

Abraham (part 2 of 2)

Description: This lesson covers the most important events of the life of Prophet Abraham (Ibrahim) based on the Quran and *Sunnah*.

By Imam Mufti

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Objectives

- To learn the most important events of the life of Prophet Abraham (Ibrahim) based on the Quran and *Sunnah*.

Arabic Terms

- *Sunnah* - The word *Sunnah* has several meanings depending on the area of study however the meaning is generally accepted to be, whatever was reported that the Prophet said, did, or approved.
- *Kabah* - The cube-shaped structure located in the city of Mecca. It serves as a focal point towards which all Muslims face when praying.
- *Rakah* - unit of prayer.
- *Hajj* - A pilgrimage to Mecca where the pilgrim performs a set of rituals. The *Hajj* is one of the five pillars of Islam, which every adult Muslim must undertake at least once in their life if they can afford it and are physically able.
- *Sa'ee* - It is the walking and running between the hills of Safa and Marwa.

After years of unsuccessful preaching and anguish at the probable fate of his father in the Hereafter, tenderhearted Ibrahim kept his promise to pray for his father. It was a promise Allah rejected in the end (Quran 9:113-114). When Ibrahim left behind Harran and the idolaters, he provided an example for us. Allah recommends part and warns against part of what he announced:

“Indeed there is for you a good example in Ibrahim and those with him, when they said to their people: ‘We are clear of you and of that which you serve besides Allah. We disbelieve in you and there has arisen enmity and hatred between us and you forever until you believe in Allah alone’ - except for the saying of Ibrahim to his father, ‘I will surely ask forgiveness for you, but I have not (power to do) for you anything against Allah.’”[\[1\]](#)

Ibrahim migrated to Egypt, where he met the Pharaoh. Sarah, a beautiful and and

charming woman, attracted the attention of the Pharaoh. When asked about his relationship with Sarah, Ibrahim replied that she was his sister - he meant his sister in faith. Through her, a statement was about to be made to the Egyptians to submit to Allah. Thinking she was available for his use, the Pharaoh quickly summoned Sarah who, on Ibrahim's instructions, kept quiet about her relationship with him. Sarah, however, was a chaste woman, and she turned to Allah in prayer. The moment Pharaoh reached for Sarah, his upper body paralyzed. He cried to Sarah in distress, promising to release her if she would release him! She, however, simply prayed to Allah for his release, to demonstrate that only He has the power, if He wills, to protect her. Only after a failed third attempt did he finally let her go. Sarah returned to Ibrahim, accompanied by Hagar, a gift from Pharaoh to propitiate one so protected by Allah. She had delivered a powerful message to the pagan Egyptians, yet still the Pharaoh misdirected his propitiation, which should have been directed towards Allah.

Loaded with gifts, Ibrahim returned to Palestine. Yet Sarah and Ibrahim continued to be childless, despite divine promises that he will have many descendants. Driven by altruism, Sarah suggested that Ibrahim take Hagar, her handmaiden, as a second wife to bear him a child on her behalf. While in Palestine, Ibrahim married Hagar who bore him a son, Ishmael.

While Ishmael was still nursing, Ibrahim was commanded by Allah to take Hagar and Ishmael to a barren valley of Bakka 700 miles southeast of Hebron. In later times it would be called Mecca. Ibrahim left them there with a skin of water and leather bag full of dates. As Ibrahim began walking away leaving them behind, Hagar became anxious about what was happening. Ibrahim did not look back. Hagar chased him, **'O Ibrahim, where are you going, leaving us in this valley where there is no person whose company we can enjoy, nor is there anything here?'** Ibrahim hurried his pace. Finally, Hagar asked, **'Has Allah asked you to do so?'** Suddenly, Ibrahim stopped, turned back and said, **'Yes!'** Feeling a degree of comfort in this answer, Hagar asked, **'O Ibrahim, to whom are you leaving us?'** **'I am leaving you to Allah's care,'** Ibrahim replied. Hagar submitted to her Lord, **'I am satisfied to be with Allah!'**^[2] She traced her way back to little Ishmael. Ibrahim left with prayers for his wife and child, which he prayed when he was out of sight.

Soon, the water and dates were gone and Hagar's desperation increased. Unable to quench her thirst or to breastfeed her little baby, Hagar began searching for water. She began climbing the rocky incline of a nearby hill. 'Maybe there is a caravan passing by,' she thought to herself. She ran between the two hills of Safa and Marwa seven times looking for signs of water, and then she heard a voice. Looking down in the valley, she saw someone standing next to Ishmael. It was the angel Gabriel, who hit the ground next to the baby with his heel as she came rushing down the hill, and water came gushing out. It was a miracle! Hagar tried to make a basin around it to keep it from flowing out and filled her skin. **'Do not be afraid of being neglected,' the angel said, 'for this is the House of Allah which will be built by this boy and his father, and Allah never neglects his people.'**^[3] It was not long afterwards that the tribe of Jurham, migrating in its usual pattern from southern Arabia, stopped as they passed the valley of Mecca. They were unaccustomed to seeing birds flying in its direction, as it was known to be dry and

lifeless, so they went to see where it was going. When they saw the abundant water, they asked the mother and child if they would share it with them. Eventually, they settled in Mecca and Ishmael grew up among them.

During a reunion with his family in Mecca after years of separation, Allah commanded Ibrahim to sacrifice his son through a dream; the son he had recently met again after a decade of prayers and separation. Ibrahim consulted his son to see if he understood, **“(Ibrahim) said: ‘O my dear son, I have seen in a dream that I must sacrifice you. So look, what think you?’ He said: ‘O my father! Do that which you are commanded. God willing, you shall find me of the patient.’”**^[4] The pious son of a pious father was committed to submit to Allah and willingly agreed to be sacrificed. Ibrahim was commanded to take his son to Mina, about four miles east of Mecca, where he laid him out for slaughter. Just as Ibrahim’s knife was poised to descend, a voice stopped him, **“We called to him: ‘O Ibrahim: You have already fulfilled the vision.’ Lo! Thus do We reward the good. Lo! That verily was a clear test.”**^[5] Ibrahim was guided to ransom Ishmael with a ram, **‘then We ransomed him with a great sacrifice.’**

Upon Ibrahim’s return to Palestine, he was visited by the angels, who gave him and Sarah the good news of a son, Isaac, with the words **“Lo! We bring you good tidings of a boy possessing wisdom.”**^[6]

In one of his later trips to Mecca the two built the *Kabah* on Allah’s command. While the father and son were building the *Kabah*, they prayed:

“Our Lord! Accept from us (this duty). Lo! You, only You, are the Hearer, the Knower. Our Lord! And make us Muslims (submissive to You) and of our seed a Muslim nation (submissive to You), and show us our ways of worship, and forgive toward us. Lo! You, only You, are the Forgiving, the Merciful. Our Lord! And raise up in their midst a Messenger from among them who shall recite to them Your revelations, and shall instruct them in the Scripture and in wisdom and shall purify them of their sins. Lo! You, only You, are the Mighty, the Wise.” (Quran 2:127-129)

Before leaving Mecca, Ibrahim made a special prayer to Allah. He asked for Mecca to be blessed, protection for his family from false worship, blessing for Ishmael and his descendants, regular prayers for his descendants, and forgiveness for himself, his parents, and all believers (Quran 14:35-41). Ibrahim’s prayer for a Messenger, and for Ishmael’s descendants, was answered several thousand years later when Allah raised Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of Allah be upon him, among the Arabs.

He was now to proclaim an obligation binding on every believer in One God to make pilgrimage to the *Kabah* (Quran 22:27). Why this is not mentioned in Judaism and Christianity in the present day is puzzling, but may be due to deliberate omission from their religious teaching as it moves the focus of their belief from ‘the Promised Land’ to a land where ‘the chosen people of the ‘Bani Israel’ were not settled.

Ibrahim and *Hajj*

Several rites of *Hajj* commemorate events of Ibrahim and his family. After going around the *Kabah*, a Muslim prays two *rakahs* prayer behind the Station of Ibrahim, the stone on which he stood to build the *Kabah*. After the prayers, a Muslim drinks from zamzam, the miracle water provided by Gabriel that saved the lives of Hagar and Ishmael. The rite of *sa'ee* - walking between Safa and Marwa - commemorates Hagar's desperate search for water when she and her baby were alone in Mecca. The sacrifice of an animal in Mina is after Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his son for Allah's sake. Lastly, the stoning of the three pillars - *jamaraat* - at Mina exemplifies Ibrahim's rejection of satanic temptations to prevent him from sacrificing Ishmael.

Ibrahim, 'The one whom Allah chose for His love' - *khaleel-ullah* - about whom Allah said, **"I will make you a leader to the nations."** [7] returned to Palestine and died there.

Endnotes:

[1] Quran 60:4

[2] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*

[3] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*

[4] Quran 37:101-102

[5] Quran 37:104-106

[6] Quran 15:53

[7] Quran 2:125

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