

السَّلَامُ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ خَلِيلِ اللَّهِ

PROPHET IBRAHIM ^[A.S]

نبي الله إبراهيم (ع)

FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

LEVEL 3

Lesson 1: Prophet Abraham (Ibrāhīm ^{as})

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand that Prophet Abraham was one of the Principal Prophets
- Should understand the concept of courage
- Should discuss the roots of courage
- Discuss the real examples of courage
- Discuss the Sacrifice of Prophet Abraham (as)
- Discuss the quality of Trust in God (Tawakkul)

Muslims honour and respect Prophet Ibrāhīm (as). The Holy Qur'an describes him as "a man of truth, a prophet".

Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) is called the father of the Prophets because from his son Prophet Isma'īl came the Arabic Prophet, including the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (as) and from his son Prophet Ishāq came the Prophets sent to the Jewish community, including Prophets Moses and Jesus (as).

The most famous title of Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) was "Khalilullāh", which means "Friend of Allah".

The Quran repeatedly describes Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) as a man who believed in *One True God*, and was a righteous example for us all to follow:

"Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian. Rather he was a *ḥanīf*, a *muslim*, and he was not one of the polytheists." (3:67)

THE BIRTH OF PROPHET ABRAHAM

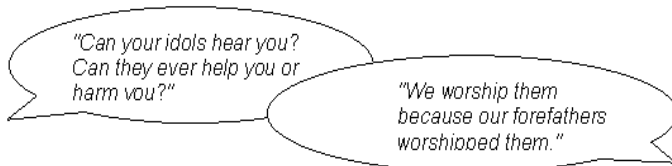
Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) was born in ancient Babylonia at the time when Namrud was the king. Namrud was a proud man and forced the people to believe in him as a god. Since the people were idolaters, who already worshipped idols of wood and stone, they willingly accepted him as their god. After some time, Allah (SWT) decided to send Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) to these people so they may be guided.

Prophet Ibrāhīm's (as) mother had shown no signs of pregnancy when she carried him, so she knew that her baby was special. To protect him from Namrud's men, she nurtured him outside the main city, and Allah (SWT) assisted her in miraculous ways in caring for him as a baby.

PROPHET ABRAHAM'S YOUTH

Time went by, and Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) became a young man. He could not believe that his people were worshipping statues. He laughed whenever he saw them entering the temple, lowering their heads, silently offering the statues the best of their food, crying and asking forgiveness from them.

They could not be gods, they have no power. God is greater than all His creatures, He is their Creator! Thus a god cannot be something that humans themselves create! One could not find Him sitting on a table in a temple. Below is an example of one conversation Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) had with his people.



ABRAHAM DESTROYS THE IDOLS

Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) vowed to destroy these statues, in order to help his community see the stupidity of their actions. He knew that a big celebration was coming soon, where everybody would leave town for a big feast on the riverbank. After making sure that nobody was left in town, Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) went towards the temple armed with an axe.

Statues of all shapes and sizes were sitting there adorned with decorations. Plates of food were offered to them, but the food was untouched. "Well, why don't you eat? The food is getting cold." He said to the statues, then with his axe he destroyed all the statues except one, the biggest of them. He hung the axe around its neck and left.

How big was the shock when people entered the temple! They gathered inside, looking at their 'gods', smashed into pieces now. They wondered who might

have done this? Then they remembered that Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) opposed the idols.

They brought him before the people and began to accuse him. Prophet Ibrāhīm (as), trying to make his people think, said that perhaps that big idol had destroyed the others, because the axe was on its shoulder. When his people replied to him that this was ridiculous, they began to understand what Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) was trying to teach them. However, their pride, and their blind following of tradition, stopped from accepting the truth. They decided to throw Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) into a huge pit of fire.

THE MIRACLE OF THE COOL FIRE

A Huge pit was dug and a large quantity of wood was piled up. Then the biggest fire people ever witnessed was lit. The fire flames were so high up in the sky that the birds could not fly over it for fear of being burned. The prophet's hands and feet were chained, and he was put in a catapult to throw him into the fire. As this was happening, Angel Gabriel came to him and said; "O Ibrāhīm, Is there anything you wish for?"

Prophet Abraham could have asked to be saved from the fire, to be taken away. Instead, he said: "I only wish that Allah be pleased with me." The catapult was released, and Abraham was thrown in the heart of the fire. However, the Almighty and Merciful Allah would not allow His Prophet to be killed. He ordered the fire:

"O fire! Be cool and safe for Abraham!"

And the miracle happened. The fire obeyed and burned only his chains.

The prophet came out from the pit as if he was coming out from a garden, peaceful, his face illuminated, and not a trace of smoke on his clothes. People watched in shock. After this, Prophet Abraham decided to leave these people and move on to live in another land.

PROPHET ABRAHAM'S COURAGE

In another incident that happened during the youth of Prophet Ibrāhīm (as), he was involved in a debate with the king of the time. Namrud, the king, sent for Prophet Ibrāhīm (as). He wanted to debate with him and show

his people that he, the king, is indeed a god who had unlimited power. He asked Prophet Ibrāhīm (as): "What can your God do that I cannot?"

Pr Abraham: My Lord gives life and causes death

Namrud: I can give life and cause death

Pr Abraham: My Lord makes the sun rise from the east, and set in the west, can you make the sun rise from the west and set in the east?

Namrud: why don't you worship me?

Pr Abraham: I would. If you could tell me what is in my heart?

Namrud: why don't you worship fire?

Pr Abraham: I would. But why shouldn't I worship water, which puts out fire?

Namrud: then worship water?

Pr Abraham: why shouldn't I worship the clouds, which swallow up the water?

Namrud: then worship the clouds

Pr Abraham: why shouldn't I worship the wind, which blows the clouds about?

Namrud: then worship the wind?

Pr Abraham: why shouldn't I worship man, who can stand strong against the wind.

Namrud: then worship me, for I am a man.

Pr Abraham: but I have already shown you why I can't worship you.

Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) left the king speechless and went back to his important mission, calling people to worship the one and only God, Allah.

COURAGE IN ISLAM

Courage, or bravery, is the virtue that arises as a result of faith, in those who fear no one but Allah, and who are deeply devoted to Him.

Those who believe in Allah show courage for the pleasure of Allah. They do not remain silent when evil acts are committed around them. They do what would please Allah, even if it displeases other people. They fear only Allah, and this makes them very brave.

Let us discuss an example. A person meets a poor man in the street who needs help. He wants to help, but those around him try to discourage him. "Leave him," they say, and, "Is it your job to help him?" mockingly to prevent

him from doing so. In such a situation, the person is faced with a choice.

Some will fear that if they help the poor man he might lose his friends but a true Muslim helps the person without fearing anyone because he knows that helping the needy person is the right thing to do.

WHAT IS NOT COURAGE?

In daily life a student who argues with the teacher may be regarded by his friends as very brave. Likewise, one who behaves rebelliously and breaks the rules is thought of as brave. For example, in a school that requires navy blue pants, a person who shows up with green pants has great courage, according to the other students. Cheating in an exam might also be thought of as a brave action. Getting into lots of fights or competitions about strength is another thing that is sometimes seen as bravery.

All these are not real examples of courage. Such people are acting with rebelliousness or stupidity, and it is mistaken for courage. Courage is to do the right thing, for the sake of Allah (SWT), even when there might be danger or fear involved.

THE COURAGE OF PROPHET ABRAHAM

The most important virtues of the Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) were the deep faith, which he possessed, his great devotion to Allah, and his great courage in doing battle against the unbelievers.

Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) opposed himself to the entire tribe, and through logical dialogue, made them recognize that their idols were not God, but only manmade sculptures of wood. The unbelievers, who had not until then ever met anyone who denounced their idols, were angered by him and wanted to punish him.

In spite of their rage, Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) continued to speak of the existence and unity of Allah; carrying out his duty with courage. Knowing that all people, including the tribe who were so violently opposing him, are under the control of Allah, he behaved steadfastly, showing his boundless trust in Allah.

The leaders of the tribe wanted to throw him into a fire, but Allah saved him by a miracle. This is a proof of Allah's promise of help to all believers show bravery in pleasing Him.

Review Questions

Q1. Who was the king at the time of Prophet Abraham?

- Pharaoh
- Namrud
- Yazid

Q2. What punishment was given to Prophet Abraham?

- He was killed
- Thrown into a fire
- Put into prison

Q3. Why did Namrud want to debate with Prophet Abraham?

- To prove he was a god himself
- To prove Prophet Ibrahim right
- To learn from Abraham (as)

Lesson 2: The Children of Abraham (as)

Prophet Abraham (as) left his country of birth. He took his family and left for Palestine. He was married to Lady Sara. Unfortunately, he and Sara could not have any children. After being married for a long time, Sara suggested Prophet Abraham marry her maid, Hajer and have children with her.

Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) and Hajer got married and Allah blessed them with a son, Prophet Ismā'īl. Five years later, Sara miraculously gave birth despite being quited old. Her son's name was Ishāq.

ABRAHAM'S FAMILY IN MECCA

Allah (SWT) ordered Prophet Abraham (as) to take Hajer and her son to Mecca. This was part of Allah's (SWT) plan to bring people to Mecca and to rebuild the Ka'bah, so that people would resume making the pilgrimage (ḥajj) there.

They settled in a good place with hills and mountains on all sides to protect them. After a while Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) said that he should go back to see Sara and to get more food and water. Before he left he prayed to Allah to look after his wife and son because they did not have much food and water left.

A while after the prophet (as) left, the food and water soon began to run low. Hajer was very worried. Her son was getting hungry and she had nothing to feed him. She began to desperately search for water. During her search, she ran seven times from Ṣafā to Marwah, two small hills near the Ka'bah. While doing this, she was praying to Allah (SWT) to save her from her predicament. Eventually, Allah (SWT) miraculously caused water to flow for her from a well, and she and her son were never needy again. This well became known as Zamzam, and until today people benefit from its holy water. The actions of Hajer have a special symbolic meaning, and everyone who performs ḥajj does the seven laps between these two small hills till today.

THE SACRIFICE OF PROPHET ABRAHAM

One night Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) had a dream. He dreamt Allah told him to sacrifice his son Ismā'īl, by slaughtering him (cutting his neck). Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) was unsure of the significance of the dream so at first he ignored it. However, he had the same dream three nights in a row, and for a prophet, this is a sign that the dream was an order from Allah (SWT) to slaughter his son.

Even though he loved his son dearly, Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) was willing to do whatever Allah (SWT) ordered him to do, even if it was as difficult as this.

Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) told his son of his dream, and that he was ordered to slaughter him. His son, who was a great prophet himself, said: "I hope you will find me patient".

Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) tied his son's hands and legs together and placed his face on the sand. He began to cut, but the knife would not cut, he kept trying, but nothing was happening, the knife would not cut! Suddenly, Allah (SWT) send a sheep down from heaven,

and ordered Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) to slaughter the sheep instead, and to let his son live.

All this was a test for Prophet Ibrāhīm (as), to see if he was willing to sacrifice the thing he loved most in this world for the sake of Allah (SWT). Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) passed this test with flying colours.

The lesson we learn from this story is that no matter how difficult it might seem to follow the orders of Allah (SWT), we must make every sacrifice to follow these orders. Once we do this, Allah (SWT) will make our task easier for us and will look after us.

THE BUILDING OF THE KA'BAH

The Well of Zamzam, where water first flowed to save the lives of Hajer and her son became a popular place for the caravans to stop. Some people liked the place so much they decided to stay there. This place became known as Mecca. This had always been a holy land, and now Allah (SWT) wanted a holy place to be built here, where people could come to worship Him.

Therefore, He ordered Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) to build the Ka'bah. The foundations of this holy house were sent from heaven to Prophet Ibrāhīm (as). The most holy part of the Ka'bah is a stone known as the Black Stone. Prophet Ibrāhīm (as), along with his son Ismā'īl, built the Ka'bah and placed the Black Stone there as well. They were the first people to perform the rites of ḥajj and to worship Allah in that holy place.

TAWAKKUL (TRUST IN GOD)

Allah, the Wise, has said:

“So when you have decided, then place your trust in Allah; surely Allah loves those who trust.”

Tawakkul means to place our trust in Allah (SWT), and to know and believe that everything we experience and everything we do takes place under Allah's control.

A person who does not trust Allah believes that anyone or anything may harm him. Such a person is always anxious or depressed.

Allah (SWT) may test a person through various ways. For instance, he may be tried by illness, loss of a close relative or friend, poverty, or family conflict.

A person who keeps their trust in Allah (SWT) in these situations, is guaranteeing themselves the help of Allah (SWT), which is never far away.

A person who trusts Allah knows that there is nothing but goodness in the tests and faces the situation with patience, just like Prophet Ibrāhīm (as), who was put to test by being asked to sacrifice his son.

Allah commands us in the Holy Qur'an:

“Put your trust in the All-Mighty, the Most Merciful”
(26:217)

Let us now listen to a story about trust in Allah (SWT).

During the time of Prophet Muḥammad (saw), there lived a trader who, in all affairs, always placed his trust in Allah.

He used to travel from Syria to Medina for trade and during one of his trips, he was confronted by a bandit who drew his sword and intended to kill him.

“If it is my wealth that you desire, come and take it and leave me alone,” pleaded the trader.

“Killing you is a must, for if I let you go free, you will identify me to the authorities,” said the bandit.

“In that case give me respite till I have offered a two-rak'ah prayer,” requested the trader.

The bandit agreed and the trader engaged himself in prayers. Having completed the prayers, he raised his hands and beseeched: “O Lord! I have heard from Your Prophet that whoever places his trust in You shall remain protected. I have no helper in this desert and Your Grace is my only hope.”

Having placed all his trust in Allah, he had hardly completed his supplication when a rider on a white horse loomed in the distance. When he came close, the rider confronted the bandit and killed him with one stroke of his sword. Then, turning to the trader, he said: “O You, who places your trust in Allah! I have killed the enemy of Allah and He has delivered you from him.”

“Who are you that you have come to my assistance in this desert?” the trader asked.

“I am your *tawakkul* (trust in Allah). Allah (SWT) brought me out in the form of an Angel to help fight your enemy.” Having said this, he disappeared out of sight.

The trader fell down in prostration of thanksgiving to Allah. On arrival in Medina, he approached the Noble Prophet (saw) and narrated what had transpired.

“Indeed! Tawakkul raises a person to the height of success and the rank of a person who possesses it, is equivalent to the ranks of the Prophets, the friends of Allah, the righteous ones and the martyrs,” said the Prophet.

Review Questions

Q1. What is Tawakkul?

- Trust in Allah
- Trusting your heart
- Trusting other people

Q2. How many sons did Prophet Abraham (as) have?

- One
- Two
- None

Q3. What is the foundation stone of the Ka’bah known as?

- White Stone
- Black Stone
- Rock

ⁱReferences:

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