

Glimpses from the Life of Prophet Ibrahim

Description: Events from the life of Prophet Ibrahim that teach us valuable lessons that are still relevant today.

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Published on 21 Jan 2013 - Last modified on 14 Aug 2014

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Objectives:

- To examine several events in the life of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham).
- To understand that submission to the will of Allah is a very important concept in Islam.
- To know that Allah bestows knowledge on whomever He wills and it is not determined by age.

Arabic Terms:

- *Ibrahim* - the Arabic word for Abraham.
- *Shaytan* - sometimes spelled *Shaitan* or *Shaytaan*. It is the word used in Islam and the Arabic language to denote the devil or *Satan*, the personification of evil.

Prophet Ibrahim was a Prophet of Allah and he has the honour of being described by Allah as *Khalil-Allah* which means the *one whom God chose for His love*.



Throughout various chapters of the Quran Ibrahim is praised as a paradigm of righteousness. He was a man whose character is an example to all believers; he was kind, forbearing, brave and trustworthy. Allah describes him as such, He says:

Indeed, Abraham was a [comprehensive] leader, devoutly obedient to Allah, inclining toward truth, and he was not of those who associate others with Allah. (He was) thankful for His (Allah's)

Graces. He (Allah) chose him and guided him to a Straight Path. And We gave him good in this world, and indeed, in the Hereafter he will be among the righteous. (Quran 16: 120-122)

Lesson 1

Parents can learn from their children and elders can learn from the youth.

Knowledge and understanding is not necessarily something that comes with age and just because a person is older does not mean that he or she is someone to emulate. The way Prophet Ibrahim interacted with his father is a very good example of a child respecting his parent yet rejecting his (the parent's) ways and lifestyle.

And (remember) when Ibrahim said to his father, Azar: "Do you take idols as gods? Verily, I see you and your people in manifest error!" (Quran 6: 74)

Ibrahim's father Azar was a sculptor of idols, so from a young age Ibrahim was aware that idols were nothing more than pieces of wood or stone " inanimate objects that could extend no benefit or harm. He found it extraordinary that people would worship them as gods!

Ibrahim tried to convince his father that his practice of idol worship was wrong and ultimately useless. He spoke to him in a gentle voice, using kind words, and he tried to warn him of the dangers inherent in worshipping idols, but his father only became annoyed and then angry.

When he said to his father: "O my father! Why do you worship that which cannot hear or see and cannot avail you in anything? O my father! Verily! I have received knowledge that you have not received, so follow me. I will guide you to a Straight Path. O my father, do not worship Satan. Indeed Satan has ever been, to the Most Merciful, disobedient. O my father, indeed I fear that you will be punished by the Most Merciful and would be a companion to Satan in Hellfire." He (the father) said: "Do you reject my gods, O Ibrahim? If you do not stop this, I will indeed stone you. So get away from me safely before I punish you." (Quran 19: 42-46)

The child feared that his father would be lost and fall into the clutches of *Shaytan*. He was wise beyond his years yet Ibrahim's father did not listen perhaps rejecting the fact that his child could guide and teach him. Ibrahim did not lose his temper but instead responded to his father's threatening attitude with respect and wisdom.

[Abraham] said, "Peace be upon you. I will implore my Lord to forgive you. Indeed, He is ever gracious to me. And I shall turn away from you and from those whom you invoke besides Allah. I will call upon my Lord and it may well be that, in calling on my Lord, I

will not be disappointed.” (Quran 19:47-48)

Lesson 2

Islam is logical.

From the perspective of Islam Prophet Ibrahim is not considered to be either Jewish or a Christian; he is a Prophet who submitted to Allah and thus is a Muslim. God tells us in the Quran that from an early age Prophet Ibrahim felt compelled to find the One God Who was worthy of worship. He realized that the idols his people worshipped, that were carved and sculptured by his father were nothing but wood and stone. He knew instinctively that the sun, moon and stars were not gods of any sort. Islam tells us that worshipping Allah is the only logical conclusion that a person who examines the evidence, can come to. This is exactly what Ibrahim did. First he asked the wooden idols to respond when he spoke to them and he then destroyed them. They could not speak or protect themselves. Next he looked to the heavens and tried to find an answer.

So when the night covered him [with darkness], he saw a star. He said, "This is my lord!" But when it was no longer visible, he said, "I do not like those that disappear!" When he saw the moon rising, he said: "This is my lord." But when it was no longer visible, he said: "Unless my Lord guides me, I shall surely be among the people who went astray." When he saw the sun rising, he said: "This is my lord. This is greater." But when it set, he said: "O my people! I disown all that you worship beside Allah. Indeed, I have turned my face as a true believer towards Him who created the heavens and the earth, and I am not one of the polytheists." (Quran 6: 76-79)

There is an important lesson to be learned from this event in Prophet Ibrahim's life. By using logic, one can easily see the signs that point to the existence of Allah and that He alone deserves to be worshipped. The sun, moon and stars are not gods in themselves but are signs of His existence and greatness. Through his contemplation Ibrahim grasped the existence and the sublime nature of Allah.

Lesson 3

A true believer is willing to give up anything or anyone for the sake of pleasing Allah.

According to Islam Prophet Ishmael was the eldest son of Prophet Ibrahim. When he was old enough to walk with his father and talk to him as a man does to a man, Ibrahim explained to him that he had seen a dream in which he was killing him. The dreams of Prophets are forms of revelation; thus they constitute a command from God. Indeed if a person was told by their father that they were to be killed due to a dream, they would doubt the dream as well question the sanity of that person! But Ishmael knew the status of

his father. He was indeed a pious man, the son of a pious father who were both committed to submit to Allah. Prophet Ibrahim took his son to the place where he was to be sacrificed and laid him face down. For this reason, God has described them in the most beautiful of words, painting a picture of the essence of submission; one which brings tears to the eyes.

And when they both submitted (to the command of God), and he (Abraham) laid him (Ishmael) face down upon his forehead (in order to be sacrificed). (Quran 37: 103)

Just as Abraham's knife was poised to descend, a voice stopped him

We called out to him: oeO Ibrahim! You have fulfilled the dream!" Verily, Thus, do We reward the good-doers. Verily, that indeed was a manifest trial. (Quran 37: 104-106)

Indeed, it was the greatest test of all, the sacrifice of his beloved child, one born to him after he had reached an old age and years of longing for progeny. Here, Ibrahim showed his willingness to sacrifice anything for the sake of Allah, and for this reason, He was designated a leader of all humanity, one whom God blessed with a progeny of Prophets. This momentous event teaches us that a person's existence has no meaning or value except when it is used to please Allah.

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