religion and the immigrants. To ward-off this potential threat, such as they saw it, they finally decided to send an Embassy to the Court of the King of Aksum to try to persuade him to extradite the Muslims back to Mecca.

Many writers gave an imagery of what might have transpired at one of the meetings of the pagan leaders of Mecca (said to have been held in Abu Sufyan’s house) as follows:-

Abu Sufyan (one of the Senior Chiefs) said: *But what shall we do to those who escaped from Mecca and went to Habasha?*

Abu Jahal (a fierce opponent of Islam) said: *We'll bring them back.*

Abu Sufyan asked: *How?*

Abu Jahal answered: *We'll send to our friend, the Negus, lots of gifts. So, he'll accept our request.*

Abu Sufyan asked: *Who will go?*

Abu Jahal answered: *We'll send a clever man to negotiate with the Negus.*

After several weeks of debates and planning, the pagan leaders of Mecca thought out a plan, and made ready a quantity of presents of a kind that the leaders of Habasha were known to value most. Leatherwork they prized above all, so a large number of fine skins were collected, enough to make a rich bribe for every one of the Negus's Generals and Courtiers. There were also rich gifts for the Negus himself.

Three men were carefully chosen for the assignment. They were Amr bin al-As (the leader), Abdallah bin Abi Rebiah and Amarah bin al-Waleed. The three, along with members of their entourage who carried the gifts, set out for Habasha from Mecca. They followed a familiar sea/land route as the people of Habasha were trading partners with Mecca and the Habasha King was a good friend of the leaders of Mecca, a friendship they wanted to exploit to bring back the Muslim migrants.

The websites, ezsoftech.com and cyberistan.org gave a graphic picture of what transpired at the Palace of the King of Aksum at Negash between the King, the migrants and the Mecca emissaries. According to the websites and other sources mentioned earlier, when the emissaries arrived at Negash, they first met the King's Generals and Courtiers, gave them their gifts and explained their missions. Amr bin al-As told the Generals and the Courtiers that,

Some foolish young men and women of our people have taken refuge in this Kingdom. They have left their own religion, not for yours, but for one they have invented; one that is unknown to us and to you. The nobles have sent us to your King on their account,

that he may send them home. So when we speak to him about them tomorrow, please counsel him to deliver them into our hands and have no words with them.

After securing a firm support from the Generals and the Courtiers, Amr bin al-As and his delegation headed to the King's Palace in the morning. Amr bin al-As said to the guards of the Palace that they were delegates from Mecca, holding gifts for the King. They were granted audience and the Negus greeted them and acknowledged the friendship between him and the leaders of Mecca and asked the delegates about the purpose of their visit. Amr bin al-As said that the Muslims in Abyssinia were not refugees from persecution but were fugitives from justice and law, and requested the King to extradite them to Mecca. Amr bin al-As added that,

Some foolish persons have taken refuge in your land of Habasha. They have abandoned their fathers' and grandfathers' religion. They haven't accepted your religion. Rather; they've brought a new religion. Neither you nor we have known it. We represent the Mecca noblemen and have come to bring them back and to educate them.

The Generals and Courtiers were present at the audience, and with one voice they urged the Negus to comply with the request of the emissaries and give up the refugees, arguing that kinsmen are the best judges of the affairs of their kinsmen. But the Negus, being fair and just, disagreed and said,

No, by God, they shall not be betrayed. A people who have sought my protection and made my country their abode and chosen me above all others! Give them up I will not, until I have summoned them and questioned them concerning what these men say of them.

If it be as they have said, then will I deliver them to them, that they may restore them to their own people. But if not, then will I be their good protector so long as they seek my protection.

The King sent for the Muslim migrants, and at the same time assembled his Bishops, who brought with them their sacred books and spread them open round the Throne Room. Amr bin al-As and his fellow envoys from Mecca had hoped to prevent the meeting between the Negus and the refugees, but they failed. It was certainly in their interests to prevent it, even more so than they realised. This is because Habasha is the first Kingdom in the World to proclaim Christianity as its official State Religion and the Negus they met and his people were devout Christians who worship One God, and they carried in their flesh the sacrament of Eucharist. As such they were sensitive to the difference between the sacred and the profane, and they were keenly conscious of the profanity of men like Amr bin al-As who worship hundreds of “gods”. So, the Negus and his Bishops clearly saw the impression of Holy earnestness and depth which was made on them by the company of Muslim believers who were now ushered into the Throne Room. A murmur of wonderment arose from the Bishops and others as they recognised that here were men and women more akin to themselves than the pagan Arabs of Mecca, who they had previously encountered.

It should be pointed out that it was not all the migrants who had to migrate as a necessity. Usman bin Affan had his traditional Arab clan’s protection and his family tried to stop him from the journey, but the Prophet (SAW) allowed him to go and to take with him his wife, Ruqayyah, the Prophet’s daughter. Their presence was a source of strength and inspiration to the community of migrants. Another couple that did not need to migrate was that of Ja’afar bin

Abu Talib and his wife Asma'u. They were well protected in Mecca by Ja'afar's father, Abu Talib; but the migrants needed a spokesman and Ja'afar was an eloquent speaker. It was Ja'far who was chosen to speak on behalf of the migrants.

When the Muslim migrants entered the Throne Room of the Palace, with Ja'far bin Abu Talib leading, they stood in front of the King while the Habasha subjects and the pagan delegates from Mecca bowed to the King. The Muslims did not bow; their heads remained raised.

The King asked the Muslims: *Why don't you bow to me?*

Ja'far answered: *Your majesty, we don't bow to anyone but to Allah, the One God.*

The King asked: *What do you mean? Who is that Allah Who you labelled as, "One God?"*

Ja'afar answered: *Your Majesty, Allah has sent us an Apostle. The Apostle has ordered us not to bow to anyone but Allah. He has also ordered us to pray to Allah and to pay Zakat.*

Amr bin al-As said with evil intention: *They are breaking their forefathers' and the King's religions!*

The King asked Amr to keep quiet and asked the group of Muslims why they had chosen this new religion rather than adhere to the religion of their forefathers or embrace the established religion of Christianity, to which he belonged. Ja'afar bin Abu Talib said,

O! Your Majesty, we used to be a people of ignorance. We worshipped idols, ate dead animals, committed great sins, severed family relations, and the strong among us belittled the weak. We were like that until God sent from among us a Prophet who was known for his noble descent, honesty, trustworthiness, and

decency. He invited us to worship God alone and abstain from worshipping idols made of woods and stones by human beings.

He ordered us to speak nothing but the truth and to render back our trusts to those to whom they are due. Moreover, he ordered us to keep our ties of kinship intact, be good to our neighbours, and abstain from what is forbidden. He also ordered us not to commit evil, nor to say false statements, nor to eat up the property of orphans, nor to accuse chaste men and women of wrong-doing without proof or witness. He has commanded us to worship God alone and not to associate anything with Him and to pray and to give Zakat.

Hence, we believed in the Prophet and in God's message to him. We worship God alone. We rejected that which we used to associate with Him as His partners. We consider unlawful what the Prophet has told us is unlawful and lawful what he has told us is lawful.

For this reason alone our people have attacked us, tortured us and wanted to force us out of our religion. They intend to make us revert to the worship of idols instead of One God. They want us to consider lawful the evil actions which we used to do in the past.

When they tortured us and harmed us, and came between us and our religion, we left for your Kingdom where no one is wronged, choosing you because we need your protection. We hope that we would be treated fairly and justly while we are with you, O fair and just King!

The King listened with patience and rapt attention and further asked Ja'afar whether he had anything sent down from God to their Prophet. Ja'afar answered by quoting some verses from the Glorious Qur'an as follows:-

قُلْ يَاعِبَادِ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمْ ۚ لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ ۗ وَأَرْضُ اللَّهِ وَاسِعَةٌ ۗ إِنَّمَا يُوَفَّى الصَّابِرُونَ أَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

Say (O Muhammad): "O My (God's) servants who believe (in the Oneness of God), be afraid of Your Lord (God) and keep your duty to Him. Good is (the reward) for those who do good in this World, and Allah's Earth is spacious (so if you cannot worship Allah at a place, then go to another place)! Only those who are patient shall receive their rewards in full, without reckoning. (Quran 39:10)

وَلَتَجِدَنَّ أَقْرَبَهُم مَّوَدَّةَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّا نَصْرِي ۚ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَسِيسِينَ ۚ وَرُهْبَانًا ءَانَهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ

And you will find the nearest in love to the believers (Muslims) are those who say: "We are Christians". That is because amongst them are Priests and Monks, and they are not arrogant (they do not reject the Truth). (Quran 5:82)

Ja'afar stated that the first verse of the Glorious Qur'an above makes Muslims to go on migration, if necessary. The second verse makes Muslims to love Christians because Islam prescribes to Muslims to have a deep affection for Jesus Christ as they do for all of God's Prophets. This point made the King, his Bishops and other Palace Officials to understand how close the two religions of Islam and Christianity are; as against Christianity and idol worship. The King then asked if the migrant Muslims had with them any Revelation that their Prophet had brought for them from God concerning Jesus Christ. When Ja'far answered that they had, the King said, "Then recite the Revelation to me".

Ja'afar recited Verses 16-34 (areas that spoke of Mary (Maryam,) and Jesus) from the Chapter of the Qur'an named after Mary (Arabic: Maryam), a Chapter that had been revealed to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) by God shortly before the departure of the migrants from Mecca to Negash. (Qur'an 19:16-34).

وَأَذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَرْيَمَ إِذِ انْتَبَذَتْ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا مَكَانًا شَرْقِيًّا ﴿١٦﴾ فَاتَّخَذَتْ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ حِجَابًا فَأَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهَا رُوحَنَا فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرًا سَوِيًّا ﴿١٧﴾ قَالَتْ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِالرَّحْمَنِ مِنْكَ إِنْ كُنْتَ تَقِيًّا ﴿١٨﴾ قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَنَا رَسُولُ رَبِّكِ لِأَهَبَ لَكِ غُلَامًا زَكِيًّا ﴿١٩﴾ قَالَتْ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَلَمْ يَمَسِّنِي بَشَرٌ وَلَمْ أَكُ بَغِيًّا ﴿٢٠﴾ قَالَ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ رَبُّكَ هُوَ عَلَى هَيْنٌ ۖ وَلَنَجْعَلُكَ آيَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَرَحْمَةً مِنَّا ۖ وَكَانَ أَمْرًا مَقْضِيًّا ﴿٢١﴾ ۖ فَحَمَلَتْهُ فَانْتَبَذَتْ بِهِ مَكَانًا قَصِيًّا ﴿٢٢﴾ فَأَجَاءَهَا الْمَخَاضُ إِلَى جِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ قَالَتْ يَلَيْتَنِي مِتُّ قَبْلَ هَذَا وَكُنْتُ نَسِيًّا مَنْسِيًّا ﴿٢٣﴾ فَنَادَاهَا مِنْ تَحْتِهَا أَلَّا تَحْزَنِي قَدْ جَعَلَ رَبُّكِ تَحْتَكِ سَرِيًّا ﴿٢٤﴾ وَهَزِيءَ إِلَيْكَ بِجِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ تُسْقِطُ عَلَيْكَ رَطْبًا جَنِيًّا ﴿٢٥﴾ فَكُلِي وَاشْرَبِي وَقَرِّي عَيْنًا ۖ فَمَا تَرَيْنَ مِنَ الْبَشَرِ أَحَدًا فَقُولِي إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ صَوْمًا فَلَنْ أُكَلِّمَ الْيَوْمَ إِنْسِيًّا ﴿٢٦﴾ فَأَتَتْ بِهِ قَوْمَهَا تَحْمِلُهُ ۖ قَالُوا يَمْرَأَتُ لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْئًا فَرِيًّا ﴿٢٧﴾ يَأْخُذُ هَرُونَ مَا كَانَ أَبُوكَ أَمْرًا سَوَاءً وَمَا كَانَتْ أُمُّكَ بَغِيًّا ﴿٢٨﴾ فَأَشَارَتْ إِلَيْهِ ۖ قَالُوا كَيْفَ نُكَلِّمُ مَنْ كَانَ فِي الْمَهْدِ صَبِيًّا ﴿٢٩﴾ قَالَ

إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ ءَاتَنِي الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيًّا ﴿١٦﴾ وَجَعَلَنِي مُبَارَكًا أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُ
 وَأَوْصَنِي بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ مَا دُمْتُ حَيًّا ﴿١٧﴾ وَبَرًّا بِوَالِدَتِي وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْنِي
 جَبَّارًا شَقِيًّا ﴿١٨﴾ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيَّ يَوْمَ وُلِدْتُ وَيَوْمَ أَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ أُبْعَثُ حَيًّا
 ﴿١٩﴾ ذَلِكَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ ۚ قَوْلَ الْحَقِّ الَّذِي فِيهِ يَمْتَرُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾

16. And mention In the Book (the Qur'an, O Muhammad), the story of Maryam (Mary), when she withdrew in seclusion from her family to a place facing east.

17. She placed a screen (to screen herself) from them; then We (God) sent to her Our Ruh (Angel Gabriel), and he appeared before her in the form of a man in all respects.

18. She said: "Verily! I seek Refuge with the Most Beneficent from you, if you do fear God".

19. (The angel) said: "I am only a Messenger from your Lord, (to announce) to you the gift of a righteous son".

20. She said: "How can I have a son, when no man has touched me, nor am I unchaste?"

21. He said: "So (it will be), your Lord said: "That is easy for Me (God): and We (God) shall appoint him (the son) as a sign to mankind and a Mercy from Us (God), and it is a matter (already) decreed, (by God)".

22. So she conceived him (Isa - Jesus), and she withdrew with him to a far place (i.e. Bethlehem valley about 8 kilometres from Jerusalem).

23. *And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a date-palm. She said: "Would that I had died before this, and had been forgotten and out of sight!"*

24. *Then (a voice) calls her from below her, saying: "Grieve not! Your Lord has provided a water stream under you."*

25. *"And shake the trunk of the date-palm towards you; it will let fall fresh ripe-dates upon you."*

26. *"So eat and drink and be glad, and if you see any human being, say: "Verily! I have vowed a fast to the Most Beneficent (God) so I shall not speak to any human being this day".*

27. *Then (after giving birth) she brought him (the baby) to her people, carrying him. They said: "O Mary! Indeed you have brought a thing Fariya (an unheard of, mighty thing)."*

28. *"O sister of Haroon (Aaron - not the brother of Moses)! Your father was not a man who used to commit adultery, nor was your mother an unchaste woman."*

29. *Then she pointed at him (the baby). They said: "How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle?"*

30. *He (the child, Isa - Jesus) said: "Verily! I am a servant of God. He has given me the Scripture and made me a Prophet."*

31. *"And He has made me blessed where ever I be, and has enjoined on me Salat (prayer), and Zakat (poor-dues), as long as I live."*

32. *"And (He instructed me to be) dutiful to my mother, and (He) made me not arrogant, unblessed."*

33. *"And Salaam (peace) be upon me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive (in the Hereafter)!"*

34. *Such is Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary). (It is) a statement of truth, about which they (unbelievers, pagans) doubt (or dispute).*

The King stood up from his Throne and said humbly, *“Certainly these Words and the Words Jesus had brought, came out of the same source”*.

He then turned to the pagan Mecca delegates and said angrily, *“I won't hand them to you and I'll give them every protection. They are safe in my Land. Not for mountains of gold would I harm a single one of them or hand him or her to you!”*

Thereafter he ordered his guards to dismiss the Mecca delegation and to return their gifts to them, saying, *“These gifts are bribes. I don't want to be bribed. I don't take bribes”*.

He turned to Ja'afar and his Muslim group and said, *“You are welcome; Your Prophet is welcome. I admit that he is the Apostle whom Jesus had given good news about. Live wherever you like in my country”*.

But when they had withdrawn from the Royal Palace to their place of aboard, Amr bin al-As said to his companions that, *“Tomorrow I will tell the King a thing that shall tear up this green growing prosperity of theirs by the roots. I will tell him that they say that Jesus the son of Mary is a slave and not a son of God”*.

So, the next morning the Mecca delegates went to the Palace and sought for an audience with the King again.

The King was very happy with the Muslim migrants who worship One God and whose religion of Islam he saw as being extremely close to his religion of Christianity. In contrast, he was annoyed with the Arab pagans who worship hundreds of idols that they created themselves. Nevertheless, in his magnanimity, fairness and

justice, he allowed audience to the Mecca delegates. When they entered, Amr bin al-As said to the King,

O King, the Muslims utter an enormous lie about Jesus Christ. They call him a slave and not the son of God. But do send for them, and ask them what they say of him.

The King sent for the Muslim migrants and when they entered the royal presence, the King asked them:

What do you say of Jesus Christ, the son of Mary?

Ja'afar answered:

We say of him what our Prophet brought to us, that he is the servant of God and His Messenger and His Spirit and His Word which He cast unto Mary the blessed virgin.

The King kept silent for a while, and then he picked his Royal Staff and drew a thin line on the floor with it and said,

Jesus Christ exceeded not what you have said by the length of this stick. Your religion and mine are only as thinly apart as this thin line! Therefore go to your abodes. You are safe in my country. Stay as long as you like.

That ended the pagan Mecca delegates' plots in shame. The delegates hopelessly and hurriedly rushed back to Mecca in disgrace, carrying their "bribes" back as nobody wanted to accept what the King had rejected. They related what happened to their principals in Mecca who were dumbfounded, confused, annoyed and who muttered that,

So Muhammad is also destabilising our foreign trade and social alliances. This is serious. Something drastic must be done to stop him and his followers from further damage.

Chapter Four

THE AFTERMATH OF THE HIJRAH

Ibn Ishaq (trans. 2004, pp. 146 to 169) relates that the migrant Muslims were given lands around Negash town where they built their dwellings and lived peacefully and unmolested for a number of years. They worked hard on farms and on trades where they prospered and fended for themselves. They continued to practice Islam as they were taught before leaving Mecca. They received new revelations through emissaries who were sent to them by Prophet Muhammad (SAW) from time to time.

During that period, Islam was gaining more converts in and around Mecca, but the persecution did not stop. Nevertheless, Muhammad (SAW) continued with his mission as ordained by Allah (SWT). That situation continued unabated up to the time Allah (SWT) instructed Muhammad (SAW) and his followers to migrate to Medina some 400 kilometres from Mecca. That migration (in 622 AD), the third in Islamic history, marked the beginning of the Islamic calendar - After Hijrah (AH).

In the seventh year after Hijrah to Medina (7 AH - 629 AD), when Islam had gained strong hold of the Mecca-Medina areas, the majority of Muslim emigrants in Habasha returned to Arabia, not to Mecca but to Medina, the then Capital of the Islamic State. Even though the migrants were very comfortable in Habasha, many of them wanted to return home and directly learn more of Islam. Several of those who returned to Medina were made close *Sahabah* (Companions of the Prophet) who served well in the propagation of Islam. Some other migrants decided to stay in Habasha where they and their descendants embarked on the propagation of Islam, particularly in East Africa and generally on the African continent.

KEY PAGAN PLAYERS IN THE HIJRAH TO NEGASH WHO CONVERTED TO ISLAM!

The plot to send emissaries to King Armah of Habasha by the leaders of pagan Mecca was hatched in the house of Abu Sufyan, one of the very Senior Chiefs of Mecca. The person chosen to lead the delegation to Habasha was Amr bin al-As, a very eloquent senior member of the Mecca ruling class. These two major antagonists of Islam and major players in the deputation to Negash later converted from idol worship to the religion of Islam and served as strong and influential commanders in the defence and propagation of the religion they once wanted to destroy!

Abu Sufyan (560 - 650 AD), was a leader of the Quraysh of Mecca, the most powerful tribe in Arabia to which Prophet Muhammad (SAW) belonged. Just like most influential leaders in Mecca, Abu Sufyan was a staunch opponent of Muhammad (SAW) and the religion of Islam. He not only led in the persecution of Muslims in Mecca, but led the meeting that approved the sending of emissaries to Habasha. When the Muslims migrated to Medina in the first year of the Hijrah (622 AD), Abu Sufyan led in the confiscation of all the properties left behind by the Muslims in Mecca.

After several years of confrontation with the Muslims, their peaceful nature and their magnanimity even in the face of wars waged against them touched the heart of Abu Sufyan. He wondered how a people he and the pagans of Mecca vehemently opposed, persecuted and confiscated their properties would temper justice with mercy on the pagans whenever they triumph in any war waged against them by the pagans. He left Mecca for Medina on horseback wondering what would happen to him on the way or

at Medina. He arrived in Medina without any molestation on the 400 km way. He expected to be executed for his atrocities against the Muslims, but on the contrary, he was well received by Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Therefore he immediately accepted Islam in Medina. He later became a strong Muslim commander who assisted in the propagation of Islam.

Abu Sufyan died at the age of about ninety in 650 AD at Medina and Usman bin Affan (RLA), who was the third Caliph, led the funeral prayer over his dead body.

Amr bin al-As (585 - January 6, 664 AD) was of the Banu Sahl clan of the powerful Quraysh tribe. Like the other Quraysh Chiefs, Amr bin al-As opposed Islam in the early days and even led the delegation to Habasha that tried to convince King Armah to return the Muslims who went to that Kingdom on Hijrah. After the mission failed and the King of Habasha refused to oblige the Meccan request, the disappointed Amr bin al-As returned to Mecca.

In the eighth year after Hijrah (629 AD), Amr bin al-As was attracted by the Hudaibiyya Peace Accord that clearly did not favour the Muslims but that which Muhammad (SAW) signed just for peace to rein. After the agreement was dishonoured by the Meccans and they waged wars against the Muslims, Amr bin al-As assessed the magnanimity of the Muslims, particularly the way they were treating the Meccan enemies during and/or after wars. He noted that the Muslims never started any of the wars fought, as they were always attacked first and they were always on the defensive. Despite all that, and as Allah willed, the Muslims mostly won the wars. He was taken in by the love, kindness and non-arrogance of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) despite the clear

successes being recorded by Muslims. Amr bin al-As therefore rode in company of Khalid bin al-Walid, from Mecca to Medina where both of them converted to Islam.

Amr bin al-As became a very senior member of the Muslim leadership who led Muslims to establish an Islamic State in Egypt. In the year 641 AD, he established Muslim Headquarters on the eastern side of the Nile, near the Babylon Fortress of Old Cairo.

Amr bin al-As died in Egypt on January 6th 664 AD, at the age of about 80 years, during the reign of Caliph Mu'awiyah.

Chapter Five

THE TOWN OF NEGASH TODAY

The Author wishes to give an account, in this Chapter, of what he saw at Negash town and what discussions and interviews he held with the Chief Imam and other officials of Negash Mosque and other persons in the vicinity. He gives the account in a narrative form that is most suited for such reports.

I visited Negash, Aksum and neighbouring historical places twice (in August and in October/November 2015) to collect first hand data on the areas and on the two migrations. During my first visit in August 2015, I travelled from Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital, to the medieval capital of Habasha, Aksum, by air. From Aksum, I travelled to Negash, a distance of 184 kilometres, by road. But due to the mountainous terrain it took me and my driver four hours and eighteen minutes to cover the distance with a stop of only about 15 minutes to rest over some cups of tea.

The journey from Negash to Makele, the capital of the Tigray Region, took me and the driver one hour forty minutes to cover the 59 kilometres distance due to the same terrain problems. On my second visit in October/November 2015, I travelled from Addis Ababa to Makele by air; and then went by road from there to Negash and back. This time around, I made the journey from Makele to Aksum by air and from Aksum back to Addis Ababa by air. I saw, during my two visits, that the plateau that houses Negash town has an imposing walled compound roughly located in the centre of the town. Immediately inside the compound, stands a Mosque where the first Mosque in Africa once stood. On the extreme west of the compound stands the tomb said to be that of King Armah and twelve of the early migrants. On the western and

northern sloppy sides of the compound are several graves of early migrants, their family members and their descendants. On the southern part of the plateau (facing the Mosque) is a sprawling structure under construction said to have been the Palace of the King where he received the migrants and where the debate between them and the pagan Mecca delegates was said to have taken place.

As at the time of my two visits, in August and in October/November 2015 respectively, all the buildings were under reconstruction or renovation that was being undertaken by the Turkish Government after an expressed approval by the Ethiopian Government. Mr. Abadi and Mr. Ataklti, who were both from the Travel Agency that handled my visits, served as my official guides at Aksum and Makele and served as interpreters in Negash. They were not Muslims so did not understand the history of Negash.

But as interpreters, they did well in all respects as the Muslim guides at the Negash Islamic Compound mainly spoke in the native language that was translated to me in the English language by the two official guides. However, the Chief Imam of the Negash Mosque, Sheikh Muhammad Zeinu Isma'il, a descendant of one of the migrants, mostly spoke in Arabic, which I have some understanding of. On arrival at the Negash Islamic Compound, I was joined by three Muslim guides, the very elderly Suleiman Adam (leader), Muhammad Umar and Abdulqadir Ibrahim. They received me at the gate that is partially closed due to the massive reconstruction and renovation of the entire Compound being undertaken by the Turkish Government.

The Muslim guides immediately led me to the farthest western end of the compound, walking on the new pavement and passing

graveyards on our right hand and virgin land that is over grown with cactus plants on our left hand and ending at a modest square building with a low dome at its centre. The building has just been renovated with new cement plaster, awaiting painting. This is the Mausoleum. In that building is a long Tomb that was covered in a maroon coloured cloth. The Muslim guides explained that the long Tomb encases the graves of King Armah of Habasha, known in Islamic tradition as “Ashama ibn Abjar”, and the graves of twelve (12) of the Muslims who made it to the first and second Hijrah to Habasha. The migrants are called the “*Sahaba*” in Arabic, meaning “the companions” of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). At this point, we were joined by the Chief Imam of the Negash Mosque, Sheikh Muhammad Zeinu Isma’il.

I made all attempts to get the full names of the 12 migrants buried in the Mausoleum, but the Chief Imam, the Muslim guides and about six other residents who joined us could only give the names of seven of the migrants as follows (note that their possible names as appeared on the list of migrants are given in brackets):-

1. Mousa bin Haris (perhaps Ma’amar Bin Al-Haris)
2. Hatif (perhaps Hatib Bin Al-Haris Al-Jumi)
3. Hatif (perhaps Hatib Bin Amr Al-Amiri)
4. Fatimat Bint Aswad (perhaps Fatimat Bint Sofwan)
5. Zainab (perhaps Zainab Bint Jehsh Bin Reyyab)
6. Harmalat (perhaps Hamnat Bint Jehsh Bin Rebab)
7. A’isha (not on list, perhaps one of the unlisted children)

We offered prayers for the repose of the souls of whoever was buried there in accordance with Islamic injunctions. We then came out of the Mausoleum and stood on the new pavement around it

facing the sloppy sides of the plateau that was prelate with graves of some of the migrants and the graves of some of their ancestors. After offering prayers for the repose of the souls of all those buried there, I turned to the Muslim guides and enquired on why King Armah (Ashama ibn Abjar) was buried in a Muslim fashion in the Mausoleum. My question was deliberate, because as a Muslim, I know the answer. The Muslim guides explained that the King was buried in that fashion because he converted to Islam. They continued to explain that:

But there was big trouble, big trouble, big upheaval, by his people that made him to hide his belief, just as the believer mentioned in the Qur'an did during the encounter between Prophet Musa AS (Moses) and the Pharaoh.

They repeated the words “big trouble ...” several times and with soft and concerned voice. They then referred me to copies of the letter believed to be that of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) calling on King Armah to accept Islam and the reply of King Armah accepting the religion. The copies of the two letters are displayed in the temporary Mosque being used in Negash as the original Mosque was under reconstruction.

Note should be taken that the letter calling on the King to embrace Islam was sent after the migrants settled in Negash so it was not the letter mentioned earlier in the last Chapter, which introduced the migrants to the King.

Prophet Muhammad's letter to Negus:

*In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.
From Muhammad the Messenger of Allah to Negus, King of
Habasha. Peace be upon him who follows true guidance.
Salutations:*

I entertain Allah's praise; there is no god but He, the Sovereign, the Holy, the Source of peace, the Giver of peace, the Guardian of faith, the Preserver of safety. I bear witness that Jesus, the son of Mary, is the spirit of Allah and His Word which He cast into Mary, the virgin, the good, the pure, so that she conceived Jesus. Allah created him from His spirit and His breathing (without a father) as He created Adam by His Hand (without a father and without a mother). I call you to Allah Alone with no associate and to His obedience and to follow me and to believe in that which came to me, for I am the Messenger of Allah. I invite you and your men to Allah, the Glorious, the All-Mighty. I hereby bear witness that I have communicated my message and advice. I invite you to listen and accept my advice. Peace be upon who follows true guidance.

Negus' Reply to Prophet Muhammad (SAW):

In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful. From Negus Ashama to Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah. Peace be upon you, O Messenger of Allah! And mercy and blessing from Allah beside Whom there is no god.

I have received your letter in which you have mentioned about Jesus and by the Lord of heaven and earth; Jesus is not more than what you say. We fully acknowledge that with which you have been sent to us and we have entertained your cousin and his companions.

I bear witness that you are the Messenger of Allah, true and confirming (the message of those Messengers who have gone before you). I pledge to you through your cousin and surrender myself through him to the Lord of the Worlds.

The Muslim guides further stated that, Muslims rely on a Hadith (saying of Prophet Muhammad) that states that when King Armah

died in Negash, the Prophet (SAW) immediately got a revelation of the death in Medina. That made him to lead a Muslim funeral prayer for the repose of the King's soul in Medina. It also gives some Scholars the reason to pray for someone's soul without bringing the dead body before the prayer-congregation as is the norm. This practice is very common with Muslims in Ethiopia today. The Hadith states that,

عن جابر بن عبد الله ، قال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم حين مات النجاشي:
مات اليوم رخل صالح فقوموا وصلّوا علي أخيكم أصحمة

Jabir Bin Abdullah (RLA) narrated that when Negus died, the Prophet (SAW) said, "Today a pious man has died. So, get up and offer the funeral prayer for your brother Ashama". (Reported by Bukhari)

Interestingly, I noticed that my official guides, who are Orthodox Christians (just as the vast majority of Christians in Ethiopia are) and who interpret into English what the Muslim guides say in the native language, wanted to make some personal comments. I told them what I noticed and they said that their profession as officially registered guides prohibits them from commenting on sensitive matters that concern a visitor and his hosts. But I insisted that they should please make their personal comments. They did not make direct comments but they asked me to ask my Muslim guides to comment on what Ethiopian Christians generally believe in King Armah and the Hijrah to Negash. They continued that, indeed, King Armah was said to be the most just and fair Christian King in Aksum history, who received all manner of people with dignity into his Kingdom. They further stated that he was a King who, more than any other in history, ordered for the manufacture of metal coins during his rule that depicted the Christian Cross on

their sides and the coins are on display in Ethiopian and other museums all over the World. But there were no such coins depicting the religion of Islam manufactured under his orders. They further stated that there is no record in Christian literature or an archaeological proof that King Armah converted to Islam. So, they wanted the Muslim guides to please comment on these. I got the message and I asked them to direct the same questions to the Muslim guides in their native language and say that the questions were from me. They did; and the Muslim guides conceded that indeed non-Muslims always argue that King Armah never converted to Islam while Muslims always argue that he did convert. They repeated the comments they made earlier on why Muslims believe that King Armah converted to Islam while the Christian guides also repeated their comments on why Christians say that King Armah did not convert to Islam. I was very glad that the debate between the two opposite guides was being conducted in a very friendly and calm manner. It reminded me of the debate between the Muslims on Hijrah and the emissaries of Mecca that was carried out in a similar calm manner in front of the Habasha King and on the same spot exactly 1,400 years ago! What a coincidence that a debate of 615 AD was re-enacted in 2015 AD!

I wanted to end the debate and concentrate on my visit; therefore I interrupted the two sides by telling them that as a Muslim, I know the Muslim side of the story very well. I also told them that, as a researcher, I have earlier made enquiries in Aksum, Makele and Addis Ababa and I have consulted both Muslim and Christian Scholars and equally consulted literatures on the Hijrah to Negash.

I referred them to a book, by Haggai Erlich (2007) titled, *Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia: Islam, Christianity and Politics Entwined*, published by Lynne Rienner Publishers, London, which gives a

critic's view of not only the purported conversion of King Armah to Islam but a general critical appraisal of the relationship between Islam and Christianity in Ethiopia as amply exemplified by the book's title.

I equally referred them to Selahadin Eshetu's (2009) research work titled, *Most Powerful Christian King Becomes Muslim 1500 Years Ago*, the title of which clearly says everything about the publication. I pointed out to them that, all these show my full awareness of both the Christian and the Muslim sides of the story and that, I made interesting findings, which I summarised to them in five sentences as follows:-

Muslims and Christians agree that King Armah was a just and fair King who had wide relations with Arabia, Asia, North Africa, Palestine and other parts of the known World of his time. He was accommodating and did accommodate the migrant Muslims in his Kingdom. BUT while Muslims agree that he converted to Islam, Christians do not agree to this. Luckily however, I have not encountered any serious record, written or verbal, that states that the Hijrah to Negash did not take place. All records agree that the Hijrah took place and the Christian King played an excellent host to the Muslims who were rejected in their homeland!

I further told them that, as the import of my two visits to Negash was not on the debate of whether King Armah (or King Ashama ibn Abjar) converted from Christianity to Islam or not, we should leave the matter at that point. I emphasised to them that the purpose of my visits and my research and my proposed Book was to:- Magnify to the World the excellent relationship between the most important man in Islam, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and the most powerful Christian on Earth at that time, King Armah of

Habasha Christendom. That relationship translated into the World's first Interfaith Union between Islam and Christianity, the type that is much needed today! This is the import of my visits and the message of my proposed Book!

They all happily concurred and we continued with our visit. We turned from the sloppy vicinity to the smaller Mausoleum next to the one housing the graves of King Armah and the migrants. The guides informed me that the smaller Mausoleum houses the grave of Addiy ibn Nadla one of leading migrants. The name rimes with that of Adiy Bin Nedlah Bin Abdeluzza, who is on the migrants' list from Mecca.

Just outside the smaller Mausoleum lie some three graves that have been distinctly marked to signify their importance. My guides said that the graves were those of some of the migrants but they could not identify any one of them.

We proceeded along the paved walkway to the northern fringes of the compound that houses many distinctly marked graves said to be those of some of the migrants and their descendents. Also included are graves of some prominent Muslim Sheikhs who died in Negash over the centuries.

Just after the graves at the northern fringes, is another well marked grave standing alone not far from the Mosque. It was said to be that of Sharif Abdullah. There was no such or similar name on the migrants' list. In addition, the title, "Sharif" was coined long after the full establishment of Islam and is normally given to those who belong to the family of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Therefore, Sharif Abdullah could possibly be a descendant of the migrants or another senior migrant who came to Negash after the official two migrations. Allah knows best.

We moved to the southern fringes of the compound that houses the massive Palace of the Habasha King that faces the first Mosque in Africa lying on the northern fringes of the compound. Both the Palace and the Mosque were undergoing complete reconstruction by the Turkish Government.

The Turkish engineers overseeing the reconstruction and renovation of the Palace, the Mosque, the two Mausoleums and all other surrounding structures and landscaping in the Negash Islamic Compound gladly received me and painstakingly explained every possible detail of the project. They proudly repeated several times that the project was the brainchild of the Turkish President, His Excellency Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

A master plan of the project that is boldly displayed at the entrance of the Compound shows a sprawling edifice on completion. All of us present showered encomiums on the Turkish Government for venturing to save this Islamic historical monument that has unfortunately been neglected by World Muslims for almost one and a half millennia.

My second visit to Negash was on Friday 30th October 2015. Therefore after undertaking an elaborate tour of the Compound, I attended the Jumu'at (Friday) congregational prayers at the temporary Mosque located outside the walls of the original Compound as the original Mosque was undergoing reconstruction.

After the prayers, I was invited by the Chief Imam to join them for lunch. We moved into the Imam's official reception compound near the temporary Mosque. Lamb-shops, vegetable soup and rice was served. I understand that the Friday lunch is a traditional weekly affair lasting several centuries. The discussions during the lunch were lively. My two official Christian guides were equally

invited along with some of the construction site engineers. It was another interfaith unity in action!

The site visit was over. I asked the Chief Imam and the Compound Officials whether they had something to say. They first of all repeated their gratitude to the Turkish Government, under His Excellency President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, for embarking on the restoration project. They also thanked the Ethiopian Government, particularly that of the Tigray Region under the Regional President, His Excellency Abey Woldu Hagos, for supporting them over the years. They finally requested me to be their Ambassador to the Nigerian Muslims who they hoped would one day, with other World Muslims, assist in uplifting the status of Negash and mirror the town to the World Muslim Community.

The Chief Imam, other Mosque officials and some residents of Negash town saw me and my official guides off at the gate of the Islamic Compound, with a show of comradeship and brotherhood that left indelible memories in my heart. I left Negash a very happy, more educated and fulfilled man.

Chapter Six

THE LESSONS OF NEGASH

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT LESSON

The most significant lesson of the Migration to Negash is not its historical relevance, but in understanding the wisdom in the civil and peaceful natures of both Islam and Christianity. This is devoid of the unfortunate manner in which both Muslims and Christians respond to each other today in the event of conflict(s). Their actions are often characterised by contempt and hatred leading to unnecessary hostilities that result in the loss of valuable lives and properties.

This Book chronicles the first and second Muslim migrations to Negash and the third migration to Medina all as a result of Muslims' persecutions in Mecca. Those foundation Muslims, led by Prophet Muhammad (SAW) himself, did not resort to violence, no, they peacefully migrated to other Lands because of the peaceful attributes of the Islamic Faith. Equally, Jesus Christ (AS) was known to have peacefully migrated from one part of the Land of Palestine to another with his followers with a view to avoiding violent confrontation with idolaters and their leaders. As Muhammad (SAW) preached peace and love, so did Jesus Christ (AS); therefore, the two religions are clearly and fundamentally built on peace and love.

Muslim and Christian men and women of peace wonder on why some misguided Muslims and Christians unreasonably resort to violent confrontations with each other at the slightest provocation. They wonder, because both Islam and Christianity recognise the Oneness of Allah-God and they are built on peace and unity. All

the major provisions of the Islamic Law and codes of conduct are either the same with, or very similar to those of Christianity. Why the rancour and the disputes? Why the loss of innocent and valuable lives and properties?

Muslims and Christians of knowledge and wisdom know full well that the two Monotheistic Religions are closer to each other in the conduct of **worldly affairs** than they are with any of the other World Religions. Both religions are different only in some **faith-based issues** that concern the modes of worship of Allah-God. Therefore, one could understand the differences in the modes of worship but one cannot understand the reasons behind the wanton destruction of lives and properties in the name of Islam or Christianity. It is of paramount importance therefore for Muslims and Christians to recognise the similarities in their two Religions and embrace them and to recognise the differences in them and respect and accommodate them. The World needs peace and the Hijrah to Negash has provided an example to follow.

THE MUSLIMS AND THE CHRISTIANS DISUNITY PROMOTES FATAL RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM

This assertion may seem strange and unbelievable, but the fact is that religious extremism that leads to terrorism and/or insurgency is born and bred not by the squabbles within a particular religion, but by the external disunity between two or more religions. If Muslims and Christians, for example, live in harmonious unity within a particular community or Nation, they will jointly check the excesses of their members thereby eliminating extremism. But when Muslims and Christians in a particular community or Nation are in perpetual conflict with each other, they will have no time to check their members and in effect, they will consciously or

unconsciously be promoting the emergence of extremists who shall be claiming to be defending the interests of their religions. At the end, such extremists shall not only fight the perceived enemies in other religion(s) but shall turn against members of their own religions and cause havoc.

Fatal religious extremism in Islam and in Christianity is promoted by a very minute percentage of the adherents because the vast majority of moderate adherents have shunned unity and therefore allowed the minute minority to have a united front that metamorphoses into extremism, terrorism and/or insurgency. The few extremists that have been causing havoc in the World today are the products of the disunity of the vast majority. This disunity leads to interreligious conflicts that take away the attention of the majority thereby allowing the minority extremists to grow to dangerous levels. How many were pioneer members Al-Qaida, or Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), or Al-Shabab in Somalia, or Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin of West Africa? The disunity of the vast majority of Muslims and Christians in those areas made the few extremists to grow into terrorists and insurgents who now unleash monstrous havoc with impunity. Perhaps, a brief on West African Chad Basin's Boko Haram suffices here to buttress this important assertion.

THE BOKO HARAM TERROR GROUPS' UNFORTUNATE EXAMPLE

The Terror Group, *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal Jihad*, widely known as "Boko Haram", has been the most complex and destructive security challenge that was ever faced by Nigeria, Cameroon, Republic of Chad and Niger Republic; countries that are located in the Lake Chad basin of the West African Sub-Region.

Boko Haram was described by the Global Terrorism Index, 2015 as follows,

*Boko Haram caused 6,644 deaths in 2014 alone, thereby making it **the World's deadliest terrorist organization**. Nigeria has also witnessed a 300 per cent rise in deaths from terror acts to 7,512 over the past one year largely due to Boko Haram's expansion".*

Global Terrorism Index 2015 classified Boko Haram as the World's deadliest Terrorist Organisation in 2014, "***largely due to Boko Haram's expansion***". This expansion could be attributable to the fact that Muslims and Christians, who constitute about 95% of Nigeria's population of over 160 million people, have been in perpetual conflicts with each other instead of uniting to fight the Boko Haram threat. The perpetual conflicts took away the attention of the Muslim and Christian population that would have united to assist the government in fighting the Boko Haram terrorists, while on the other hand Boko Haram used that opportunity to recruit its deadly membership. The government and its security forces also had their share of laxity for not doing enough to contain Boko Haram at its infancy. Therefore the government and its security agencies to some extent; and the Muslim and Christian disunited population to another extent; contributed to the growth of Boko Haram. If the Muslim and the Christian population had united, they would have checkmated Boko Haram's drive for membership thereby giving the security forces the leeway to contain the few militant ones at the early stages. Lugga (2016) gives a detailed account on the formation and the growth of Boko Haram, which gives credence to the above assertion, as summarised below.

Boko Haram claims to be an Islamic organisation but it purely performs un-Islamic acts like other terrorist groups such as Al-

Qaeda, Al-Shabab and ISIS. Its name, *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal Jihad*, which translates to, "Brethren of Sunni Muslims Committed to the Propagation of Islam and the Conduct of Holy War", was coined to deceive unsuspecting Muslim youths. It was locally called "Boko Haram" in the Hausa language, which means, "Western education is illegal" because of the intense opposition of its members to Westernisation.

The group emerged in the year 2000. Its foundation membership consisted of a small group of youths of less than 100, under the leadership of late Mohamed Yusuf who was assisted by Abubakar Shekau, its present leader. That group of youths made up the bulk of the students studying under Sheikh Faisal who was based at London-Ciki area of Maiduguri town in Borno State of Nigeria. The youths were attracted and motivated by Sheikh Faisal's opposition to Westernisation, particularly Western Education and Western Cultures, which they claim are directly against Islamic values. From their sermons, lectures and publications, particularly a booklet written by its leader, Mohamed Yusuf, titled "*Hazhihi Aqidatu-na*" (This is Our Ideology), the main belief of the Sect is that Western cultures and values are un-Islamic and therefore must be eradicated from Muslim societies. They assert that change from the infidel Western systems and beliefs to Islamic ones should be through *da'awah* (preaching) and other peaceful means, but where these are made impossible, arms could be taken against the State and against all those who serve as stumbling blocks to the change.

The Boko Haram ideology was preached freely for several years to unsuspecting youths as a result of negligence by Nigerian security forces and the continued religious disunity between Nigerian Muslims and Christians who constitute over 95% of the Nigerian population of over 160 million people. Therefore, some few

hundred extremists continued to freely mobilise for membership for several years unhindered in a population of over 160 million people simply because the vast majority of Muslims and Christians were disunited and fighting each other thereby creating an avenue for the very minute number of extremists to grow and unleash terror on both Muslims and Christians who they view as “infidels”.

Boko Haram tactfully intensified recruitment drive for followership from 2001 to 2003. They deceitfully recruited young people through brainwashing them and indoctrinating them with their own brand of “Islam”. The recruits were usually unemployed but energetic youths within the age bracket of 13-18 years. Most of them feel dejected, frustrated and unwanted in the society due to lack of proper religious or vocational education and due to lack of any form of gainful employment. Such young persons were easy to brainwash and train both physically and mentally to believe that the existing State and administrative structures and even the society itself were not serving their interests. Many extremist and un-Islamic ideas were planted in their hearts and brains making them believe that those ideas were truly Islamic and the best ways to worldly and eternal salvation. Boko Haram young followers have been so indoctrinated as to believe that death in Boko Haram service is the surest way to Paradise. That strong belief was why in most cases they were more willing to die while on an assignment than to return home or to their camps.

With the government not taking any serious action and the majority Muslim and Christian citizens in perpetual conflicts, Boko Haram established a militants’ camp at a virgin forest-land near Kanama Town in Yobe State of Nigeria where they settled and called the place “Small Medina”.

The Sect members attacked the nearby Kanama and Geidam Police Stations on 23rd December 2003, where they carted away some arms and ammunitions.

The group attacked and destroyed Dapchi and Babban Gida Police Stations in Busari and Tarmuwa Local Government Areas. A joint Military and Police operation was then carried out where some of the group members escaped while others were arrested and detained at the Damaturu, Maiduguri, Bauchi and Gombe Prisons, in Yobe, Borno, Bauchi and Gombe States of Nigeria respectively.

In June 2004, the group attempted to break into the Damaturu Prison with a view to freeing their detained members, but the attempt was foiled by security forces. On September 23rd 2004, the group attacked Police Stations in Goza and Bama Towns in Borno State where they killed some Policemen. They were later repelled by a joint Police/Military operation and they moved into Goza hills and set up training camps there. The group attacked a police convoy at the Goza area on 10th October 2004 where they abducted 12 Policemen, who they later killed. Boko Haram continued with their atrocities, seemingly unabated.

In early 2005, they moved their headquarters back to Maiduguri metropolis from where they spread their recruitment drag-net to other States of Nigeria, particularly to Yobe, Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Kano, Kaduna, Plateau, Niger and Kogi States. When they started to openly preach their unwholesome ideology in Borno State, the government banned their activities at the end of 2006; but they continued to preach and propagate their ideology illegally. The Group members were made to be more hardened and more resolute in resisting warnings by government and security agents. Members were indoctrinated to imbibe the spirit of “hard struggle”

against the authorities and all those who oppose their teachings, Muslims and Christians alike. The years 2007 and 2008 were used by the dreaded group for further membership recruitment.

In 2009, Borno State Government set up a Joint Task Force with a view to enforcing the use of crash helmets by motorcyclists in the State and the Task Force embarked on its assignment on 26th July 2009. Boko Haram members refused to use the helmets thereby leading to a confrontation with security agents. That seemingly minor skirmish in Maiduguri, the Borno State capital, on July 29th 2009, later turned into full scale “war”.

Boko Haram members emerged with sophisticated weapons including improvised explosive devices (IEDs). They surprised and almost overwhelmed security agents with their arsenals that they used in launching deadly attacks on seven Police Stations, Police Staff Quarters, Prison Yard, three Primary Schools, Electoral Commission Office and eleven Churches. Reports indicated that over 1,000 innocent civilians, Policemen and members of their families and Boko Haram members lost their lives in the two days fracas. The Military had to be called in to quell the crisis as a result of which they arrested the Boko Haram leader, Mohamed Yusuf, and handed him over to the Police in whose custody he was allegedly extra judiciously killed.

That minor incidence on “**helmet wearing**” became a catastrophe that opened the Pandora box of heinous attacks by Boko Haram on security formations, government establishments, public infrastructure, motor parks, markets, places of worship, innocent citizens, etc. Those attacks have so far resulted in the loss of over 50,000 lives and the destruction of over \$9 billion (Naira 3 trillion) worth of public and private properties.

The very important point being made here is that, while Boko Haram was busy mobilising and growing, Nigerian Muslims and Christians were busy fighting each other. Within that period, serious religious conflicts ensued particularly in Kaduna, Plateau, Benue, Taraba, Kano and Adamawa States of Nigeria. Thousands of lives were lost and properties worth billions of Naira were destroyed in the crises. Within that period, the security forces' attention was diverted away from Boko Haram to the sporadic Muslim and Christian conflicts all over the Nation, which consumed thousands of lives and billions of Naira worth of public and private properties.

The list below gives a glimpse of such Muslim/Christian conflicts from the emergence of Boko Haram around 2000 to its full growth in 2011, when it was declared as an international terrorist organisation (sourced from Lugga, 2016):-

2000 January to May: Thousands of people were killed in Northern Nigeria as non-Muslims opposed to the introduction of Shari'ah (Islamic Law) fight Muslims who demand its implementation in the Northern State of Kaduna.

2001 September: Christian-Muslim violence flares after Muslim prayers in Jos, Plateau State, with churches and mosques set on fire. According to a September 2002 report by a panel set up by Plateau State Government, at least 1,000 people were killed in the rioting.

2002 February: Some 100 people were killed in Lagos, Lagos State, in clashes between Hausas from mainly-Islamic North and ethnic Yoruba from Christian Southwest.

2002 November: More than 200 people were killed in four days of rioting stoked by Muslim fury over the planned Miss World

Beauty Pageant in Kaduna, Kaduna State, in December 2002. The event was relocated to London, Great Britain.

2003 August: Inter-communal/religious violence in the Niger Delta town of Warri killed about 100 people and injured about 1,000.

2004 May 4: Hundreds of people, mostly Muslims of the Hausa and Fulani tribes, were killed by Christian Tarok tribe militia in the Central Nigerian town of Yelwa, Plateau State. Survivors say they buried over 630 corpses. Police say hundreds were killed.

2004 May 12: Muslim and Christian militias fought street battles in the Northern city of Kano, Kano State. Christian community leaders say 500-600 people, mostly Christians, were killed in the two days of rioting.

2006 February: At least 157 people died in a week of rioting by Muslim and Christian mobs. The violence began in the North Eastern city of Maiduguri, Borno State, when a Muslim protest against Danish cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) ran out of control.

2008 November: Clashes between Muslim and Christian gangs triggered by a disputed local government election killed at least 700 people in Jos, Plateau State, according to the US-based Human Rights Watch.

2009 February 21: The Governor of Bauchi State imposed a night curfew on Bauchi City on February 22, a day after clashes killed at least 41 people. At least another 58 people were seriously wounded and several houses, churches and mosques burnt down.

2009 December: At least 40 people were killed in clashes between security forces and members of an Islamic sect armed with machetes in the Northern city of Bauchi.

2010 January 17: On the Muslim Eid celebrations of January 17th 2010, nine hundred and sixty eight (968) Muslims were massacred at the open Eid Prayer Ground in Jos, Plateau State of Nigeria by suspected Christian militia.

2010 January: At least 460 people were reported killed after clashes between Muslim and Christian gangs in Jos, Plateau State, mostly by gunfire. Police impose a 24-hour curfew, enforced by hundreds of soldiers and police. The violence started after an argument between Muslim and Christian neighbours over rebuilding homes destroyed in the November 2008 clashes.

2010 March: Hundreds of people were killed in clashes between Muslim pastoralists and Christian villagers in the mostly Christian villages of Dogo Nahawa, Zot and Ratsat just South of Jos, Plateau State. The State Government said more than 300 people were killed.

2010 July 17: A church was burnt and eight people hacked to death in an attack by Muslims on Christians in Mazzah village, located 14 km from Jos, Plateau State.

2010 December 24: Suspected Muslim militia attacked Churches on Christmas Eve, 24th December, 2010, in Jos, Plateau State, that resulted in the death of about seventy (70) Christians. The attack was said to be a reprisal attack for the attack on Muslims on Eid festival on January 17th 2010 by suspected Christian militia in the same Jos that resulted in the death of 968 Muslims.

2011 January: Several days of violence between Christians and Muslims flared up in Central Nigeria, killing at least 200 people.

Various places of worship are targeted, while religious rioting and arson attacks continued on the streets in the cities of Jos, Plateau State and Tafawa Balewa, Bauchi State.

2011 May 30: A series of blasts hit cities mainly in Northern Nigeria, killing at least 122 people. The attacks came less than 24 hours after the inauguration of Goodluck Jonathan as President of Nigeria.

2011 August: At least 70 people were killed in clashes in Central Plateau State. The violence started when Christian youths attacked Muslims gathering to celebrate end of Ramadan Fasting in Jos.

It is pathetic to state that, when Boko Haram came out in full force to fight Nigerians and the Nigerian State, the fabric of Muslim/Christian unity that would have contained them had been torn to shreds. Even when the Nigerian Government mobilised its security forces to fight Boko Haram insurgency, Nigerian Muslims and Christians were at each others' throats.

THE NEGASH FORMULA TO THE RESCUE

The above rendition on Boko Haram clearly shows that, if Nigerian Muslims had been united, Boko Haram would not have grown to be such a deadly monster. Similarly, if World Muslims and Christians had united, Al-Qaida and ISIS would not have become the dreaded monsters they are! Unfortunately for the World today, Muslims see the “war against terror” as a conglomeration of powerful Christian and Jewish States fighting the weak Muslim States. On the other hand, Christians and Jews see the “war against terror” as a legitimate war against who they call “Islamic terrorists” who are out to eliminate Jewish and Christian States.

The panacea to these crises is the application of the Negash formula of love, peace, unity, understanding, respect and accommodation of

each others' religions. If the Negash formula had been applied within the last three decades, the World would have been saved from religious terrorism and insurgencies. However, it better late than never, as the formula could still be implemented to give the World the much desired peace and security.

The Allah-God of Muhammad (SAW) and Jesus (AS) is a Loving God and not a God of violence, therefore no one has the right to kill and maim human beings and destroy private and public properties in the name of the One Omnipotent God-Allah!

The solid foundation for peaceful co-existence, respect and love between Muslims and Christians was laid at the infancy of Islam and the maturity of Christianity with the HIJRAH TO NEGASH. Whatever happened to the “buildings” erected on that “solid foundation”, that is making the buildings to be crumbling today should be rectified. Today's Muslims and Christians have a responsibility to provide an enabling environment for peace to prevail in the World. Peace is the only panacea for progress and development to the present generation and the guarantee of an enduring legacy of hope for the future generations.

There is no doubt, if the unity exhibited by Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and the Christian King Armah of Habasha were to be re-enacted today, the World would be a much better place to live in, devoid of hatred and rancour. Muslims and Christians are the absolute majority of the inhabitants of the most developed parts of the civilised World. 90% of the leaders of the most powerful countries in the World are either Christians or Muslims. Therefore an “International Religious Union” today, the type exhibited at Negash between Islam and Christianity, would be the solution to World's religious crises.

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