

The incredibly forgiving and understanding nature of the Messenger became very obvious during the final conquest of Makkah. He (saw) had ordered a complete news blackout so that the people of Makkah would have no intimation of the coming attack and no time to prepare for battle. Hatib, one of the most trusted followers of the Prophet, secretly despatched a female messenger with a letter to Makkah containing news of the intended attack. The Prophet (saw) received news from heaven of Hatib's action and sent 'Ali and Al-Miqdad with instructions to go after her. They overtook the messenger, and after a long search discovered the letter. The Prophet (saw) summoned Hatib and asked him for an explanation.

Hatib replied, "O Messenger of Allah! I have no affinity of blood with Quraish; there is only a kind of friendly relationship between them and myself. My family is at Makkah and there is no one to look after it or to offer protection to it. My position stands in striking contrast to that of the refugees whose families are secure due to their blood ties with Quraish. I felt that since I am not related to them, I should, for the safety of my children, earn their gratitude by doing good to them. I swear by Allah that I have not done this act as an apostate, forsaking Islam. I was prompted only by fear for my family's safety."

Syyedina 'Umar was furious and wanted to cut his head off as a hypocrite, but the Prophet (saw) accepted his excuse and granted him pardon. He then addressed 'Umar saying: "Hatib is one of those who fought in the battle of Badr. How do you know that he is a hypocrite? Allah is likely to look favourably on those who participated in that battle." Turning then to Hatib, he said: "Do as you please, for I have forgiven you."

The magnanimity of the Prophet to friend and foe alike earned him the undying love of those around him. After the peaceful conquest of Makkah, the Prophet (saw) entered his beloved birthplace from which he had been forced to flee previously. He had seen his close friends and followers tortured and killed without mercy simply for following his religion. Today, those killers stood before him in defeat; he was the victor and could do as he pleased. But he ordered no bloodshed or revenge. Instead, he asked them,

*"O you people of Quraish! What treatment do you think I am about to accord to you?"
They replied: "O noble brother and son of noble brother! We expect nothing but good from you."*

Upon this he said: "I speak to you in the same words as Yusuf spoke to his brothers: He said, 'No reproach on you this day,' [Al-Qur'an 12:92] go your way, for you are freed ones."

All the killers were pardoned. 'Ikrimah bin Abu Jahl, who had attacked Khalid's detachment at the time of the entry into Makkah, was forgiven. Wahshi, the murderer of the Prophet's beloved uncle Hamzah, and Hind, who had chewed Hamzah's liver, were both completely pardoned. The same generous treatment was given to Habar who had attacked the Prophet's daughter with a spear so grievously that she ultimately died of the fatal injuries. The chiefs of Quraish, who had led so many battles against the Muslims and who had encouraged the torture of Muslims, were pardoned once they had embraced Islam. They were Safwan bin Umayyah and Fudalah bin 'Umair. The latter had attempted to assassinate the Prophet while he was performing Tawaf in the Holy Sanctuary. This incredible magnanimity ultimately converted a terrible hypocrite into a faithful and devout believer.

The Quran ascribes the most beautiful characteristics to the person of the Prophet (saw):

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَاهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا (٤٥)

O Prophet! Lo! We have sent thee as a witness and a bringer of good tidings and a warner.
(Surah Al Ahzab 33:45)

The faith preached and practised by the Messenger was described as a good news and a light-giving lamp. He set a perfect example in his own life of a Muslim father, husband, friend, merchant, statesman, judge, soldier, teacher, ruler and much much more. He was a living Quran, proving that the word of Allah was not merely a Book of incantations but a practical handbook of guidance for all aspects of man's life. An even greater achievement of the Prophet [saw] was that he did not live by the Quran on his own but created a dynamic community of believers devoted to Allah, His Book and His Messenger. The community of Companions who studied from him went on to spread the word in dozens of countries which have remained Muslim to this day. This lone man made immense sacrifices and suffered dreadfully so that the religion of Allah may spread, and to him the Muslims owe a great deal of gratitude and debt. Their love for him must be intense and complete, as on it rests their salvation.

Chapter 3

IMPORTANCE OF THE SUNNAH

Imam Malik said: I was told that the Prophet [saw] said, "I am leaving among you two things. You will not go astray as long as you hold to them fast: The Book of Allah and my Sunnah."

(Agreed Upon)

It is evident from this narration that Muslims should follow the Quran and the Sunnah if they wish to save themselves from being misled by Satan.

Sunnah literally means 'way' or 'path' but in Islamic terminology, this usually means the way of the Prophet [saw]. It refers to the practical examples of his life and the instructions he gave to his companions about the way to implement Islam in their lives. The Sunnah of the Prophet [saw] combines the following categories:

- a) All the sayings of the Prophet [saw]
- b) All his actions.
- c) All those matters done in his presence to which he showed his approval, or did not show his displeasure.

The word 'Hadith' (pl. Ahadith) is commonly used as a synonym for Sunnah. The early scholars of Hadith devoted their lives to acquiring this knowledge in great depth, and through their efforts the Sunnah of the Prophet [saw] was preserved in the written form. Of the numerous collections of Hadith extant today, the following seven are the most important:

1. Sahih of Imam Bukhari (Muhammad b. Isma'il, d.256 A.H.)
2. Sahih of Imam Muslim (Muslim b. Hajjaj, d.261 A.H.)
3. Sunan of Imam Nasa'i (Ahmad b. Shu'aib, d.303 A.H.)
4. Sunan of Abu Da'ud (Sulaiman b. Ash'ath, d.275 A.H.)
5. Sunan of Tirmidhi (Muhammad b. 'Isa, d. 279 A.H.)
6. Sunan of Ibn Majah (Muhammad b. Yazid, d.273 A.H.)
7. Mu'atta of Imam Malik b. Anas (d. 179 A.H.)

These collections are known by the names of their compilers, and it is a common custom when quoting a Hadith to give a reference indicating the compilation in which it occurs. The reference "Agreed upon" (**Muttafiq Alaihi**) refers to the fact that the Hadith in question is to be found in both Sahih Al Bukhari and Sahih Muslim.

Islamic Shariah (Law) is derived from four main sources, which are the Quran, Sunnah, Ijma' (Consensus) and Qiyas (Analogy). The Sunnah thus plays a vital role in formulating Islamic Law. Both the Quran and the Sunnah are derived from divine revelation to Prophet Muhammad [saw] through Archangel Jibreel. The Quran is the text of this revelation, and the Sunnah is the practical implementation of it. To reject either is to reject Islam. Allah Almighty has said about the Prophet,

وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ (٣) إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ (٤)

Nor doth he speak of (his own) desire. (3) It is naught save an inspiration that is inspired, (4)
(Surah An Najm 53:3-4)

The Sunnah is in a unique position to the Quran as it supports and confirms Quranic verses, elaborates on matters mentioned only briefly by the Quran, and legislates on matters not mentioned in the Quran. There are a variety of subjects which the Quran mentions only briefly, leaving it to the Sunnah to explain the finer details. Prayer, wudu, zakah, fasting and hajj are all examples of this category. For example, the Quran exhorts believers,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَاغْسِلُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ إِلَى الْمَرَافِقِ وَامْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ إِلَى الْكَعْبَيْنِ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ جُنُبًا فَاطَّهَّرُوا وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَىٰ أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِّنْكُمْ مِنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لَمَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ مِّنْهُ مَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيَجْعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ حَرَجٍ وَلَٰكِنْ يُرِيدُ لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ وَلِيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (٦)

O ye who believe! When ye rise up for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands up to the elbows, and lightly rub your heads and (wash) your feet up to the ankles. And if ye are unclean, purify yourselves. And if ye are sick or on a journey, or one of you cometh from the closet, or ye have had contact with women, and ye find not water, then go to clean, high ground and rub your faces and your hands with some of it. Allah would not place a burden on you, but He would purify you and would perfect His grace upon you, that ye may give thanks. (6)

(Surah Al Ma'ida 5:6)

The detailed manner of performing wudu as well as the circumstances which nullify it are not explained by the Quran and can only be found in the Sunnah. Similarly, the Quran repeatedly exhorts believers to pray and it mentions the basic components of prayer such as ruku' (bowing), sujood (prostration) and du'a. But it was left to the Prophet [saw] to explain the minutiae of prayer from the first takbeer to the salaam, the numbers of rak'ahs for each prayer, their precise time-scales, and the correct du'as for each position of prayer. Without the Sunnah, the Muslims would have no set formula for their daily Salah, and the beautiful, even rows of worshippers praying together in unison would not be possible.

Zakah is mentioned again and again by the Quran, but merely as a simple order:

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَءَاتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَارْكَعُوا مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ (٤٣)

Establish worship, pay the poor-due, and bow your heads with those who bow (in worship).(43)

(Surah Al Baqarah 2:43)

The details of zakah, such as factors of Nisab (minimum quality), types of goods on which zakah has to be paid, and time factors are all explained in great detail by the Sunnah.

The fasting of Ramadan is also mentioned only briefly by the Quran:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ (١٨٣)

O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, even as it was prescribed for those before you, that ye may ward off (evil); (183)

(Surah Al Baqarah 2:183)

The finer details of fasting can only be found in the Sunnah. These include the importance of eating a Suhoor meal, the lawful and the prohibited during the fast, what to do on eating by mistake, a description of the immense rewards promised to those who fast, the recommended du'as for Ramadan, Tarawih prayers, the importance of Laylatul Qadr, and the injunctions regarding Eid celebrations.

Another example is that of the Hajj, which is a major collective act requiring an extensive body of literature to explain its many rituals, the dates and times of these rituals, different types of Hajj, exemptions and penalties, commandments about the Sacrifice, recommended du'as, Talbiyyah, commandments regarding Ihram, shaving of the head, and much more. The Quran mentions the Hajj only briefly, leaving it to the Sunnah to fill in the details.

The above examples thus show quite clearly that anyone who questions the importance of the Sunnah or abandons it altogether will have great difficulty in fulfilling some of the most basic requirements of Islam. But the Sunnah does more than elaborate on the Quran, as it also introduces new legislations not found in the Book of Allah. At times the Prophet [saw] was forced to do his own Ijtihad [Independent Judgement] while waiting for revelation in a difficult situation. If his ijihad was incorrect, Allah Almighty would correct him through the Quran. For example, when he prayed the Janaza prayer for Abdullah bin Ubayy, the leader of the hypocrites, the following verse was revealed:

وَلَا تُصَلِّ عَلَىٰ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَّتَّ أَبَدًا وَلَا تَقُمْ عَلَىٰ قَبْرِهِ إِنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ فَٰسِقُونَ (٨٤)

And never (O Muhammad) pray for one of them who dieth, nor stand by his grave. Lo! they disbelieved in Allah and His messenger, and they died while they were evil-doers. (84)

(Surah At Tawba 9:84)

The Prophet (saw) once vowed never to eat honey after a dispute between his wives but Allah Almighty quickly corrected him:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ لِمَ تُحَرِّمُ مَا أَحَلَّ اللَّهُ لَكَ تَبَتَّغَىٰ مَرَضَاتِ أَرْوَاجِكَ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (١)

O Prophet! Why bannest thou that which Allah hath made lawful for thee, seeking to please thy wives? And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. (1)

(Surah At Tahreem 66:1)

After the Battle of Badr the Prophet (saw) accepted ransom from the Makkan captives and freed them. Allah Almighty then revealed:

مَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ أَسْرَىٰ حَتَّىٰ يُتَخَنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ تُرِيدُونَ عَرَصَ الدُّنْيَا وَاللَّهُ يُرِيدُ الْآخِرَةَ
وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (٦٧)

It is not for any prophet to have captives until he hath made slaughter in the land. Ye desire the lure of this world and Allah desireth (for you) the Hereafter, and Allah is Mighty, Wise. (67)

(Surah Al Anfal 8:67)

Aside from these few and minor corrections, there is a huge compendium of legislation and commandments introduced by the Prophet [saw] which are part of the Islamic corpus. He urged his followers to use the Miswak [natural tooth stick] regularly, saying: “Were it not for the hardship it would cause my Ummah, I would have ordered them to use the siwak before every prayer.” The Prophet also added a number of voluntary prayers to the corpus of worship, such as tahajjud (night prayer), witr, eclipse prayer, prayer for rain, and istikhara (seeking Allah’s help). To the laws of zakah he added Zakat-ul-Fitr, which is payable in Ramadan before Eid, and must be paid on behalf of each and every individual in the house. To wudu he added permission to perform masah [wiping] over socks with time limitations. He also gave detailed instructions regarding financial transactions, Riba al-fadl, mortgages, lending money, endowments (waqf) and other land issues. The Sunnah also contains extensive advice on marital matters, such as the reasons for which spouses should be chosen, engagements, polygamy and its restrictions, relations forbidden in marriage, divorce, annulment, rights of divorcees and issues related to the successful raising of children. In matters of food, he forbade the eating of the flesh of donkeys, birds with claws and beasts with canine teeth. He also gave rulings regarding legal matters, testimonies, advice for the judge, wills and gifts.

Despite the fact that the Sunnah is one of the two primary components of Islamic Law, some Muslims are foolhardy enough to decry it as unimportant. Such an attitude can take its proponent outside the pale of Islam. The Prophet [saw] himself warned his followers regarding this issue, as he once told Al Miqdam Ma’dikareb:

“Soon a man from you, seated well on his cushion, will say about my hadith, ‘Between us and you is the Book of Allah. Whatever is halal in it we shall take as permitted. And whatever is haram in it we shall take as prohibited.’ Beware! Whoever rejects any of my sayings, he rejects Allah. Indeed the Messenger of Allah has prohibited things similar to those prohibited by Allah.”

The Quran has also urged Muslims again and again to seek guidance from both the Quran and Sunnah.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولَى الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِن تَنَزَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ
فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِن كُنتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا (٥٩)

O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the messenger and those of you who are in authority; and if ye have a dispute concerning any matter, refer it to Allah and the messenger if ye are (in truth) believers in Allah and the Last Day. That is better and more seemly in the end. (59)

(Surah An Nisaa 4:59)

Anas reported that the Prophet [saw] once said, *“I have left among you two things and you will never go astray as long as you abide by them. They are the Book of Allah and my Sunnah.”*

It is well known that the best people from the Muslim ummah were the Sahaba, the Companions of the Prophet, who met him, learned from him, and obeyed his injunctions to the letter. Their devotion to the Prophet was intense, and after his death they clung to the Sunnah just as he had ordered.

Once Abdullah b. Mas’ud quoted the following hadith during a sermon: *“May Allah curse the women who tattoo their bodies, those who pluck their eyebrows, those who make spaces between their teeth (for beauty), and those who change the creation of Allah.”*

A woman called Umm Yaqub from the tribe of Banu Asad heard of his talk and came to him, saying, ‘O Abu Abdul Rahman. It was reported to me that you have cursed such-and-such women!’

He replied, ‘Why should I not curse whom the Prophet cursed and who is also cursed in the Book of Allah?’

She said, ‘I have read all that is contained between the two covers (i.e. the Quran) but I did not find this verse.’

Ibn Mas’ud replied, “Had you read it well, you would have discovered it. Did you not read this verse, “So take what the messenger gives to you, and abstain from whatever he forbids.”

(Al Hashr 59:7)

The Companions of the Prophet [saw] clung tenaciously to the example of their beloved Messenger, making his life a model for their own as commanded by Allah Almighty. It is the duty of Muslims in all ages and in all walks of life to do the same as well.

Immediately after the death of the Prophet, the Muslim community was confronted with three major divisive challenges which had the potential to disunite and fragment the community. However, Syyedina Abu Bakr settled them amicably in the light of guidance left by the Prophet. The first issue was related to the appointment of the Khalifah. A large number of Muhajirin [those who emigrated from Makkah to Madina] and Ansar [the original inhabitants of Madina] gathered in Saqifa Bani Sa’ida where an argument developed on this issue. The Ansar proposed that the Khalifah should be chosen from either of the two communities, but Abu Bakr reminded them that the Prophet [saw] had said, *“Imams will be from the Quraysh as long as they have understanding of the religion.”* The Ansar conceded to his argument

immediately. Syyedina Umar then proposed the name of Abu Bakr as Khalifah. This was accepted unanimously by everyone present, and later all the inhabitants of Madina gave the oath of allegiance to their first Khalifah.

The second issue related to the issue of the place of the Prophet's burial. Abu Bakr put an end to the debate by quoting from the Prophet [saw]: "*A Prophet is buried where he takes his final breath.*" The Prophet was thus buried in the apartment of his wife, Umm al Mu'mineen Aisha, where he had died.

The third issue was related to the legacy left by the Prophet. When his daughter Fatima asked for her share of the inheritance, Abu Bakr reminded her of her father's words: "*We, the community of the Prophets, do not leave an inheritance. Whatever we leave behind is charity.*" Fatima accepted the decision.

Another example of a ruling taken from the Sunnah concerns infectious diseases. Following news of the conquest of Syria, Umar advanced to Damascus with a number of Companions. On reaching the outskirts of the Syrian town of 'Amwas, they heard the news of a plague in the town. Umar consulted the Companions as to whether or not they should enter the town, but the ensuing discussion came to an end when Abdul Rahman b. 'Awf quoted the Prophet: "*If you are in a community where an epidemic breaks out, do not move outside it. And if you are outside it when the epidemic breaks out, do not enter it.*" Accordingly Umar ordered his people to retreat. Someone remarked to him, 'Umar! Do you run away from a destiny decreed by Allah?' Umar replied, 'Yes, we run away from one destiny decreed by Allah to another destiny decreed by Allah.' Such was the wisdom of the Prophet [saw] that centuries ago introduced the concept of quarantine regulations.

These few examples illustrate the importance attached to the Sunnah by the Companions - may Allah be pleased with them all- and the obedience with which they followed prophetic injunctions. The Sunnah was treated neither as mundane nor as optional but as holy and obligatory. Just as the Companions rushed to learn and implement the Quran, so they rushed to acquaint themselves with and enforce the Sunnah. At the same time, the Quran and Sunnah were never understood or applied by the early Muslims in isolation but in context. For example, the Quran ordains that the hand of the thief be cut off as punishment. However, during the Caliphate of Syyedina Umar, the Muslims suffered a terrible drought that led to incredible suffering and poverty. Umar immediately suspended the hadd penalty for theft, saying that as he could not provide for his people's need for food, he would not punish them for trying to fulfil this basic need themselves.

Umar knew that the basic duty of Shariah is to provide justice for the citizens of the country, and that by enforcing the hadd penalty in a time of drought and poverty, this principle of justice would be lost. There is a great lesson in this for modern scholars and interpreters, who often apply Quranic injunctions without understanding the principles behind them.



LESSON
4

Chapter 1 PROPHET IBRAHIM

The events concerning Ibrahim, Messenger of Allah, have been narrated in twenty five surahs of the Quran. He is respected and honoured by all three monotheistic religions: Islam, Christianity and Judaism. His life was the epitome of devoutness to Allah, ceaseless efforts to please Allah and commitment to convincing the people around him of the truth.

Ibrahim was born and brought up in Babylonia (Iraq), among the people of Ur, where his father Azar earned a living by carving statues out of wood and stone to be used in worship. The people had abandoned the worship of one God and many of them now worshipped statues. Others worshipped celestial bodies such as the sun, moon, stars and planets, while others in the country worshipped their kings and leaders.

Ibrahim watched his father carving the idols out of stone with his own hands and then placing them in the temple where people gathered to pray, bow, cry and implore their requests. The temple was full of idols of all shapes and sizes. Ancient traditions relate an incident when Ibrahim was still a little boy. His father made a statue with very long ears and at Ibrahim's queries told him that the idol was Mardukh, god of gods. His long ears symbolized his deep and extensive knowledge. Ibrahim was only seven years old, but he began to laugh as the idol reminded him of donkeys in the street. Thus from a very early age, Ibrahim began to be aware of the idiocy and fallacy of idol-worship, and he rejected it completely.

A.

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ لِأَبِيهِ عَازِرًا أَتَّخِذُ أَصْنَامًا ءَالِهَةً إِنِّي أَرَىٰ أَرْبَابَكَ وَفَوْمَكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (٧٤) وَكَذَٰلِكَ نُرَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلِيَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُوقِنِينَ (٧٥) فَلَمَّا جَنَّ عَلَيْهِ اللَّيْلُ رَأَىٰ كَوْكَبًا قَالَ هَٰذَا رَبِّي فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَا أَحِبُّ الْآفِلِينَ (٧٦) فَلَمَّا رَأَىٰ الْقَمَرَ بَازِعًا قَالَ هَٰذَا رَبِّي فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَئِن لَّمْ يَهْدِنِي رَبِّي لَأَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الضَّالِّينَ (٧٧) فَلَمَّا رَأَىٰ الشَّمْسَ بَازِعَةً قَالَ هَٰذَا رَبِّي هَٰذَا أَكْبَرُ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَتْ قَالَ يُقَوْمِ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ (٧٨) إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (٧٩)

(Remember) when Abraham said unto his father Azar: Takest thou idols for gods? Lo! I see thee and thy folk in error manifest. (74) Thus did We show Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth that he might be of those possessing certainty: (75) When the night grew dark upon him he beheld a star. He said: This is my Lord. But when it set, he said: I love not things that set. (76) And when he saw the moon uprising, he exclaimed: This is my Lord. But when it set, he said: Unless my Lord guide me, I surely shall become one of the folk who are astray. (77) And when he saw the sun uprising, he cried: This is my Lord! This is greater! And when it set he exclaimed: O my people! Lo! I am free from all that ye associate (with Him). (78) Lo! I have turned my face toward Him Who created the heavens and the earth, as one by nature upright, and I am not of the idolaters. (79)

(Surah Al An'am 6:74-79)

1. While still very young, Ibrahim argued with his father about the fallacy of worshipping heavenly bodies such as the stars and moon which shone brightly at night, only to fade away when the sun appeared. These celestial bodies were obviously created and controlled by a powerful authority which caused them to appear and disappear according to set patterns. Logic demanded that this Creator be worshipped, not His creation.

2. Ibrahim dissociated himself completely from the Shirk of his people and announced himself to be a 'Hanif' [lit: one who submits himself totally to Allah]. The word 'Hanif' is used again by the Quran to describe Ibrahim:

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تُحَاجُّونَ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمَا أُنزِلَتِ التَّوْرَةُ وَالْإِنْجِيلُ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ (٦٥) هَآأَنْتُمْ هَآؤِلَآءِ حَآجَجْتُمْ فِيمَا لَكُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلِمَ تُحَآجُّونَ فِيمَا لَيْسَ لَكُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَآللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (٦٦) مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَكِن كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُسْلِمًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (٦٧) إِنَّ أَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِإِبْرَاهِيمَ لَلَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ وَهَذَا النَّبِيُّ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَآللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٦٨)

O People of the Scripture! Why will ye argue about Abraham, when the Torah and the Gospel were not revealed till after him? Have ye then no sense? (65) Lo! ye are those who argue about that whereof ye have some knowledge: Why then argue ye concerning that whereof ye have no knowledge? Allah knoweth. Ye know not. (66) Abraham was not a Jew, nor yet a Christian; but he was an upright man who had surrendered (to Allah), and he was not of the idolaters. (67) Lo! those of mankind who have the best claim to Abraham are those who followed him, and this Prophet and those who believe (with him); and Allah is the Protecting Guardian of the believers. (68)

(Surah Aal Imran 3:65-68)

The Jews and Christians claimed that Ibrahim was a Jew and a Christian respectively, but Allah Almighty rejects their claims. How can Ibrahim have belonged to either of these two religions when he lived centuries before the birth of both of them. He was instead a Hanif, a true believer in pure monotheism.

B.

وَأَذْكُرُ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا (٤١) إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ لِمَ تَعْبُدُ مَا لَا يَسْمَعُ وَلَا يُبْصِرُ وَلَا يُغْنِي عَنْكَ شَيْئًا (٤٢) يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي قَدْ جَاءَنِي مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَمْ يَأْتِكَ فَاتَّبِعْنِي أَهْدِكَ صِرَاطًا سَوِيًّا (٤٣) يَا أَبَتِ لَا تَعْبُدِ الشَّيْطَانَ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلرَّحْمَنِ عَصِيًّا (٤٤) يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يَمَسَّكَ عَذَابٌ مِنَ الرَّحْمَنِ فَتَكُونَ لِلشَّيْطَانِ وَلِيًّا (٤٥) قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَ أَنْتَ عَنْ ءَالِهَتِي يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ لَئِن لَّمْ تَتَنَّهُ لَآرْجَمَنَّكَ وَأَهْجُرَنِي مَلِيًّا (٤٦) قَالَ سَلِّمْ عَلَيْكَ سَأَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكَ رَبِّي إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِي حَفِيًّا (٤٧) وَأَعْتَرْتُكُمْ وَمَا تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَأَدْعُوا رَبِّي عَسَىٰ أَلَّا أَكُونَ بِدُعَاءِ رَبِّي شَقِيًّا (٤٨)

And make mention (O Muhammad) in the Scripture of Abraham. Lo! he was a saint, a prophet. (41) When he said unto his father: O my father! Why worshippeth thou that which heareth not nor seeth, nor can in aught avail thee? (42) O my father! Lo! there hath come

unto me of knowledge that which came not unto thee. So follow me, and I will lead thee on a right path. (43) O my father! Serve not the devil. Lo! the devil is a rebel unto the Beneficent. (44) O my father! Lo! I fear lest a punishment from the Beneficent overtake thee so that thou become a comrade of the devil. (45) He said: Rejectest thou my gods, O Abraham? If thou cease not, I shall surely stone thee. Depart from me a long while! (46) He said: Peace be unto thee! I shall ask forgiveness of my Lord for thee. Lo! He was ever gracious unto me. (47) I shall withdraw from you and that unto which ye pray beside Allah, and I shall pray unto my Lord. It may be that, in prayer unto my Lord, I shall not be unblest. (48)
(Surah Maryam 19:41-48)

Just as Ibrahim had rejected the worship of bright celestial bodies in the sky, so he rejected the worship of inanimate figures of wood and stone which were helpless and lifeless. He tried to dissuade his father from idolatry, and his discussions show that he did so with great wisdom, gentleness and courage. He did not mock or ridicule his father but spoke to him with kindness and affection. He knew that the idol-worshippers would ultimately be punished by Allah and he desperately wished to save his father from this fate. But Azar was stubborn and became angry, threatening to stone Ibrahim if he did not leave. Ibrahim did leave some time later but promised to pray to Allah to forgive his father. Later however, he realized that idol-worshippers would never be forgiven by Allah, so he dissociated himself totally from them.

وَمَا كَانَ اسْتِغْفَارُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ إِلَّا عَنْ مَوْعِدَةٍ وَعَدَّهَا إِيَّاهُ فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ أَنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ لِلَّهِ تَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُ
 إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَأَوَّاهٌ حَلِيمٌ (١١٤)

The prayer of Abraham for the forgiveness of his father was only because of a promise he had promised him, but when it had become clear unto him that he (his father) was an enemy to Allah he (Abraham) disowned him. Lo! Abraham was soft of heart, long-suffering. (114)
(Surah At Tawba 9:114)

C.

وَتَأْتِيهِمْ لَأَكِيدَنَّ أَصْنَامَكُمْ بَعْدَ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا مُدْبِرِينَ (٥٧) فَجَعَلَهُمْ جُذَاءً إِلَّا كَبِيرًا لَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ
 يَرْجِعُونَ (٥٨) قَالُوا مَنْ فَعَلَ هَذَا بِآلِهَتِنَا إِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٥٩) قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا فَتَى يَدْعُرُهُمْ
 يُقَالُ لَهُ- إِبْرَاهِيمُ (٦٠) قَالُوا فَاتُوا بِهِ عَلَى عَيْنِ النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْهَدُونَ (٦١) قَالُوا عَأْنَتَ
 فَعَلْتَ هَذَا بِآلِهَتِنَا يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ (٦٢) قَالَ بَلْ فَعَلَهُ كَبِيرُهُمْ هَذَا فَسَلُّوهُمْ إِنْ كَانُوا يَنْطِقُونَ
 (٦٣) فَرَجَعُوا إِلَى أَنفُسِهِمْ فَقَالُوا إِنَّكُمْ أَنْتُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ (٦٤) ثُمَّ نَكَسُوا عَلَى رُءُوسِهِمْ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ
 مَا هَؤُلَاءِ يَنْطِقُونَ (٦٥) قَالَ أَفَتَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَضُرُّكُمْ (٦٦) أَفِ
 لَكُمْ وَلِمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ (٦٧) قَالُوا حَرِّفُوهُ وَانصُرُوا آلِهَتَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ
 فَاعِلِينَ (٦٨) قُلْنَا يَنَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ (٦٩) وَأَرَادُوا بِهِ كَيْدًا فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ
 الْأَخْسَرِينَ (٧٠)

And, by Allah, I shall circumvent your idols after ye have gone away and turned your backs. (57) Then he reduced them to fragments, all save the chief of them, that haply they might have recourse to it. (58) They said: Who hath done this to our gods? Surely it must be some

evil-doer. (59) They said: We heard a youth make mention of them, who is called Abraham. (60) They said: Then bring him (hither) before the people's eyes that they may testify. (61) They said: Is it thou who hast done this to our gods, O Abraham? (62) He said: But this, their chief hath done it. So question them, if they can speak. (63) Then gathered they apart and said: Lo! ye yourselves are the wrong-doers. (64) And they were utterly confounded, and they said: Well thou knowest that these speak not. (65) He said: Worship ye then instead of Allah that which cannot profit you at all, nor harm you? (66) Fie on you and all that ye worship instead of Allah! Have ye then no sense? (67) They cried: Burn him and stand by your gods, if ye will be doing. (68) We said: O fire, be coolness and peace for Abraham, (69) And they wished to set a snare for him, but We made them the greater losers. (70)

(Surah Al Anbiyaa 21:57-70)

فَقَالَ إِنِّي سَقِيمٌ (٨٩) فَتَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ مُدْبِرِينَ (٩٠) فَرَاغَ إِلَىٰ ءَالِهَتِهِمْ فَقَالَ أَلَا تَأْكُلُونَ (٩١) مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَنْطِقُونَ (٩٢) فَرَاغَ عَلَيْهِمْ ضَرْبًا بِالْيَمِينِ (٩٣) فَأَقْبَلُوا إِلَيْهِ يَزْفُونَ (٩٤) قَالَ أَتَعْبُدُونَ مَا تَنْجِتُونَ (٩٥) وَاللَّهِ خَلَقَكُمْ وَمَا تَعْمَلُونَ (٩٦) قَالُوا أَبْنَاؤُا لَهُ بُنْيَانًا فَأَلْفُوهُ فِي الْجَحِيمِ (٩٧) فَأَرَادُوا بِهِ كَيْدًا فَجَعَلْنَاهُمُ الْأَسْفَلِينَ (٩٨)

Then said: Lo! I feel sick! (89) And they turned their backs and went away from him. (90) Then turned he to their gods and said: Will ye not eat? (91) What aileth you that ye speak not? (92) Then he attacked them, striking with his right hand. (93) And (his people) came toward him, hastening. (94) He said: Worship ye that which ye yourselves do carve (95) When Allah hath created you and what ye make? (96) They said: Build for him a building and fling him in the red-hotfire. (97) And they designed a snare for him, but We made them the undermost. (98)

(Surah As Saffat 37:89-98)

A great celebration was taking place on the banks of the river and the whole city was being deserted as the people flocked to the river bank. They asked Ibrahim to join them but he pretended to be unwell and so was left behind. He waited until the city was empty and went to the grand temple carrying a sharp axe. The temple also stood deserted as all the priests were participating in the festival. It was filled with idols of different sizes and shapes, each representing a different god. In front of them lay trays of food, left by the people as offerings to their gods. Ibrahim approached one of these idols and sarcastically asked it why it was not eating its meal which was now getting cold. Receiving no answer he asked again for a reply. He then raised his axe and began to smash all the idols in the temple except the largest one. Once his work was finished, he hung the axe around the neck of the large idol and returned home.

The people of Ur returned to their city to find their temple full of broken statues. Ibrahim was arrested and placed on public trial. He was asked to admit to the destruction, but he replied that they should question the biggest idol which had been found with the compromising axe around its neck. The destruction had to have been his doing. The interrogators replied that Ibrahim knew very well that the idols were incapable of speech or movement, and so could not be held responsible. This was the cue Ibrahim was waiting for, and with great wisdom he pounced on it. You have admitted of your own volition that the idols are inanimate and

helpless, he argued, so how can you justify worshipping them? The spectators realized the foolishness of their beliefs, but most of them were too arrogant to admit it and the decision was taken to burn Ibrahim alive. A huge pit was dug and fuel was collected for days. The firewood was ignited and as its flames began to lick the sky, Ibrahim's hands and feet were tied and he was catapulted into the pit. According to a hadith recorded in Bukhari, Ibrahim recited the following prayer repeatedly while waiting to be thrown into the fire: *"For me Allah is Sufficient and He is the best Disposer of affairs."*

His prayer was accepted and the Almighty commanded the fire to be cool for Ibrahim. As he fell into the fire, it was as if he was being lowered gently into a cool garden. The flames continued to burn around him, but not a spark touched Ibrahim. He sat in the middle of the inferno feeling cool and comfortable. When the fire finally died down, the people were shocked to see Ibrahim emerge from it unscathed. But the incident served only to strengthen their hatred for him.

D.

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِي حَاجَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ فِي رَبِّهِ أَنْ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ إِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّيَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ
قَالَ أَنَا أَحْيِي وَأُمِيتُ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْتِي بِالشَّمْسِ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ فَأْتِ بِهَا مِنَ الْمَغْرِبِ فَبُهِتَ
الَّذِي كَفَرَ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٢٥٨)

Bethink thee not of him who had an argument with Abraham about his Lord, because Allah had given him the kingdom; how, when Abraham said: My Lord is He Who giveth life and causeth death, he answered: I give life and cause death. Abraham said: Lo! Allah causeth the sun to rise in the East, so do thou cause it to come up from the West. Thus was the disbeliever abashed. And Allah guideth not wrongdoing folk. (258)

(Surah Al Baqarah 2:258)

King Namrud (Nimrod), King of Ur in Chaldea (Babylonia), was infuriated when he heard of Ibrahim's safe escape from the fire. He feared that such a miracle could cause his own claim to divinity to be challenged by Ibrahim and summoned him to the palace for a confrontation. When Ibrahim declared that Allah alone had the Power to give life and cause death, the King arrogantly boasted that he too could do the same. He was referring to the fact that as King, he had sole authority in the land to condemn people to death or pardon them. Ibrahim rejoined that as Allah caused the sun to rise from the East, the King should make it rise from the West. Namrud was left speechless by this reasoning and the debate came to an end.

E. Ibrahim decided that the time had come to leave his people, so he emigrated with the only two people who had believed in Allah: his wife Sarah and his nephew Lut. Lut was later sent as a Prophet to the despicable people of Sodom and Gomorrah. Ibrahim travelled through Babylonia to Palestine and then to Egypt, calling the people he met to the worship of one Lord. During his journey to Egypt an important incident took place which is recounted in the following hadith recorded in Sahih al Bukhari:

Abu Hurayra narrated that Allah's Apostle had said: "Abraham did not tell a lie except on three occasions. Twice for the Sake of Allah, when he said, "I am sick", and "I have not done this but the great idol has done it." The third was that while Abraham and Sarah were on a

journey, they passed through the territory of a tyrant. Someone said to the tyrant, "This man (i.e. Abraham) is accompanied by a very beautiful lady." So, he sent for Abraham and asked him about Sarah, saying, "Who is this lady?" Abraham said, "She is my sister." Abraham went to Sarah and said. "O Sarah! There are no believers on the surface of the earth except you and me. This man asked me about you and I have told him that you are my sister, so do not contradict my statement."

The tyrant then summoned Sarah but when he tried to take hold of her with his hand, his hand became stiff and he was unable to move it. He asked Sarah, "Pray to Allah for me, and I shall not harm you." So Sarah asked Allah to cure him and he was cured.

He tried to take hold of her for the second time, but his hand became as stiff or worse than before, leaving him even more confused. He again requested Sarah, "Pray to Allah for me, and I will not harm you." Sarah asked Allah again and he was cured.

He then called one of his guards (who had brought her) and said, "You have not brought me a human being but have brought me a devil."

The tyrant then gave Hajar as a servant girl to Sarah. Sarah came back to Abraham while he was praying. Abraham, gesturing with his hand, asked, "What has happened?" She replied, "Allah has ruined the evil plot of the infidel (or immoral person) and has given me Hajar for service."

Abu Hurayra then addressed his listeners saying, "That (Hajar) was your mother, O Bani Ma'-is-Sama (i.e. the Arabs, the descendants of Ishmael, Hajar's son)." (Bukhari)

When the King allowed Sarah to leave, he gave her a woman called Hajirah as a servant. Sarah was old and sterile, and the couple had no children. She decided to present Hajirah to Ibrahim as his second wife, and Hajirah later gave birth to Ibrahim's first son Ismail when Ibrahim was 86 years of age!

F. Ibrahim settled in Palestine with his two wives but he was commanded by Allah to take Hajirah and the infant Ismail to the barren and unpopulated valley of Makkah. This important incident is fleetingly and incorrectly referred to as "the wilderness of Paran" in the Bible (Genesis 21:21). Ismail thus became the founding ancestor of the Arabs in Makkah, and Prophet Muhammad [saw] was able to trace his genealogy directly back to Prophet Ibrahim through him. Ibrahim took his wife and baby son to Makkah and immediately returned to Sarah in Palestine. One can barely imagine the pain he must felt at having to abandon his wife and baby in a deserted valley with no food or water. But he was a Prophet of Allah and had complete trust in his Lord. As he left he prayed for them,

رَبَّنَا إِنِّي أَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ رَبَّنَا لِيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ فَاجْعَلْ أَفْئِدَةً مِنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوِي إِلَيْهِمْ وَارْزُقْهُمْ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْكُرُونَ (٣٧) رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ تَعْلَمُ مَا نُخْفِي وَمَا نُعْلِنُ وَمَا يَخْفَى عَلَى اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ (٣٨)

Our Lord! Lo! I have settled some of my posterity in an uncultivable valley near unto Thy holy House, our Lord! that they may establish proper worship; so incline some hearts of men that they may yearn toward them, and provide Thou them with fruits in order that they may be thankful. (37) Our Lord! Lo! Thou knowest that which we hide and that which we proclaim. Nothing in the earth or in the heaven is hidden from Allah. (38)

(Surah Ibrahim 14:37-38)

The miraculous incident of the emergence of the blessed spring of Zamzam water took place in Makkah. Hajirah was standing in a barren valley overlooked on both ends by two mountains called As Safaa and Al Marwa. Desperately seeking water and help, she ran up and down the valley and the two mountains seven times. This desperate run of hers is remembered by millions of Muslims every year when they perform the Sa'ee (walking seven times between As Safaa and Al Marwa) during both the Hajj and Umrah. After her seventh run she noticed an angel digging the sand near her son until water gushed out. This spring of water known as Zamzam produces water to this day in Makkah.

Some time later, a native Arab tribe called Jurhum were passing that way and asked Hajirah for permission to settle down near the oasis. A community thus became established in Makkah. The Jurhum spoke pure, unadulterated Arabic and Ismail grew up in their company, learning to speak the Arabic language from them. Prophet Muhammad [saw] was a direct descendant of Ismail and spoke the same pure dialect of Arabic.

G. Ibrahim would sometimes return to Makkah from Palestine to see his family. During one of these trips he and Ismail were commanded to build the Ka'ba, the House of Allah, in Makkah. *"Then they raised the foundations of the House. Ismail brought the stones while Ibrahim built, and when the walls became high, Ismail brought this stone and put it for Ibrahim, who stood on it and carried on building. As Ismail handed him the stones, both recited, "Our Lord! Accept this service from us. Verily, you are the All Hearer, the All Knower."*

(Sahih al Bukhari)

Ibrahim stood on a stone and built the walls, while Ismail fetched the stones. It was such a mammoth task that Ibrahim's footprints became imprinted on the stone on which he stood. This stone is known as Maqam Ibrahim and is kept on display near the Ka'ba. Pilgrims performing Hajj or Umrah have been ordered to pray two rak'ahs of prayer near it when they have completed the Tawaf of the Ka'ba.

وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَمْنَا وَاتَّخِذُوا مِن مَّقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّى وَعَهِدْنَا إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ
وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَن طَهِّرَا بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْعَاكِفِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ (١٢٥)

And when We made the House (at Mecca) a resort for mankind and sanctuary, (saying): Take as your place of worship the place where Abraham stood (to pray). And We imposed a duty upon Abraham and Ishmael, (saying): Purify My house for those who go around and those who meditate therein and those who bow down and prostrate themselves (in worship). (125)
(Surah al Baqarah 2:125).

H.

قَالَ إِنِّي ذَاهِبٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي سَيِّدِينَ (٩٩) رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (١٠٠) فَبَشَّرْنَاهُ بِغُلَامٍ حَلِيمٍ (١٠١) فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعَىٰ قَالَ يَبْنَئِي إِنِّي أَرَىٰ فِي الْمَنَامِ أَنِّي أَذْبَحُكَ فَانظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَىٰ قَالَ آتَيْتَ أَعْمَلَ مَا تُوَمَّرُ سَتَجِدُنِي إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ (١٠٢) فَلَمَّا أَسْلَمَا وَتَلَّهُ لِلْجَبِينِ (١٠٣) وَنَدَيْنَاهُ أَنْ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ (١٠٤) قَدْ صَدَّقْتَ الرُّعْيَا إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١٠٥) إِنَّ لَنَا لَهُوَ الْبَلَاءُ الْمُبِينُ (١٠٦) وَفَدَيْنَاهُ بِذَبْحٍ عَظِيمٍ (١٠٧) وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ (١٠٨) لَمْ نَحْمِلْ عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ (١٠٩) كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١١٠) إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١١١) فَبَشَّرْنَاهُ بِإِسْحَاقَ نَبِيًّا مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (١١٢)

And he said: Lo! I am going unto my Lord Who will guide me. (99) My Lord! Vouchsafe to me of the righteous. (100) So We gave him tidings of a gentle son. (101) And when (his son) was old enough to walk with him, (Abraham) said: O my dear son, I have seen in a dream that I must sacrifice thee. So look, what thinkest thou? He said: O my father! Do that which thou art commanded. Allah willing, thou shalt find me of the steadfast. (102) Then, when they both surrendered (to Allah), and he had flung him down upon his face, (103) We called to him: O Abraham! (104) Thou hast already fulfilled the vision. Lo! thus do We reward the good. (105) Lo! that verily was a clear test. (106) Then We ransomed him with a tremendous victim. (107) And We left for him among the later folk (the salutation): (108) Peace be upon Abraham! (109) Thus do We reward the good. (110) Lo! he is one of Our believing servants. (111) And we gave him tidings of the birth of Isaac, a prophet of the righteous. (112) (Surah As Saffat 37:99-112)

1. This is the famous incident of the sacrifice. Ibrahim had prayed to Allah for virtuous offspring, and this prayer had been granted. His son Ismail was extremely virtuous and patient. While the boy was still young, Ibrahim saw a dream in which he was sacrificing his most precious possession, his only son. When he related this dream, Ismail immediately consented to be sacrificed without the slightest hesitation. The Quran uses the word 'As' to describe the complete surrendering of both father and son to the dictates of their Lord. The words Islam and Muslim are both derivatives of this verb; Islam is the religion of unconditional obedience to Allah, and a Muslim is someone who submits himself entirely to Allah. The claim of the Jews and Christians that Ibrahim followed their religions is erroneous and false, as Ibrahim's life was dedicated to obeying Allah.

مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَكِنْ كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُّسْلِمًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (٦٧) إِنَّ أَوْلَىٰ النَّاسِ بِإِبْرَاهِيمَ لَلَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ وَهَذَا النَّبِيُّ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٦٨)

Abraham was not a Jew, nor yet a Christian; but he was an upright man who had surrendered (to Allah), and he was not of the idolaters. (67) Lo! those of mankind who have the best claim to Abraham are those who followed him, and this Prophet and those who believe (with him); and Allah is the Protecting Guardian of the believers. (68) (Surah Aal Imran 3:67-68)

2. Ibrahim placed his son's head on a stone and sharpened his knife for the sacrifice. But Allah Almighty substituted Ismail for a ram which was sacrificed, an incident which is commemorated annually by millions of Muslims all over the globe on the festival of Eid al Adha, when each household offers an animal such as a sheep or camel in sacrifice.

Ibrahim was then given the good news of another son, Ishaq (Isaac), who would also be a Prophet. Ishaq was born to Sarah in Palestine when Ismail was already 14 years old.

It is well known that the numerous editors of the Bible have changed both the Old and New Testaments extensively over the centuries. One of their aims in doing so was to eradicate any references to Makkah and the Arabs. The accounts of Ibrahim's travels from Palestine to Makkah were removed completely, and the object of the sacrifice became Ishaq instead of Ismail. Yet despite all the alterations the Bible has witnessed, it still contains some original evidence to show that the boy to be sacrificed was Ismail but his name was later substituted with that of Ishaq. The Bible narrates that God asked Abraham to sacrifice his 'only son,' contradicting the Bible's own claim that Isaac was to be sacrificed, as Isaac was born 14 years after the birth of Ismail. This proves that the incident of the sacrifice must have taken place before Isaac's birth when Ismail was the only child in the family.

"And He said, take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest and get thee in the land of Moriah and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

(Genesis 22/22)

The incident of the sacrifice probably took place at the hill of Marwah in Makkah, but the editors of the Bible changed this to "Moriah" in order to remove any connections with Makkah. (For further details, please refer to Maulana Hamiduddin Farahi's (d. 1930) scholarly treatise entitled, 'The correct opinion about who was to be sacrificed.')

3. After the incident of the sacrifice, Ibrahim was declared by the Quran to be a **Muhsin** (someone who fulfills the commandments of Allah in the best possible way). He was also rewarded with the good news of another son, Ishaq (Isaac).

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ نَافِلَةً وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا صَالِحِينَ (٧٢) وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أئِمَّةً يَتَّبِعُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا
وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ وَكَانُوا لَنَا عَابِدِينَ (٧٣)

And We bestowed upon him Isaac, and Jacob as a grandson. Each of them We made righteous. (72) And We made them chiefs who guide by Our command, and We inspired in them the doing of good deeds and the right establishment of worship and the giving of alms, and they were worshippers of Us (alone). (73)

(Surah Al Anbiyaa 21:72-73)

Ibrahim was also given the promise that many of his descendants through his two sons would be Prophets of Allah, a promise that culminated in Muhammad [saw], seal of the Prophets.

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ كُلًّا هَدَيْنَا وَنُوحًا هَدَيْنَا مِن قَبْلُ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِهِ دَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ
 وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُوسُفَ وَمُوسَى وَهَارُونَ وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٨٤) وَزَكَرِيَّا وَيَحْيَى وَعِيسَى
 وَإِلْيَاسَ كُلٌّ مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (٨٥) وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِلْيَاسَ وَيُونُسَ وَلُوطًا وَكُلًّا فَضَّلْنَا عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ
 (٨٦)

And We bestowed upon him Isaac and Jacob; each of them We guided; and Noah did We guide aforetime; and of his seed (We guided) David and Solomon and Job and Joseph and Moses and Aaron. Thus do We reward the good. (84) And Zachariah and John and Jesus and Elias. Each one (of them) was of the righteous. (85) And Ishmael and Elisha and Jonah and Lot. Each one of them did We prefer above (Our) creatures, (86)
 (Surah Al An'am 6:84-86)

I.

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ بِالْبُشْرَى قَالُوا سَلَامًا قَالَ سَلَامٌ فَمَا لَبِثَ أَن جَاءَ بِعِجْلٍ حَنِيذٍ (٦٩)
 فَلَمَّا رَأَى أَيْدِيَهُمْ لَا تَصِلُ إِلَيْهِ نَكِرَهُمْ وَأَوْجَسَ مِنْهُمْ خِيفَةً قَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَى قَوْمِ لُوطٍ
 (٧٠) وَأَمْرَأَتُهُ قَائِمَةٌ فَضَحِكَتْ فَبَشَّرْنَاهَا بِإِسْحَاقَ وَمِن وَرَاءِ إِسْحَاقَ يَعْقُوبَ (٧١) قَالَتْ
 يَوَيْلَتَىٰ أَأَلِدُ وَأَنَا عَجُوزٌ وَهَذَا بَعْلِي شَيْخًا إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عَجِيبٌ (٧٢) قَالُوا أَتَعْجَبِينَ مِنْ أَمْرِ
 اللَّهِ رَحِمَتُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ إِنَّهُ حَمِيدٌ مَّجِيدٌ (٧٣) فَلَمَّا ذَهَبَ عَن إِبْرَاهِيمَ الرَّوْعُ
 وَجَاءَتْهُ الْبُشْرَى يُجَادِلُنَا فِي قَوْمِ لُوطٍ (٧٤) إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَحَلِيمٌ أَوَّاهٌ مُنِيبٌ (٧٥) يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ
 أَعْرِضْ عَن هَذَا إِنَّهُ قَدْ جَاءَ أَمْرُ رَبِّكَ وَإِنَّهُمْ آتِيهِمْ عَذَابٌ غَيْرُ مَرْدُودٍ (٧٦)

And Our messengers cam unto Abraham with good news. They said: Peace! He answered: Peace! and delayed not to bring a roasted calf. (69) And when he saw their hands reached not to it, he mistrusted them and conceived a fear of them. They said: Fear not! Lo! we are sent unto the folk of Lot. (70) And his wife, standing by laughed when We gave her good tidings (of the birth) of Isaac, and, after Isaac, of Jacob. (71) She said: Oh woe is me! Shall I bear a child when I am an old woman, and this my husband is an old man? Lo! this is a strange thing! (72) They said: Wonderest thou at the commandment of Allah? The mercy of Allah and His blessings be upon you, O people of the house! Lo! He is Owner of Praise, Owner of Glory! (73) And when the awe departed from Abraham, and the glad news reached him, he pleaded with Us on behalf of the folk of Lot. (74) Lo! Abraham was mild, imploring, penitent. (75) (It was said) O Abraham! Forsake this! Lo! thy Lord's commandment hath gone forth, and lo! there cometh unto them a doom which cannot be repelled. (76)
 (Surah Hud 11:69-76)

1. Ibrahim returned to Palestine after the incident of the sacrifice. One day he was sitting outside his home when three strangers came to visit him. They were in fact the angels Jibreel, Israfil and Michail, in the shape of humans, who had been sent to destroy the evil people of Sodom (Sadum) and Gomorrah (Amurah).

Sodom lay on the western shore of the Dead Sea and Ibrahim's nephew Lut had been sent as a Prophet to them. The people were extremely evil and Allah Almighty finally decided to destroy them completely. Ibrahim rushed to prepare food for his guests and being of a

generous disposition, he offered them a whole roasted calf. But he began to feel afraid of them when he saw that they did not touch the food. They put him at ease by revealing their identities as well as their mission. At the same time, Ibrahim's barren wife Sarah was given the good news of her first son Ishaq. She was joyful but incredulous; how could she conceive a child when she and her husband were both elderly. The angels reassured her, reminding her of Allah's Power and Greatness. They ended by sending salutations of Allah's Mercy and Grace on the House (Ahl al Bayt) of Ibrahim.

The term Ahl al bayt used in verse 73 literally means "People of the house," and included Ibrahim, his wife and his children. Prophet Ibrahim and his family were the first household to be addressed in this respectful manner, and the same term was later used to address Prophet Muhammad [saw] and his family.

وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَىٰ وَأَقِمْنَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتِينَ الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِعْنَ
 اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا (٣٣)

And stay in your houses. Bedizen not yourselves with the bedizement of the Time of Ignorance. Be regular in prayer, and pay the poor-due, and obey Allah and His messenger. Allah's wish is but to remove uncleanness far from you, O Folk of the Household, and cleanse you with a thorough cleansing. (33)

(Surah Al Ahzab 33:33)

2. When Ibrahim heard the mission of the angels, his gentle and forgiving nature forced him to plead clemency for the doomed people. But the angels remained unmoved as Allah's Wrath had now been decreed. Ibrahim's petition on behalf of the people of Lut is given in more detail in the Bible.

"The men turned away and went towards Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the LORD. Then Abraham approached him and said: "Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing – to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the judge of all the earth do right?"

The LORD said, "If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake."

Then Abraham spoke up again: "Now that I have been so bold to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes, what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city because of five people?"

"If I find forty five there," he said, "I will not destroy it."

Once again he spoke to him, "What if only forty are found there?"

He said, "For the sake of forty I will not do it."

Then he said, "May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak. What if only thirty can be found there?"

He answered, "I will not do it if I find thirty there."

Abraham said, "Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, what if only twenty can be found there?"

He said, "For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it."

Then he said, "May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?"

He answered, "For the sake of ten I will not destroy it."

When the LORD had finished speaking with Abraham, he left, and Abraham returned home.

(Genesis 18: 22-33)

(Further details on Prophet Ibrahim and Lut will follow in Lessons 5 and 6.)

Chapter 2

HADITH: HYPOCRISY (NIFAQ)

Abu Hurayra reported that the Messenger of Allah said: *“The Signs of a hypocrite are three: When he speaks, he lies. When he makes a promise, he breaks it. When he is entrusted with something, he breaks the trust.”*

(Agreed upon)

A. THE REPORTER: ABU HURAYRA

His full name was Abd al Rahman b. Sakhr and he belonged to the tribe of Daws. He embraced Islam in the sixth year of the Hijrah when the Prophet (saw) took a military expedition to Khaybar. He memorized thousands of Ahadith of the Prophet (saw) and so played a major role in preserving the Prophet’s sayings. As he entered Islam late, he made it a habit to acquire Ahadith from the other Companions. Eager to gain knowledge, he became a humble and constant student of the Prophet (saw), accompanying him whenever possible and memorizing his words. By the grace of a prayer that the Prophet (saw) once made for him, he never forgot whatever he learned. According to a narration in Bukhari, *Abu Hurayra once said to the Messenger of Allah, “I hear many of your sayings, but I forget them.”*

The Prophet said to him, “Spread out your cloak.”

I did so, and he moved his hands as if filling them with something and then emptying it into the cloak.

He said “Take this and wrap your body with it.”

I did so and never forgot a single Hadith again.”

Abu Huraira became a prolific reporter of Hadith because of his great thirst for knowledge. He once commented, “Our Muhajir brothers (emigrants from Makkah) used to be busy in the market with their business, and our Ansari brothers (Muslims of Madina who helped the Muhajirs) were busy with their properties. But I used to stick to Allah’s Messenger (saw) so that I might fill my stomach with his teachings while others were absent, and I used to memorise those things that they did not memorise.”

He was given the **kunya** of Abu Hurayra (father of a small kitten) because he owned a small cat in his youth. (Note: A *kunya* is a traditional Arab custom of calling a person by a nickname as a mark of respect or affection. Some leading figures of Islamic history are known by their *kunya*, while others are known by their proper names. The *kunya* always begins with *Abu* (Father of...) for a male and *Umm* (Mother of...) for a female. It is common practice for parents to take the name of their first-born child as their *kunya*. The Prophet’s *kunya* was Abu Qasim, the title he took after the birth of his first son Qasim, who died in infancy.)

Abu Hurayra served as governor of Bahrain during the caliphate of Umar, and as a Qadi and Governor of Madina during the caliphates of Uthman and Muawiya respectively. He died in 59 AH at the age of seventy eight years. According to Ibn Jawzi, he reported 5,374 Ahadith. Imam Ahmad transmitted 3,848 Ahadith from him in his collection called Musnad Ahmad.

THE TRANSMITTER: MUSLIM B. HAJJAJ.

Imam Muslim was born in 206 AH (821 CE) at Naisabur (Nishapur, Iran). Like his contemporary, Imam Bukhari, he travelled extensively in order to acquire the sayings of the Prophet (saw) from transmitters throughout the world. His collection of Hadith is known as Sahih Muslim and contains approximately four thousand Ahadith, excluding any repetitions. His collection is considered to be equal that of Sahih Bukhari by most of the traditionists, and second to it by some of them.

The events surrounding the death of Imam Muslim (in 261 AH) demonstrate the intense love for knowledge that he had, a love that eclipsed all concerns for his personal welfare. It is reported that he was once asked about a particular Hadith but he could not recall the details, so he went home and buried himself in his books, looking for the Hadith in question. A sack full of dates lay in the room and he helped himself to these dates while working. Deep in his research, he did not realize that he had eaten the entire sack of dates until it was too late. Severe stomach pains were followed soon afterwards by his death.

EXPLANATION OF THE TEXT

A true believer (**Mu'min**) obeys the commandments of Allah with sincerity and true devotion. His soul is cleansed, his intentions are pure and his faith is strong. He desires neither fame nor fortune through his obedience to Allah, but seeks only the pleasure of Allah and eternal salvation from hell.

There are two types of hypocrites (**Munafiq**). The first is outwardly a Muslim but a disbeliever at heart (**Nifaq I'tiqadi – hypocrisy in belief**). His hypocrisy may be a conscious decision, possibly feigning Islam simply to enjoy the material advantages of becoming a Muslim. This may be in order to marry a Muslim woman, to inherit from Muslim relatives, to gain war booty, or to avoid paying the jizya (a tax paid by non-Muslims under Muslim rule which promises them protection at times of war and absolves them from military service). Such a person is arrogant enough to imagine that he can deceive Allah; he may deceive the Muslims, but never his Lord. Hypocrisy appeared for the first time in Madina after the battle of Badr. The Muslims were gaining in strength and some inhabitants of Madina decided to feign faith in order to gain financially. They showed their true colours and loyalties during the wars with the Makkans by secretly helping the Quraish with information and refusing to go into battle, despite knowing that the Muslims were in the minority and needed all the manpower available. In private gatherings they would mock the generosity of the believers, question the commandments of the Quran and belittle the Prophet (saw). Allah Almighty exposed their hypocrisy and promised never to forgive such people.

In modern times such hypocrisy has become very common and rears its ugly head every time Islam is in the spotlight; one sees experts rushing to sympathise with the enemy, to deride the cause of the Muslims, to look for contradictions in the Quran, to jeer at Islamic rituals, even to defame and revile the Messenger of Islam.

فَأَعْقَبَهُمْ نِفَاقًا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ يَلْقَوْنَهُ بِمَا أَخْلَفُوا اللَّهَ مَا وَعَدُوهُ وَبِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ (٧٧)
 أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ سِرَّهُمْ وَنَجْوَاهُمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَّمُ الْغُيُوبِ (٧٨) الَّذِينَ يَلْمِزُونَ الْمُطَّوِّعِينَ
 مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فِي الصَّدَقَاتِ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ إِلَّا جُهْدَهُمْ فَيَسْخَرُونَ مِنْهُمْ سَخِرَ اللَّهُ مِنْهُمْ وَلَهُمْ
 عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٧٩) اسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ أَوْ لَا تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ إِنْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ سَبْعِينَ مَرَّةً فَلَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ
 ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ (٨٠) فَرِحَ الْمُخَلَّفُونَ بِمَقْعَدِهِمْ
 خِلَافَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ وَكَرِهُوا أَنْ يُجَاهِدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَقَالُوا لَا تَنْفِرُوا فِي
 الْحَرِّ قُلْ نَارُ جَهَنَّمَ أَشَدُّ حَرًّا لَوْ كَانُوا يَفْقَهُونَ (٨١) فَلْيَضْحَكُوا قَلِيلًا وَلْيَبْكُوا كَثِيرًا جَزَاءً بِمَا
 كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (٨٢) فَإِنْ رَجَعَكَ اللَّهُ إِلَى طَائِفَةٍ مِنْهُمْ فَاسْتَأْذَنُوكَ لِلْخُرُوجِ فَقُلْ لَنْ تَخْرُجُوا مَعِيَ
 أَبَدًا وَلَنْ تُقَاتِلُوا مَعِيَ عَدُوًّا إِنَّكُمْ رَضِيتُمْ بِالْقُعُودِ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ فَاقْعُدُوا مَعَ الْخَالِفِينَ (٨٣) وَلَا تَصَلِّ
 عَلَى أَحَدٍ مِنْهُمْ مَاتَ أَبَدًا وَلَا تَقُمْ عَلَى قَبْرِهِ إِنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ
 (٨٤) وَلَا تَعْجَبْكَ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَأَوْلَادُهُمْ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَتَزْهَقَ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَهُمْ
 كَافِرُونَ (٨٥) وَإِذَا أَنْزَلْتَ سُورَةَ أَنْ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَجَاهِدُوا مَعَ رَسُولِهِ اسْتَأْذَنَكَ أُولُوا الطَّوْلِ
 مِنْهُمْ وَقَالُوا ذَرْنَا نَكُنْ مَعَ الْقَاعِدِينَ (٨٦) رَضُوا بِأَنْ يَكُونُوا مَعَ الْخَوَالِفِ وَطُبِعَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ
 فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ (٨٧)

So He hath made the consequence (to be) hypocrisy in their hearts until the day when they shall meet Him, because they broke their word to Allah that they promised Him, and because they lied. (77) Know they not that Allah knoweth both their secret and the thought that they confide, and that Allah is the Knower of Things Hidden? (78) Those who point at such of the believers as give the alms willingly and such as can find naught to give but their endeavours, and deride them - Allah (Himself) derideth them. Theirs will be a painful doom. (79) Ask forgiveness for them (O Muhammad), or ask not forgiveness for them; though thou ask forgiveness for them seventy times Allah will not forgive them. That is because they disbelieved in Allah and His messenger, and Allah guideth not wrongdoing folk. (80) Those who were left behind rejoiced at sitting still behind the messenger of Allah, and were averse to striving with their wealth and their lives in Allah's way. And they said: Go not forth in the heat! Say: The fire of hell is more intense of heat, if they but understood. (81) Then let them laugh a little: they will weep much, as the reward of what they used to earn. (82) If Allah bring thee back (from the campaign) unto a party of them and they ask of thee leave to go out (to fight), then say unto them: Ye shall never more go out with me nor fight with me against a foe. Ye were content with sitting still the first time. So sit still, with the useless. (83) And never (O Muhammad) pray for one of them who dieth, nor stand by his grave. Lo! they disbelieved in Allah and His messenger, and they died while they were evil-doers. (84) Let not their wealth nor their children astonish thee! Allah purposeth only to punish them thereby in the world, and that their souls shall pass away while they are disbelievers. (85) And when a surah is revealed (which saith): Believe in Allah and strive along with His messenger, the men of wealth among them still ask leave of thee and say: Suffer us to be with those who sit (at home). (86) They are content that they should be with those who remain behind and their hearts are sealed, so that they apprehend not. (87)

(Surah At Tawba 9: 77 – 87)

The second and more common type of hypocrisy (**Nifaq ‘Amali – hypocrisy in actions**) is unconscious and so deep and hidden that the person may not even be aware of it. Such a person thinks of himself as a Muslim and a Believer, and he hopes for Paradise in the Hereafter. However, he has acquired some characteristics of hypocrisy which, unknown to him, are destroying his good deeds as fast as he does them. Various ahadith enumerate many dozens of characteristics of hypocrisy; the more of these characteristics a person possesses, the closer he is to becoming a pure hypocrite. This is very worrying as hypocrites have been promised severe punishment by the Quran:

إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ فِي الدَّرَكِ الْأَسْفَلِ مِنَ النَّارِ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُمْ نَصِيرًا (١٤٥)

Lo! The hypocrites (will be) in the lowest deep of the Fire, and thou wilt find no helper for them; (145)

(Surah An Nisaa 4:145)

It is the duty of the sincere believer to identify the various characteristics of hypocrisy, and if he finds any of them within himself, to struggle until he has rid himself of them. The hadith under discussion mentions three of the most common signs of Nifaq. The hypocrite tells lies with such ease that falsehood becomes part of his normal speech. He has no honour for the promises he makes and will break them without a second's thought. He will also betray his trust, whether confidences or possessions. He can never be entrusted with anything as he knows neither honour nor truth.

Hypocrisy is dangerous because the person in question may think that he is doing good deeds, but in fact they are being rejected because the intention behind them is not pure. Even dying for the cause of Allah in jihad may not be accepted if the person was a hypocrite.

‘Utba ibn ‘Abd as-Sulami narrated that the Prophet [saw] said, “*The slain are of three types: A believer who strives with his property and person in Allah’s cause and when he meets the enemy he fights until he is killed. (Of him the Prophet [saw] said that the martyr who has suffered trials is in Allah’s tent under His Throne and is not excelled by the Prophets except in the degree of the prophetic office.)*

A believer who mingles a good deed with an evil deed, who fights with his person and property in Allah’s cause, fighting until he meets the enemy and is killed. (Of him the Prophet [saw] said that his martyrdom has obliterated his sins and his errors, for the sword obliterates errors, and he will be introduced by whichever of the gates of Paradise he wishes).

A hypocrite who strives with his person and property, and when he meets the enemy he fights until he is killed; but that one will go to Hell, for the sword does not obliterate hypocrisy.”
(Mishkat Al-Masabih)

Laziness in worship

Prayer is the most basic requirement from a Muslim, but it is Allah alone who can distinguish between the prayer of a believer and that of a hypocrite. Although the latter does pray, his heart is not in his worship. He wishes that others see him praying and will lengthen his worship to win their admiration. But when no-one is watching, he will pray hastily and will remember Allah very little in his supplications.

إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَهُوَ خَادِعُهُمْ وَإِذَا قَامُوا إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ قَامُوا كُسَالَى يُرَاءُونَ النَّاسَ
وَلَا يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا (١٤٢)

Lo! the hypocrites seek to beguile Allah, but it is He Who beguileth them. When they stand up to worship they perform it languidly and to be seen of men, and are mindful of Allah but little; (142)

(Surah An Nisa 4:142)

Abdullah ibn Mas'ud narrated that the Prophet [saw] said, "I have seen the time when no one stayed away from prayer except a hypocrite whose hypocrisy was well known, or a sick man, but if the sick man could walk between two persons he would come to prayer. He also said: The Messenger of Allah [saw] taught us the path of right guidance, among which is the prayer in the mosque in which the Adhan is called."

(Sahih Muslim)

Anas ibn Malik narrated that Al Ala' ibn Abdurrahman said, "We went to visit Anas ibn Malik after Dhuhr and he stood up and prayed Asr. When he finished his prayer, we mentioned performing prayers early in their time, or he mentioned it, and he said that he heard the Prophet [saw] say, "The prayer of the hypocrite is that one of them sits until the sun becomes yellow and is between the horns of Shaytan, or on the horns of Shaytan, and then gets up and rattles four rak'as, hardly remembering Allah in them at all."

(Al-Muwatta)

Abu Huraira narrated that the Prophet [saw] said, "No prayer is harder for the hypocrites than the Fajr and the Isha prayers and if they knew the reward for these prayers at their respective times, they would certainly present themselves (in the mosques) even if they had to crawl." The Prophet [saw] added, "I had almost decided to order the Muezzin to pronounce iqama, order a man to lead the prayer and then take a flame to burn all those who had not left their homes so far for the prayer, along with their houses."

(Bukhari)

Buraida ibn al-Hasib narrated that the Prophet [saw] said, "That which distinguishes us from the disbelievers and hypocrites is our commitment to Prayer. He who gives it up falls into disbelief."

(Trimidhi)

In contrast, the believers are humble in their prayers, they concentrate on their worship rather than on the world around them, and they remember Allah as much as possible.

الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ (٢٨)

Who have believed and whose hearts have rest in the remembrance of Allah. Verily in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest! (28)

(Surah Ar Ra'd 13: 28)

الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَمًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَطْلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ (١٩١)

Such as remember Allah, standing, sitting, and reclining, and consider the creation of the heavens and the earth, (and say): Our Lord! Thou createdst not this in vain. Glory be to Thee! Preserve us from the doom of Fire. (191)

(Surah Aal Imran 3:191)

Love for this world and chasing obsessively after material wealth weakens one's Iman, opens the heart to satanic temptation, and weakens the resolve to worship Allah frequently.

أَسْتَحْوَذَ عَلَيْهِمُ الشَّيْطَانُ فَأَنسَاهُمْ ذِكْرَ اللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ حِزْبُ الشَّيْطَانِ أَلَا إِنَّ حِزْبَ الشَّيْطَانِ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ (١٩)

The devil hath engrossed them and so hath caused them to forget remembrance of Allah. They are the devil's party. Lo! is it not the devil's party who will be the losers? (19)

(Surah Al Mujadilah 58:19)

Miserness

Spending generously in charitable acts is a characteristic of a believer as he is happy to exchange his worldly wealth for heavenly luxuries. The hypocrite, on the other hand, has no such certainty of faith and finds it difficult to part with his wealth.

الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتُ بَعْضُهُم مِّنْ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمُنْكَرِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَقْبِضُونَ أَيْدِيَهُمْ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَنَسِيَهُمْ إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ (٦٧)

The hypocrites, both men and women, proceed one from another. They enjoy the wrong, and they forbid the right, and they withhold their hands (from spending for the cause of Allah). They forget Allah, so He hath forgotten them. Lo! the hypocrites, they are the transgressors. (67)

(Surah At Tawbah 9:67)

Encouraging evil and forbidding good

The verse quoted above gives yet another characteristic of the hypocrites, which is that they command that which is evil and forbid what is good. Throughout Islamic history there have been numerous reformers, activists and womens' rights campaigners who have sought to bring reform and modernization to the faith. Yet when their opinions are dissected, one will find a desire to destroy the faith. They call for the empowerment of women through removing the hijab, claiming that the hijab was a requirement only for the Prophet's wives and not for all women. They wish to force all women into the workforce and away from their homes, to the detriment of their families and the upbringing of their children. They describe the severe Islamic punishments for theft and murder as barbaric, preferring instead modern methods of imprisonment which harden criminals and deny true justice.

Dislike of Jihad

The hypocrites dislike the thought of fighting in Jihad as their love for this world far outstrips their claim to love Allah. When the early Muslims set off for the battle of Uhud, the hypocrites of Madina refused to join them and also discouraged others from joining. Later, when news of the martyrdom of many believers reached Madina, the hypocrites celebrated the news. Allah Almighty responded by revealing the following verses:

وَمَا أَصْلَابِكُمْ يَوْمَ التَّقَى الْجَمْعَانِ فَبِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٦٦) وَلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ نَافَقُوا وَقِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا قَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَوْ ادْفَعُوا قَالُوا لَوْ نَعْلَمُ قِتَالًا لَاتَّبَعْنَاكُمْ هُمْ لِلْكَفَرِ يَوْمَئِذٍ أَقْرَبُ مِنْهُمْ لِلْإِيمَانِ يَقُولُونَ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ مَا لَيْسَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَكْتُمُونَ (١٦٧) الَّذِينَ قَالُوا لِإِخْوَانِهِمْ وَقَعَدُوا لَوْ أَطَاعُونَا مَا قُتِلُوا قُلْ فَادْرَءُوا عَنْ أَنْفُسِكُمُ الْمَوْتَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (١٦٨)

What ye suffered on the day the two armies Met, was with the leave of Allah, in order that He might test the believers,-(166) And the Hypocrites also. These were told: "Come, fight in the way of Allah, or (at least) drive (The foe from your city)." They said: "Had we known how to fight, we should certainly have followed you." They were that day nearer to Unbelief than to Faith, saying with their lips what was not in their hearts but Allah hath full knowledge of all they conceal.(167) (They are) the ones that say, (of their brethren slain), while they themselves sit (at ease): "If only they had listened to us they would not have been slain." Say: "Avert death from your own selves, if ye speak the truth."(168)
(Surah Aal Imran 3: 166-168.)

Foul and abusive language during arguments

Abdullah b. Amr narrated that the Prophet [saw] said, "Whoever has the following four qualities will be a pure hypocrite and whoever has one of the following four qualities will have one characteristic of hypocrisy unless until he gives it up:

1. When he is entrusted, he betrays the trust.
2. When he speaks, he lies.

3. When he makes a covenant, he proves to be treacherous.

4. When he quarrels, he is insulting and coarse.

(Bukhari)

Arrogance and self-righteousness

Muslims often have an 'us and them' mentality, considering themselves to be superior to the rest of the world and convinced that they hold a passport to heaven. Such an inclination can make the person both arrogant and complacent, both of which are characteristics of hypocrisy. The true believer is forever humble and aware that any benefits he enjoys on earth, such as faith, wealth and health, are all gifts from Allah who can bestow them on whoever He wishes. Secondly, it is the duty of Muslims to remember that when the Quran has promised the hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of hell-fire, it has actually implied that the hypocrites are worse than the non-believers. All Muslims have the potential to become hypocrites through weakness of faith, love for worldly comforts, lack of remembrance of Allah, pride and laziness. It is thus their duty to avoid these characteristics and to strengthen their faith through all the means available to them.

Ostentation

The Prophet (saw) once said, "Showing off is a form of Shirk."

(Musnad Imam Ahmad)

He also said, "If someone lets the people know of his good deeds intentionally in order to gain their praise, Allah Almighty will let the people know of his real intentions on the Day of Judgement. And if someone does good deeds in public to show off and to win the admiration of the people, Allah Almighty will expose his real intentions and humiliate him on the Day of Judgement.

(Agreed upon)

The Quran curses such people:

فَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّينَ (٤) الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ (٥) الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَاءُونَ (٦) وَيَمْنَعُونَ
الْمَاعُونَ (٧)

Ah, woe unto worshippers (4) Who are heedless of their prayer; (5) Who would be seen (at worship) (6) Yet refuse small kindnesses! (7)

(Surah Al Ma'un 107 : 4-7)

The characteristics of hypocrisy enumerated above are by no means exhaustive but they should serve as a warning signal to Muslims of the ease with which one can fall into this sorry state.

Chapter 3

PROPHET MUHAMMAD [SAW] THE PERFECT MAN

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَاهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا (٤٥)

O Prophet! Lo! We have sent thee as a witness and a bringer of good tidings and a warner. (45)

(Quran Surah Al Ahzab 33:45)

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ كَثِيرًا مِمَّا كُنْتُمْ تُخْفُونَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَعْفُو عَنْ كَثِيرٍ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُبِينٌ (١٥)

O People of the Scripture! Now hath Our messenger come unto you, expounding unto you much of that which ye used to hide in the Scripture, and forgiving much. Now hath come unto you light from Allah and plain Scripture, (15)

(Surah Al Maidah 5:15)

We have discussed earlier the importance of the Sunnah and the importance of love for the Messenger of Allah [saw] in the daily life of each and every Muslim. This article will deal, albeit briefly, with the personality and physical characteristics of the Prophet.

Each one of the previous Prophets sent by Allah was sent to a particular people with a message specific to their lifestyle and surroundings. The ancient divine Books were limited in their scope and limited to a particular audience. In these ancient times, communities lived very isolated lives. Travel and communication were exceedingly slow and people knew very little about the world around them. The community in which a person was born was the one in which he would live, marry and die; the few who ventured out would be merchants, travelling on trade routes for months at a time. Each community thus needed its own Prophet from Allah. But at the threshold of the electronics age when communications and travel would be transformed forever by the sheer speed of air travel and the microchip, Allah Almighty sent a new and final Message. Scientific discoveries were paving the way for this world to become a global village in which people on opposite ends of the world could communicate instantly and journeys which once lasted months could now be taken in matter of hours. For this shrinking and transparent world came Islam, a message which would be complete, perfect and relevant to all people until the end of this world. And to bring this final and perfect Message was the final and perfect Prophet: Muhammad, may the blessings of Allah be upon him.

He was tender and affectionate with his wives and children, yet fearless in battle. His generosity, integrity and honesty became legendary even before revelation came to him. He was forgiving, gentle and kind. Anas once said, *“I served Allah’s Messenger for ten years from the time I was eight years old, and he never blamed me for anything which I ruined. If any member of the family blamed me, he would say, ‘Leave him alone, for that which is decreed will happen.’ ”*

(Al Masabih)

Anas also said that the Prophet would visit the sick, attend funerals, accept an invitation from a slave, and ride on a donkey. He rode on a donkey at the battle of Khaybar, never showing pride.

(Transmitted by Ibn Majah and Baihaqi)

His wife Aisha said that *“Allah’s Messenger would patch his own sandals, sew his garment and conduct himself at home as any of you does in his house. He was a human being, searching his garment for lice, milking his sheep, and doing his own chores.”*

(Tirmidhi)

His life was one of extreme hardship, but he bore it with humility and forbearance. Abu Huraira reported that *“The Prophet never criticised any food put in front of him. He would eat it if he liked it, or he would leave it (without expressing dislike).”*

(Bukhari)

His speech was gentle and free from indecency, vulgarity or cursing. Anas reported that if he wished to reproach anyone, he would rebuke them with the words, *“What is the matter with him! May his forehead cleave to the dust!”*

(Bukhari)

Aisha said that he was never unseemly or lewd in his language; he did not speak loudly in the streets, nor did he return evil with evil, but would forgive and pardon.

(Tirmidhi)

Abu Huraira reported that when the Prophet was asked to invoke a curse on the polytheists who were making life unbearable for the Muslims, he replied, *“I was not sent to curse but I was sent as a mercy.”*

(Muslim)

He avoided all ribaldry, vulgarity and immodesty. Abu Saeed described him as being *“more modest than a virgin in her apartment.”*

(Agreed upon)

When he spoke, he enunciated slowly so that his listeners would understand and remember his words. Aisha reported that *“Allah’s Messenger did not go on talking rapidly as you do, but spaced out his words so that those who sat with him could remember them.”*

(Tirmidhi)

The Companions would hang on to his every word, treasuring his every word, his every smile, his every rebuke. The brevity of his speech, the love he induced in the people around him, and the desire of his followers that none of his teachings be lost helped preserve the Sunnah.

He smiled often, but laughed quietly and rarely. For him, life was not for merriment and jocularly but for a serious purpose. Those who lived with and studied under the Prophet have unanimously described him as the embodiment of human perfection, unrivalled in beauty and character. Poems were composed to praise his astonishing looks and radiance which dazzled those around him.

Aisha once said about the beauty of the Prophet, *"If the friends of Zulaikha had seen the blessed face of the Messenger of Allah, they would have cut their hearts open instead of their hands..."*

His physical beauty compelled his Companions to write poems in his honour. Hassan ibn Thabit said about him,

*'More beautiful than you has my eyes never observed.
More handsome than you no mother has ever conceived.
You have been created free of all blemishes,
created as though you have been created as you intended'.*

Al Baraa reported that *"The Prophet was of medium height, broad-shouldered, with his hair hanging down to the lobes of his ears. I saw him wearing a red robe, and I had never seen anything more beautiful than him."*

(Agreed Upon)

Anas said that Allah's Messenger had a clear complexion, his sweat was like pearls and when he walked he bent forward slightly as if going downhill. He said that he had not touched brocade or silk which was softer than the palm of the Prophet, or smelt musk or ambergris sweeter than the Prophet's odour.

(Agreed upon)

Jabir b. Samura described an incident in which the Prophet was returning home after a prayer. *"Some children met him and he began to stroke their cheeks. He stroked my cheeks, and I experienced a coolness, or a fragrance, in his hand as though he had brought it out of a scented-bag."*

(Muslim)

Ali b. Abi Talib said about his cousin, the Prophet: *"He was neither very tall nor very short, but was of medium height. He had neither very curly nor flowing hair, but a mixture of the two (ie. it had a wave in it). He was not fat nor too thin. He did not have a very round face (ie. it was oval). His complexion was reddish-white. He had wide black eyes and long eyelashes. He had protruding joints and shoulder-blades. He was not hairy, but had some hair on his chest. The palms of his hands and feet had callouses. When he walked, he raised his feet as if walking down a slope. When he turned round he turned completely. Between his shoulders was the seal of prophecy (like a collection of moles) and he was the seal of the Prophets. He had a finer chest than anyone else. He was the most truthful person, had the gentlest nature and came from the noblest tribe. Those who saw him suddenly stood in awe of him, and those who became acquainted with him loved him. Those who described him said they had never seen anyone like him before or since."*

(Tirmidhi)

These descriptions of the Prophet by those who knew him best describe the very essence of physical perfection in a man. He was handsome, had a magnetic personality, was truthful, hardworking, yet gentle and playful with children. An extremely important aspect of the

Prophet was the sense of moderation in both his looks and teachings. For example, the final hadith above (quoted from Tirmidhi) emphasises this lack of extremes: he was neither too tall nor too short; his hair was neither too curly nor straight; his complexion was neither too dark nor too fair; he was neither fat nor thin; he was neither very hairy nor hair-less etc. These descriptions are of a man who embraces all the colours, shapes and sizes of mankind, and emerges as the perfect man. He represents all mankind, and is the perfect example for it. And likewise, the Prophet's teachings encouraged moderation as well. His followers were urged to pray at night, but to sleep as well; to fast some days, and eat on others; to enjoy the good things of this world, but avoid being trapped in its snares; to marry and have children, but never to forget their Lord in the pursuit of worldly happiness.

The Prophet (saw) loved children and would kiss and hug them easily. The Arab culture of the time was obsessed with manliness and toughness in a man, so many men found it difficult to show affection to their children. The Prophet (saw) showed them that a man could be fierce and tough in battle, yet gentle and loving in the home.

Abu Hurayrah reported that, Allah's Messenger kissed Hasan ibn `Ali while Al-Aqra` ibn Habis At-Tamim was sitting with him. Al-Aqra` said, "I have ten children and have never kissed any of them." The Prophet cast a look at him and said, "Whoever is not merciful to others will not be treated mercifully." (Al-Bukhari)

Anas ibn Malik, the servant of the Prophet, once said, I never saw anyone who was more compassionate towards children than Allah's Messenger (saw). His son Ibrahim was in the care of a wet nurse in the hills around Madinah. He would go there, and we would go with him, and he would enter the house, pick up his son and kiss him, then come back. (Muslim)

Abu Hurayrah reported of the immense love the Prophet had for his two grandsons, Hasan and Husayn. I went along with Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) at a time during the day but he did not talk to me and I did not talk to him until he reached the market of Banu Qainuqa. He came back to the tent of Fatimah and said, "Is the little chap (meaning Hasan) there?" We were under the impression that his mother had detained him in order to bathe, dress him and perfume him. Soon afterwards, Hasan came running and both of them embraced each other. Then Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "O Allah, I love him; love him and love one who loves him." (Muslim)

Children knew of the love the Prophet had for them and would play comfortably on his lap and even on his back when he was praying. Anas ibn Malik narrated that, The Prophet said, "Sometimes I start the prayer intending to prolong it, but on hearing the crying of a child I shorten the prayer because I know that the cries of the child will worry its mother." (Al-Bukhari)

Abu Qatadah narrated that: "The Messenger of Allah came towards us while carrying his grand-daughter Umamah on his shoulder. He prayed, and when he wanted to bow, he put her down, and when he stood up he lifted her up." (Al-Bukhari)

Umm Khalid narrated: I (the daughter of Khalid ibn Said) went to Allah's Messenger with my father and I was wearing a yellow shirt. Allah's Messenger said, "*Sanah, Sanah!*" (Abdullah, the narrator, said that *sanah* meant "good" in the Ethiopian language). I then

started playing with the seal of prophethood (between the Prophet's shoulders) and my father rebuked me harshly for that. Allah's Messenger said, "Leave her." The Prophet, then, invoked Allah three times to grant her a long life. (Al-Bukhari)

A'ishah said that once the Prophet took a child in his lap ... and then the child urinated on him, so he asked for water and poured it over the place of the urine. (Al-Bukhari)

The Prophet [saw] was also a magnificent general, who took his small armies to battle against superior numbers, yet won again and again. Piety and faith were obviously part of the equation in these astonishing victories, but another part was played by brilliant military strategies and manoeuvres. The early Arabs were divided into feuding tribes and although fiercely brave, their ancient tribal feuds and revenge killings ensured their lack of progress on the world stage. The Romans and Persians had built huge empires, and were respected and feared throughout the lands. In contrast, the Arabs were seen as mere bedouins, shepherds and nomads. None knew them and none feared them. But the Prophet of Allah [saw] transformed these camel herders and heavy drinkers into one of the most disciplined and humane armies this world has ever seen. An army which brought the mighty empires of the world to their knees and spread the message of Islam from Africa to China.

The concept of rules of warfare and engagement is generally seen as a modern, western invention, yet it was the Prophet (saw) who introduced this concept to the world. He played a direct or indirect role in 27 battles with the Muslims, and in each battle he introduced new rules on Islamic warfare. After the battle of Badr, the Prophet (saw) allowed the warriors to continue with their ancient practice of taking spoils of war (or war-booty), but allotted shares to the soldiers depending on the part they had played in the fight. He also allocated shares to the poor of Madina, especially those who had become orphaned or widowed as a result of battle.

The Prophet (saw) insisted that noncombatants be unharmed in battle. He told his armies not to kill women, children, the elderly, monks and other people engaged in worship. Once he came across the body of a dead woman while riding in battle and said, "She was not fighting. How then came she to be killed?"

He also forbade the burning of fruit trees, the killing of animals other than for food, and the poisoning of wells. This last command has many implications for those who use biological agents in modern warfare. Abu Bakr, the first Caliph of Islam, learned these rules of engagement from the Prophet (saw) and so told an army setting out for Syria, "Stop, O people, that I may give you ten rules for your guidance in the battlefield. Do not commit treachery or deviate from the right path. You must not mutilate dead bodies. Neither kill a child, nor a woman, nor an aged man. Bring no harm to the trees, nor burn them with fire, especially those which are fruitful. Slay not any of the enemy's flock, save for your food. You are likely to pass by people who have devoted their lives to monastic services; leave them alone."

The Arabs were used to an ancient practice of decapitating the dead in battle and displaying their heads as trophies. This and other practices involving mutilation of the dead were quickly put to an end by the Messenger of Allah (saw).

The Prophet was a brilliant military strategist who trained his companions in tactical warfare. Before the battle of Ahzab, he sent Naim bin Masud, who was newly converted, back to his tribe in Makkah to gather intelligence. Naim's reports provided the Muslims with important information concerning the alliances of the Makkans with other tribes. In the battle of Bani Lahyan, the Prophet ordered his armies northward towards Syria, giving the Makkans in the south the impression they were safe. But another army then attacked Makkah from the rear in a brilliant ruse. Before the battle of Al Khandaq, the Prophet was given the novel idea by Salman al Farsi of digging a trench around Madina to protect its inhabitants from the invading Makkan army. This tactic was adopted for the first time in Arabian history and led to a brilliant victory for the Muslims.

Allah Almighty has declared Prophet Muhammad [saw] in unequivocal terms to be the final Messenger, the Seal of the Prophets. Anyone who claims to be a new prophet after him is an apostate, and anyone who follows such a false prophet is also an apostate.

May Allah Almighty send His blessings on Prophet Muhammad [saw] and on his family, just as He sent blessings on Prophet Ibrahim and his family.



LESSON
5

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Prophet Ibrahim holds a place of immense importance, honour and respect in Islam. The sacrifices he made and was prepared to make at the instructions of Allah Almighty, such as his readiness to slaughter his one and only son, earned him the honoured title of Khalilullah (Friend of Allah). Makkah had been chosen by Allah to be the sacred site of the Ka'ba, the House of Allah, for the annual pilgrimage of believers until the Day of Judgement. He was told to abandon his wife Hajira and baby son Ismail in Makkah in order that the barren valley may become populated, and later he and his son built the Ka'ba together. Ibrahim made a number of beautiful du'as to Allah during his life which were not only fulfilled but also recorded for posterity by the Almighty in the Quran. These beautiful and emotional invocations are quoted later in this chapter. Prophet Ibrahim is remembered by millions of Muslims every day in their daily prayers when they send salutations of peace on Prophet Ibrahim, Prophet Muhammad [saw] and on their families in the the Durood.

1. The Supplications of Ibrahim

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِي بِبَكَّةَ مُبَارَكًا وَهُدًى لِّلْعَالَمِينَ (٩٦) فِيهِ آيَاتٌ بَيِّنَاتٌ مَّقَامُ
إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمَنْ دَخَلَهُ كَانَ آمِنًا وَلِلَّهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حُجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ
اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ (٩٧)

Lo! the first Sanctuary appointed for mankind was that at Mecca, a blessed place, a guidance to the peoples; (96) Wherein are plain memorials (of Allah's guidance); the place where Abraham stood up to pray; and whosoever entereth it is safe. And pilgrimage to the House is a duty unto Allah for mankind, for him who can find a way thither. As for him who disbelieveth, (let him know that) lo! Allah is Independent of (all) creatures. (97)

(Surah Aal Imran 3:96-97)

The Ka'ba was the first House of God ever to be built, in the direction of which prayers to Allah were performed. The word Bakkah used in the above verses means 'city.' The famous Lebanese town of Ba'la Bekk (The city of Ba'l) still preserves the original word 'Bakk' as part of its name. Ibrahim named the valley where his family had settled Bakkah, but the town later became known as Makkah. The Quran mentions the original name because the Jews had falsely referred to it as Wadi Bakkah (the weeping valley) in Palestine and so tried to divert attention away from the Hijaz, just as they had done with all the incidents associated with Ibrahim's stay at Makkah.

2. Prayers of Ibrahim while building the House of Allah

وَإِذِ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ
عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ (١٢٤) وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَمْنًا وَاتَّخِذُوا مِن مَّقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّى
وَعَهْدَنَا إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَنَّ طَهَّرَا بَيْتِي لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْعَاكِفِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ (١٢٥)

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا بَلَدًا ءَامِنًا وَارْزُقْ أَهْلَهُ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ مَنْ ءَامَنَ مِنْهُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ
 الْآخِرِ قَالَ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَأُمَتِّعُهُ قَلِيلًا ثُمَّ أَضْطَرُّهُ إِلَىٰ عَذَابِ النَّارِ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ (١٢٦) وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ
 إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (١٢٧) رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا
 مُسْلِمِينَ لَكَ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةٌ مُّسْلِمَةٌ لَّكَ وَارِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ
 (١٢٨) رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ ءَايَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ
 إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (١٢٩)

And (remember) when his Lord tried Abraham with (His) commands and he fulfilled them, He said: Lo! I have appointed thee a leader for mankind. (Abraham) said: And of my offspring (will there be leaders)? He said: My covenant includeth not wrong-doers. (124) And when We made the House (at Mecca) a resort for mankind and sanctuary, (saying): Take as your place of worship the place where Abraham stood (to pray). And We imposed a duty upon Abraham and Ishmael, (saying): Purify My house for those who go around and those who meditate therein and those who bow down and prostrate themselves (in worship). (125) And when Abraham prayed: My Lord! Make this a region of security and bestow upon its people fruits, such of them as believe in Allah and the Last Day, He answered: As for him who disbelieveth, I shall leave him in contentment for a while, then I shall compel him to the doom of Fire - a hapless journey's end! (126) And when Abraham and Ishmael were raising the foundations of the House, (Abraham prayed): Our Lord! Accept from us (this duty). Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Hearer, the Knower. (127) Our Lord! And make us submissive unto Thee and of our seed a nation submissive unto Thee, and show us our ways of worship, and relent toward us. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Relenting, the Merciful. (128) Our Lord! And raise up in their midst a messenger from among them who shall recite unto them Thy revelations, and shall instruct them in the Scripture and in wisdom and shall make them grow. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Mighty, Wise. (129)
(Surah Al Baqarah 2: 124-129)

Explanation of the verses

Verse 124 - Ibrahim had been subjected to a number of extremely difficult trials by Allah and had been ordered to make some difficult sacrifices, but he had fulfilled these commands each time perfectly. He confronted his people readily, destroyed their idols and preached to them the Oneness of Allah with great wisdom. He showed no signs of weakness or fear, even when confronted with the penalty of being burned alive. He even faced and argued wisely with the powerful King Nimrod, who was known for punishing his opponents mercilessly. A son was born to him late in life, but he was immediately ordered to abandon his wife and new son in a dry, barren and unpopulated valley. Ibrahim did so without the least hesitation, placing complete trust in his beloved Lord.

But the hardest trial was yet to come; he was ordered to sacrifice his only son after years of separation, and he readily began to sharpen his knife, covering his eyes with a blindfold in case the face of his precious son should weaken his resolve.

Ibrahim was declared to be the Imam, the leader of all mankind. This was a title of great prestige and respect, not acquired by ordinary people. The various incidents of his life are remembered annually by millions of Muslims as they perform the rituals of the Hajj, the Pilgrimage to Makkah.

Verse 125 - The House of Allah was declared to be an abode of peace and tranquillity, and a place of refuge and retreat for mankind. The Station of Ibrahim (Maqam Ibrahim), which referred both to the stone on which he stood when building the Ka'ba and to the whole sanctuary of Haram, became a place dedicated to prayer. Prophets Ibrahim and Ismail were assigned the task of ensuring that the House was kept pure and free of all practices damaging to the concept of Tawheed: the Oneness of Allah.

This verse also mentions four types of worship:

Tawaf: To circumambulate (walk around) the Ka'ba with love and affection for the Almighty. Just as every object in this universe revolves around its nucleus, so a Muslim in Tawaf shows his attachment to his spiritual home.

I'tikaf: This is a period of complete devotion to Allah when the believer confines himself to the Masjid for a limited period of time and devotes himself to worship away from his worldly life.

Ruku' and Sajda: Bowing and prostrating are two major external features of the Islamic prayer. However, the believer should not forget that these are secondary to the actual essence of the prayer, which is complete concentration, humility and devotion to Allah.

Verse 126 - Ibrahim asked for peace in the land of Makkah and for economic independence for its inhabitants who would be responsible for serving the flock of pilgrims arriving there. Both prayers were answered beautifully. Makkah was declared to be a Haram, an inviolable place of sanctity where fighting and bloodshed were forbidden forever. Furthermore, pilgrims travelling to Makkah for Hajj or Umrah were protected from violence by the simple strategy of declaring Rajab and the three successive months of Dhul Qa'da, Dhul Hijjah and Muharram to be Haram months as well. War and bloodshed were totally forbidden during these months. Allah Almighty Himself protected His House from destruction by invaders. When Abraha, the Ethiopian King of Yemen, decided to demolish the Ka'ba with his army of soldiers and elephants, Allah Almighty sent dense flocks of birds carrying pellets in their beaks with which they bombarded and decimated the entire army. (Refer to Surah Al-Fil for an account of this incident, which took place in the year the Prophet Muhammad [saw] was born.)

With the increasing number of pilgrims travelling to Makkah, the doors to free-trade opened wide for its inhabitants. Trade prospered, goods from all over the world exchanged hands, and Makkah quickly changed from being an unknown, barren valley to a bustling, wealthy town. Even today, any visitor to Arabia will be astonished by the huge variety of foods, fruit and general merchandise available for sale. The visitor will find an abundance of the

necessities and luxuries of life, from exotic fruit to entire bazars shimmering with gold jewellery. Ibrahim had prayed for this miracle for the Muslims alone, as he knew that the Imamate was limited to the believers. But Allah Almighty reminded him that as far as the mundane necessities of life were concerned, every individual, whether a believer or not, would receive his assigned portion of this world. However, the disbelievers will enjoy no such privileges in the Hereafter and will receive the punishment they have earned during their lives on earth.

Verse 127 - The construction of the House of Allah was achieved by the two pious Prophets of Allah. They asked him to accept their humble work of devotion and obedience.

Verse 128 - The invocation 'rabbana' (O our Lord!) is repeated in this supplication as the Muslim always directs his Du'as to Allah alone. Ibrahim and Ismail reiterated once again that their desire was to submit totally to Allah, and they asked for a Muslim Ummah to be raised from among their offspring. Their prayer was fulfilled with the arrival of Prophet Muhammad [saw] who revived Ibrahim's faith two thousand years later. They also asked for forgiveness and guidance in the matter of Hajj and its rituals.

Verse 129 - The climax of their supplication was their prayer for a Rasul (Messenger) to be born among their descendants, who were the Arabs that descended from Ibrahim through Ismail. Their prayer mentions four functions of this Prophet:

1. Tilawah - Recitation of the verses

A Messenger does not keep the divine revelation to himself but conveys it to the people by reciting the verses of God to them. This is the first stage of his mission.

2. Ta'lim al Kitab - Teaching the Book

A Rasul is not simply a conveyor of the divine message. He lives among his people to demonstrate in practical terms the teachings he was given for their guidance.

3. Ta'lim al Hikma - Teaching Wisdom

A Rasul is divinely blessed with powerful wisdom and judgement. He provides explanations of the divine verses and leaves behind pearls of wisdom for their guidance.

4. Tazkiyyah - Purification

The life of the Rasul is a perfect model for his followers to learn from and emulate. He is a constant guide for them, helping them to abandon their follies and ignorant ways, showing them the door of repentance if they falter, and encouraging them to develop the noblest moral characters.

Prophet Muhammad [saw] belonged to the family line of Ismail and was the answer to this prayer. His life mirrored exactly the characteristics described in the supplication of his pious ancestors.

3. Other Prayers of Ibrahim

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُمْسِكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ أَنْ تَزُولَا وَلَئِن زَالَتَا إِنْ أَمْسَكَهُمَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِّن بَعْدِهِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ
حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا (٤١)

Lo! Allah graspeth the heavens and the earth that they deviate not, and if they were to deviate there is not one that could grasp them after Him. Lo! He is ever Clement, Forgiving. (41)
(Surah Ibrahim 35-41)

Discussion

Verse 35-36 - Ibrahim prayed in particular that he and his descendants be saved from the worship of idols, and he dissociated himself from those who committed Shirk and disobeyed Allah.

Verse 37 - The initial purpose for which Ibrahim was asked to abandon his family in the barren land of Makkah was that Prayer may be established there. The practice of the Hajj was added to this later. As well as economic independence, he also asked for the inhabitants of Makkah to be loved by the people. His prayers were answered so minutely that Makkah became the centre of the entire Arabian peninsula, and with the rapid expansion of Islam, it became and remains the focal point and spiritual home of Muslims all over the globe. Muslims of all colours and nationalities, have always longed and yearned to travel to Makkah.

Verse 38 - The tongue is not always able to express the person's wishes and hopes completely, so with these words, Ibrahim leaves his feelings, both silent and expressed, to Allah.

Verse 39 - Ibrahim thanked Allah for the precious gift of two wonderful sons in his old age, and looked forward with hope to a response to his other prayers.

Verse 40-41 - Once again Ibrahim asked assistance for himself and his descendants in establishing regular prayers. He prayed for forgiveness for himself, the believers and for his parents. Although his father Azar remained an idol worshipper, Ibrahim continued to pray for him in the hope that he would join the right path eventually. However, he later absolved himself of his father once he realized that his father would never abandon idol worship.

The words 'Rabb' and 'Rabbana' (My Lord) are repeated seven times in this supplication, and show the humility and deference with which a believer invokes the Mercy of his beloved Lord.

4. Ibrahim's call for Hajj

وَإِذْ بَوَّأْنَا لِإِبْرَاهِيمَ مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ أَنْ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِي شَيْئًا وَطَهَّرْ بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْقَائِمِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ
السُّجُودِ (٢٦) وَأَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا وَعَلَىٰ كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَأْتِينَ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجٍّ عَمِيقٍ

(٢٧) لِيَشْهَدُوا مَنَافِعَ لَهُمْ وَيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَّعْلُومَاتٍ عَلَىٰ مَا رَزَقَهُم مِّن بَهِيمَةِ
الْأَنْعَامِ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَطْعِمُوا الْبَائِسَ الْفَقِيرَ (٢٨) ثُمَّ لِيَقْضُوا تَفَثَهُمْ وَلِيُوفُوا نُدُورَهُمْ وَلِيَطَّوَّفُوا
بِالْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ (٢٩) ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعْظَمْ حُرْمَتِ اللَّهِ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ وَأُحِلَّتْ لَكُمْ الْأَنْعَامُ إِلَّا
مَا يُنْتَلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْأَوْثَانِ وَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ (٣٠)

And (remember) when We prepared for Abraham the place of the (holy) House, saying: Ascribe thou no thing as partner unto Me, and purify My House for those who make the round (thereof) and those who stand and those who bow and make prostration. (26) And proclaim unto mankind the pilgrimage. They will come unto thee on foot and on every lean camel; they will come from every deep ravine, (27) That they may witness things that are of benefit to them, and mention the name of Allah on appointed days over the beast of cattle that He hath bestowed upon them. Then eat thereof and feed therewith the poor unfortunate. (28) Then let them make an end of their unkemptness and pay their vows and go around the ancient House. (29) That (is the command). And whoso magnifieth the sacred things of Allah, it will be well for him in the sight of his Lord. The cattle are lawful unto you save that which hath been told you. So shun the filth of idols, and shun lying speech, (30)

(Surah Hajj 22: 26-30)

Discussion

Verse 26 - Makkah was given the great honour of being the site chosen for Allah's sacred House until the Day of Judgement. It would be a place of security, pure monotheism, and freedom from the absurdity of idol worship and Shirk. This purpose has stood the test of time and Makkah has remained the pivot of pure Tawheed to this day.

Verse 27 - Ibrahim was commanded to pronounce the call for Hajj. As foretold by the Almighty, pilgrims flocked to it by every available means of transport and from every corner of the globe. Before the birth of Prophet Muhammad [saw], when the people of Makkah had degenerated into paganism and idol worship, the Ka'ba was still venerated as a House of God and the Quraish welcomed pilgrims annually from many neighbouring lands. Since the advent of Islam, the prosperity and popularity of Makkah has increased so much that there is no country left which is not represented by pilgrims at the annual Hajj. Pilgrims travel to Makkah in their millions using all conceivable means of transport.

Verse 28 - Makkah has seen many benefits since the institution of the Hajj. It has flourished as a centre of commerce, but the spiritual benefits of hajj remain unique and unparalleled. The pilgrim enjoys a wonderful experience of closeness with Allah and intense worship. The huge gathering inspires great feelings of brotherhood, awareness of the existence and problems of various Muslim communities, and the intense joy of being a member of a great and global Muslim Ummah. The sight of millions of Muslims dressed in a simple, shroud-like white garb will remind the pilgrim of the day of Judgement and help intensify his resolve to leave return home a better Muslim.

The Hajj commemorates many of the incidents in Ibrahim's life. These culminated in the supreme act of willingness to sacrifice his only son, an act which was immortalised in the annual event of an animal sacrifice at the end of the Hajj. The pilgrims and the rest of the Muslim community in the world have four days in which to perform the sacrifice, and when doing so they must pronounce the Name of Allah. This is the only keyword by which a person is permitted to take the life of an animal. By invoking Allah, the Muslim admits to the sole authority of Allah in granting permission for the life of any animal to be taken. The Muslims are advised to share the sacrificial meat with the poor and needy, and thus the entire community is able to enjoy the celebration of Eid-al-Adha.

Verse 29 - Pilgrims are required to shave or trim their hair once the rituals of Hajj are over. Like a newborn baby whose hairs are shaved on the seventh day and who enters the world sinless and pure, the pilgrim too begins a new life. Allah Almighty has promised to forgive all the past sins of a person who performs the Hajj correctly. He is now required to fulfil his vow and circumambulate the Ka'ba once again. The Ka'ba was built long before Bayt al Maqdis (Solomon's Temple) in Jerusalem, so it is given the worthy title of 'Al Bayt al Ateeq,' the Ancient House.

5. Ibrahim's Prayer for Complete Satisfaction of Belief

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ أَرِنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ قَالَ أُولَٰئِمَّا تُوْمِنُ قَالَ بَلَىٰ وَلَٰكِن لِّيَطْمَئِنَّ قَلْبِي قَالَ فَخُذْ أَرْبَعَةً مِّنَ الطَّيْرِ فَصُرْهُنَّ إِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ أَجْعَلْ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِّنْهُنَّ جُزْءًا ثُمَّ ادْعُهُنَّ يَأْتِينَكَ سَعْيًا وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (٢٦٠)

And when Abraham said (unto his Lord): My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead, He said: Dost thou not believe? Abraham said: Yea, but (I ask) in order that my heart may be at ease. (His Lord) said: Take four of the birds and cause them to incline unto thee, then place a part of them on each hill, then call them, they will come to thee in haste, and know that Allah is Mighty, Wise. (260)

(Surah Al-Baqarah 2:260)

Discussion

Ibrahim was a believer, but he wished to achieve the state of complete contentment and belief which harbours not a single doubt. All prophets of Allah suffered years of persecution, refusal and betrayal by their people, and so had to show extreme courage, patience and perseverance. They needed to be equipped formidably, both morally and spiritually, in order to succeed in their daunting missions. The following verse implies that Prophet Muhammad [saw] was also favoured with a similar satisfaction of belief:

أَلَمْ نَشْرَحْ لَكَ صَدْرَكَ (١)

Have We not expanded for thee thy breast? (1)

(Surah 94:1)

Prophet Ibrahim prayed for complete satisfaction in his heart and mind regarding the issue of resurrection. In response to this request, Allah Almighty commanded him to tame four birds so they would respond to the sound of his voice, then to cut them into small pieces and scatter the pieces on the surrounding mountains. On his call, the birds flew back to him just as they usually did. Ibrahim realized that just as the Almighty could give life in this manner to the dead birds, so he could undoubtedly resurrect all dead bodies on the Day of Judgment.

The birds were tamed and trained in order to familiarize them with Ibrahim's call so that they would respond to his voice. In the same way, the dead and decayed bodies of all humans and jinns will rush to the Gathering Ground from every inch of the earth after resurrection.

6. Ibrahim's Prayers During His Encounter With His People

قَدْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ إِذْ قَالُوا لِقَوْمِهِمْ إِنَّا بُرَءَاؤُا مِنْكُمْ وَمِمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ كَفَرْنَا بِكُمْ وَبَدَا بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةُ وَالْبَغْضَاءُ أَبَدًا حَتَّى تُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَحَدُّهُ إِلَّا قَوْلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ لَأَسْتَغْفِرَنَّ لَكَ وَمَا أَمْلِكُ لَكَ مِنْ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ رَبَّنَا عَلَيْكَ تَوَكَّلْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ أَنْتَبْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ (٤) رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا فِتْنَةً لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَاعْفِرْ لَنَا رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٥) لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِيهِمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ (٦)

There is a goodly pattern for you in Abraham and those with him, when they told their folk: Lo! we are guiltless of you and all that ye worship beside Allah. We have done with you. And there hath arisen between us and you hostility and hate for ever until ye believe in Allah only - save that which Abraham promised his father (when he said): I will ask forgiveness for thee, though I own nothing for thee from Allah - Our Lord! In Thee we put our trust, and unto Thee we turn repentant, and unto Thee is the journeying. (4) Our Lord! Make us not a prey for those who disbelieve, and forgive us, our Lord! Lo! Thou, only Thou, are the Mighty, the Wise. (5) Verily ye have in them a goodly pattern for everyone who looketh to Allah and the Last Day. And whosoever may turn away, lo! still Allah, He is the Absolute, the Owner of Praise. (6)

(Surah Al Mumtahina 60:4-6)

Discussion

Verse 4 - Ibrahim and the handful of believers with him were announced to be an example for the fledgling Muslim community in Makkah in the early days of the Prophet Muhammad's [saw] mission. At the final stage of his ordeal with his people, Ibrahim absolved himself and the believers from the idol worshippers. He made it clear that as long as they continued to disbelieve in One God, there would be enmity and hatred between them and the believers. But love and affection for his father compelled Ibrahim to continue to pray for forgiveness for him. On another occasion he prayed to Allah,

وَاعْفِرْ لِأَبِي إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الضَّالِّينَ (٨٦) وَلَا تُخْزِنِي يَوْمَ يُبْعَثُونَ (٨٧)

And forgive my father. Lo! he is of those who err. (86) And abase me not on the day when they are raised, (87)

(Surah Ash Shu'ara 26 : 86-87)

Verse 5 - Ibrahim prayed to Allah to protect him and his followers from being easy targets for their enemies. They did not wish to be so weak and powerless that the enemies of Allah could defeat them easily. He also prayed for forgiveness as he and his followers were mortals and inevitably subject to faults.

Verse 6 - The example set by Ibrahim and his followers could be imitated only by people of strong faith and will, who themselves believed with certainty that they would meet their Lord one day.

7. Teachings contained in Ibrahim's Scripture

Prophet Ibrahim did receive a divine Scripture about which little is known. Abdullah Yusuf Ali makes the following comments about it in his famous translation of the Quran,

No Book of Abraham has come down to us. But the Old Testament recognises that Abraham was a Prophet (Gen.xx.7). There is a book in Greek, which has been translated by Mr. G.H. Box, called the Testament of Abraham (published by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, London, 1927). It seems to be a Greek translation of a Hebrew original. The Greek Text was probably written in the second Christian century, in Egypt, but in its present form it probably goes back only to the 9th or 10th century. It was popular among the Christians. Perhaps the Jewish Midrash also refers to a Testament of Abraham. (footnote No. 6094)

أَمْ لَمْ يُنَبِّأْ بِمَا فِي صُحُفِ مُوسَىٰ (٣٦)

Or hath he not had news of what is in the books of Moses (36)

(Surah An Najm 53:36)

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّىٰ (١٤) وَذَكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّىٰ (١٥) بَلْ تُؤَثِّرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا (١٦) وَالْآخِرَةَ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ (١٧) إِنَّ هَذَا لَفِي الصُّحُفِ الْأُولَىٰ (١٨) صُحُفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَىٰ (١٩)

He is successful who groweth, (14) And remembereth the name of his Lord, so prayeth, (15) But ye prefer the life of the world (16) Although the Hereafter is better and more lasting. (17) Lo! This is in the former scrolls. (18) The Books of Abraham and Moses. (19)

(Surah Al A'Alaa 87 14-19)

8. Titles of Honour Given to Ibrahim

Khalil-ullah: The friend of Allah (Al-Nisa:125)

Neither a Jew nor a Christian: (Aal-Imran:67)

The Quran refuted the claim made by the Jews and the Christians who tried in vain to label Ibrahim as one of their own brethren. How could Ibrahim be either a Jew or a Christian when both these factions were established centuries after the life of Ibrahim?

Hanif: He denounced Shirk and preached the Unity of God throughout his life.
(Aal-Imran :67)

Muslim: As Islam is and has been the religion of all prophets of God, Ibrahim too submitted himself to his Lord. (Aal-Imran:67)

Siddique: His readiness to sacrifice everything in the way of Allah is a great witness to his truthfulness. (Surah Maryam 19 :41)

وَأَذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا (٤١)

And make mention (O Muhammad) in the Scripture of Abraham. Lo! he was a saint, a prophet. (41)

(Surah Maryam 19 :41)

Chosen and guided: (Surah An-Nahl 16: 120 and Al-Baqarah 2 :130)

إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ كَانَ أُمَّةً قَانِتًا لِلَّهِ حَنِيفًا وَلَمْ يَكُ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (١٢٠)

Lo! Abraham was a people obedient to Allah, by nature upright, and he was not of the idolaters; (120)

(Surah An-Nahl 16: 120)

وَمَنْ يَرْغَبْ عَنْ مِلَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَفِهَ نَفْسَهُ وَلَقَدْ اصْطَفَيْنَاهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (١٣٠)

And who forsaketh the religion of Abraham save him who befooleth himself? Verily We chose him in the world, and lo! in the Hereafter he is among the righteous. (130)

(Surah Al-Baqarah 2 :130)

Awwaah: (Tender-hearted). Surah At-Taubah 9:114 and Surah Hud 11:75)

وَمَا كَانَ اسْتِغْفَارُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ إِلَّا عَنْ مَوْعِدَةٍ وَعَدَاهَا إِيَّاهُ فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ أَنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ لِلَّهِ تَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَأَوَّاهٌ حَلِيمٌ (١١٤)

The prayer of Abraham for the forgiveness of his father was only because of a promise he had promised him, but when it had become clear unto him that he (his father) was an enemy to Allah he (Abraham) disowned him. Lo! Abraham was soft of heart, long-suffering. (114)

(Surah At-Taubah 9:114)

إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَحَلِيمٌ أَوَّاهٌ مُنِيبٌ (٧٥)

Lo! Abraham was mild, imploring, penitent. (75)
(Surah Surah Hud 11:75)

Haleem: (Forbearing of faults). (Surah At-Taubah 9:114 and Hud 11:75)

Muneeb: Turning back to God. (Surah Hud:75)

Builder of the House of Allah: (Al-Baqarah 2:127)

وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (١٢٧)

And when Abraham and Ishmael were raising the foundations of the House, (Abraham prayed): Our Lord! Accept from us (this duty). Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Hearer, the Knower. (127)

(Al-Baqarah 2:127)

Pronouncer to the call for Hajj: (Hajj 22:27)

وَأَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا وَعَلَىٰ كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَأْتِينَ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجٍّ عَمِيقٍ (٢٧)

"And proclaim the Pilgrimage among men: they will come to thee on foot and (mounted) on every kind of camel, lean on account of journeys through deep and distant mountain highways;(27)

(Hajj 22:27)

Father of the Muslim community: (Hajj 22:78)

وَجَاهِدُوا فِي اللَّهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهِ هُوَ اجْتَبَاكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ مِّلَّةَ أَبِيكُمْ
إِبْرَاهِيمَ هُوَ سَمَّاكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَفِي هَذَا لِيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْكُمْ وَتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ
عَلَى النَّاسِ فَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِاللَّهِ هُوَ مَوْلَاكُمْ فَنِعْمَ الْمَوْلَىٰ وَنِعْمَ
النَّصِيرُ (٧٨)

And strive in His cause as ye ought to strive, (with sincerity and under discipline). He has chosen you, and has imposed no difficulties on you in religion; it is the cult of your father Abraham. It is He Who has named you Muslims, both before and in this (Revelation); that the Messenger may be a witness for you, and ye be witnesses for mankind! So establish regular Prayer, give regular Charity, and hold fast to Allah. He is your Protector - the Best to protect and the Best to help!(78)

(Hajj 22:78)

Master of a sound heart: (Saffat 37:84)

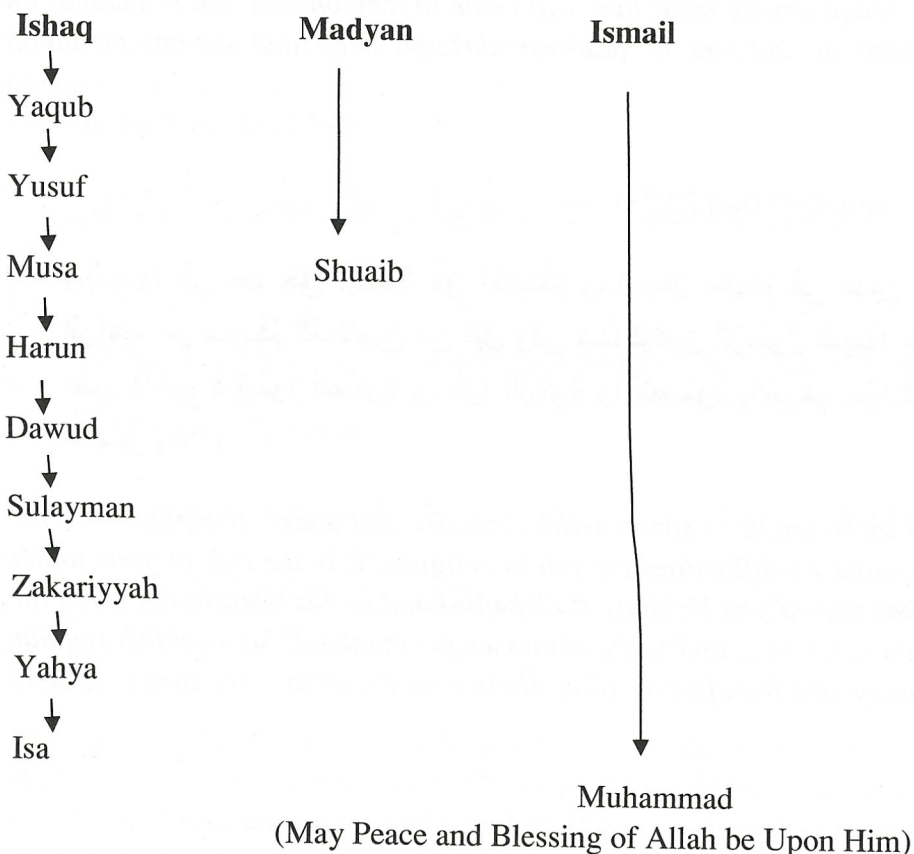
إِذْ جَاءَ رَبَّهُ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ (٨٤)

Behold! he approached his Lord with a sound heart.(84)

9. Father of a Dynasty of Prophets

Ibrahim had a third wife called Qatura, who gave birth to a son called Madyan. He is said to be the father of the Madianites, also known as Ashab al Aikah (People of the Wood), to whom Prophet Shu'aib was sent as Messenger. Prophet Ibrahim died at the age of 175 years. His place of burial is said to be at Al Khalil in Palestine. Through his son Ishaq (who lived to be 180 years old) and grandson Ya'qub, his family tree was adorned with a continuous chain of Prophets, culminating in the person of Prophet Isa. Isa's main duty was to give the people the glad tidings of the coming of Prophet Muhammad [saw]. This prophecy was fulfilled six centuries later in Ibrahim's second chain of descendants through his son Ismail, who remained in Makkah and lived to the age of 137 years. Prophet Muhammad [saw] was born among the descendants of Ismail in 571C.E. Ibrahim was thus truly a father of Prophets and the pious. May Allah shower His Blessings on Ibrahim and his family.

SOME PROPHETS AMONG THE DESCENDANTS OF PROPHET IBRAHIM IBRAHIM



Chapter 2

HADITH: ADHAN AND WUDU

The beginning of the call to prayer

Abdullah b. Zayd reported that, "When the Messenger of Allah [saw] asked for a clapper to be made to invite the people to prayer, I had a dream in which I saw a man carrying a clapper in his hand.

I said to him, "O slave of Allah, will you sell this clapper?"

He said, "What do you want to do with it?"

I said, "We shall use it to call people for prayer."

He said, "Can I suggest something better?"

I said, "Yes, of course you may."

He said, "You should say these words:

<i>Allahu Akbar (Allah is the Greatest)</i>	(four times)
<i>Ash hadu al la ilaha illallah (I bear witness there is no god but Allah)</i>	(twice)
<i>Ash hadu anna Muhammadur rasulullah (I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah)</i>	(twice)
<i>Hayya 'alas salah (Hasten to prayer)</i>	(twice)
<i>Hayya 'alal falah (Hasten to salvation)</i>	(twice)
<i>Allahu akbar (Allah is the greatest)</i>	(twice)
<i>La ilaha illallah (There is no god but Allah)</i>	

He then stood quiet for a while before saying,
"You should say this when the prayer is about to begin,

<i>Allahu Akbar</i>	(twice)
<i>Ash-hadu al la ilaha illallah</i>	
<i>Ash-hadu anna Muhammadur Rasulullah</i>	
<i>Hayya alas Salah</i>	
<i>Hayya alal Falah</i>	
<i>Qad qamatus Salah</i>	(twice)
<i>Allahu Akbar</i>	(twice)
<i>La ilaha illallah."</i>	

So I came to the Prophet in the morning and narrated my vision to him. He said, "By the grace of Allah, this is a true dream. Go to Bilal and communicate your vision to him, and ask him to pronounce these words as loudly as he can." So I stood with Bilal and instructed him in the Adhan and Bilal pronounced the words. Umar ibn al Khattab heard the sound of the Adhan in his house and he came dragging his tunic on the ground, and said, "O Messenger of Allah. By Him who has sent you with the truth, I have had a similar vision."

The Messenger of Allah replied, "Allah be praised for that."
(Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi)

DISCUSSION

1. According to another hadith also contained in Abu Dawud, the Prophet [saw] had requested suggestions on the best way to summon the people for prayer. Someone suggested that a banner be waved at the time for prayer, but this idea was quickly rejected. The horn was then suggested, but the Prophet [saw] rejected it because it was used by the Jews. Someone then suggested using a clapper (made by hitting two pieces of wood together), but the Prophet [saw] rejected this as it was used by the Christians. Abdullah b. Zayd then reported the dream which he had seen and so the human voice was chosen. Unlike the harsh, impersonal and monotonous sounds of the clapper, horn and bell, the sonorous human voice with its wealth of emotions, tones and sounds is perfect for inviting the people to prayer.
2. The Prophet [saw] forbade the Muslims from following the ways of the Jews and Christians, especially in religious observation and festivals. Both groups of people had been chosen by Allah at different times to receive the honour of revelation and to spread the message of Tawheed to the world. Both groups failed miserably in their task. The Jews went as far as to earn the Wrath of Allah by murdering the Prophets sent to them and making a mockery of the Torah. Divine commandments were twisted and changed out of recognition in order to suit the whims and desires of the rabbis and their flocks.

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَا مُوسَىٰ لَنْ نَصْبِرَ عَلَىٰ طَعَامٍ وَاحِدٍ فَادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُخْرِجْ لَنَا مِمَّا تُنْبِتُ الْأَرْضُ مِنْ بَقْلِهَا وَقِثَّائِهَا وَفُومِهَا وَعَدَسِيهَا وَبَصِلِهَا قَالَ آتَسْتَبِدُّونَ النَّاسَ هُوَ أَذْنَىٰ بِأَلَدِي هُوَ خَيْرٌ أَلْهَبُوا مِصْرًا فَإِنَّ لَكُمْ مِمَّا سَأَلْتُمْ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذَّلِيلَةُ وَالْمَسْكَانَةُ وَبَاءَؤُا بِعَصَابٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيِّينَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ذَٰلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ (٦١)

And when ye said: O Moses! We are weary of one kind of food; so call upon thy Lord for us that He bring forth for us of that which the earth groweth - of its herbs and its cucumbers and its corn and its lentils and its onions. He said: Would ye exchange that which is higher for that which is lower? Go down to settled country, thus ye shall get that which ye demand. And humiliation and wretchedness were stamped upon them and they were visited with wrath from Allah. That was because they disbelieved in Allah's revelations and slew the prophets wrongfully. That was for their disobedience and transgression. (61)

(Surah Al Baqarah 2:61)

The Christians went astray very quickly after the departure of Prophet Isa as they lost the Scripture he had brought with him. The New Testament extant was virtually re-written by Saint Paul and later Church elders, and bears little resemblance to the original Injeel revealed to Prophet Isa.

The Muslim community was warned of the fate of its predecessors and so advised to avoid imitating the Jews and Christians in their worship, customs, religious festivals, and especially in their treatment of the Prophets and divine Scriptures.

3. The Adhan is pronounced a little while before the congregational prayer in the Mosque to give the Muslims time to prepare by performing Wudhu (ablution for prayer) and travelling to the Masjid. The Muezzin traditionally stands on a tall minaret on the roof of the Masjid to

deliver the Adhan so that his voice can reach as many people as possible. Once the people are ready and standing in rows in the Masjid, the Iqamah is recited. This is very similar to the Adhan but is recited quickly inside the Masjid, not from the minaret.

According to a hadith reported by Abu Mahdhura, the Prophet (SAW) told him to insert the following phrase twice after 'Hayya 'alal Falah' for the Fajr Adhan:

'As Salatu Khayrun Minan Nawm.'

(Prayer is better than sleep)

It can be very difficult for most people to forsake their warm beds and comfortable sleep to arise, to perform wudhu and then pray, so they are reminded that worshipping Allah is much better for their souls than sleep.

The person who gives the Adhan (Muezzin) has been promised an immense reward. Ameer Mu'awiya reported that he heard the Prophet (saw) say, "The Muezzin will have the tallest necks on the Day of Judgement (to reflect their eminence)."

(Muslim)

Abu Abdullah bin Abdur Rahman bin Abu Sa'sa related that Abu Sa'eed al Khudri told him, "I see that you people are shepherds and nomads. If you are in the desert where your goats are grazing and you have to pronounce the Adhan, do it loudly. Because anybody, whether jinn, human or anything else, who hears even the most distant voice of the muezzin, shall be a witness to it on the Day of Judgement. This I heard from the Holy Prophet."

(Bukhari)

'Uqbah bin Amir said that he heard the Prophet say, "Your Lord delights at a shepherd who, on the peak of a mountain crag, gives the call to prayer and prays. Then Allah says: Look at this servant of Mine. He gives the call to prayer and performs the prayer; he is in awe of Me. I have forgiven My servant his sins and have admitted him to Paradise."

(Nisai)

WUDU (ABLUTION)

In preparation for prayer, believers must perform wudu first. *The Prophet said, "The key to paradise is prayer, and the key to prayer is purification."*

(Ahmad)

Wudu prepares the Believer physically and mentally for prayer. Just as the dirt that tarnishes the human body is washed away in wudu, so the dirt that tarnishes the soul is washed away by prayer. The believer then emerges from Salah physically and spiritually cleansed.

Cleanliness is extremely important in Islam. There is no religion other than Islam which requires such strict requirements of personal hygiene, including the unique precept that believers must wash their private parts after answering the call of nature. While performing

wudu, the believer is reminded that he is not off to perform some mundane daily task but is about to converse in a private audience with his Lord and Master. Imagine an ordinary citizen granted the honour of an audience with his country's monarch. He would take time to wash and cleanse his body, primp and preen himself with his finest attire, perfume his body and style his hair. To speak to one's King is an honour and a privilege, and few would undertake it without the necessary toilette. Prayer is the pinnacle of royal audiences, as it is an audience not with a mere mortal king but with the Omnipotent God and Master of mankind. And despite the vastness of His Kingdom, Allah Almighty has honoured each and every servant of His with private audiences whenever they so desire. There are no limits of time or quantity. A believer can raise his hands in supplication whenever he so wishes, and his Lord will listen. And so before the daily prayers, the believer cleanses and beautifies himself for the great honour that his Lord has granted him.

Abu Huraira reported that the Messenger of Allah said, *"When a believer washes his face (in ablution), every sin he contemplated with his eyes will be washed away from his face with the drops of water; when he washes his hands, every sin they committed will be effaced from his hands; and when he washes his feet, every sin towards which his feet have walked will be washed away, with the result that he comes out pure from all sins."*
(Muslim)

Nu'aim b. Abdullah al Mujmir reported that Abu Huraira performed wudu and said that the Prophet had said, *"You shall have your faces, hands and feet bright on the Day of Resurrection because of your perfect ablution. He who can do so, let him increase the brightness of his forehead and of his hands and legs."* (Muslim)

Cleanliness is part of Fitrah (man's natural inclination). Human beings like to present themselves at their best, especially in public, not at their worst. And as with all aspects of life, Islam has advised us how to keep clean. Aisha reported that the Messenger of Allah said, *"Ten are the acts according to the Fitrah: clipping the moustache, letting the beard grow, using the tooth-stick, snuffing up the water in the nose, cutting the nails, washing the finger joints, plucking the underarm hair, shaving pubic hair, and cleaning the private parts with water."* (The narrator forgot the tenth one.)
(Muslim)

Wudu must be performed with care as the rewards for it are great indeed. Abdullah b. Zaid b. Asim al Ansari was a Companion who was asked by the people to perform ablution as it was performed by the Prophet. *"He called for a vessel of water and poured water from it on his hands and washed them three times. Then he inserted his hand in the vessel, scooped out water, rinsed his mouth and snuffed water from the palm of one hand, doing it three times. He again scooped out water and washed his face three times. Then he inserted his hand to draw out water and washed each arm up to the elbow thrice. Then he inserted his hand to draw out water and wiped his head front and back with his hands. He then washed his feet up to the ankles, and said, 'This is how Allah's Messenger performed wudu.'"*
(Muslim)

Humran, the freed slave of Uthman, reported that Uthman performed wudu and then said, *The Messenger of Allah said, "He who performed wudu like this wudu of mine and offered two rak'ahs of prayer without allowing his thoughts to be distracted, all his previous sins will be forgiven."*

(Muslim)

Chapter 3

BELIEF IN ANGELS

Aisha reported that the Prophet (saw) once said, "*The angels were created from light. The jinns were created from fire. Man was created from that which has been described to you.*" (Muslim)

The substances from which all creatures were created have quite an impact on their characteristics. For example, the angels were created from light, which is transparent and pure. The angels are similarly transparent as they have no sins to hide and no complexities in their character. They were created to serve Allah and that is all they do, without choice. And like light, they are pure, illuminated and good.

Jinns, on the other hand, were created from fire, which is aggressive and destructive, qualities which made Iblis arrogant and disobedient when he first met Prophet Adam.

Fire is also an element that burns and consumes other elements in order to survive. If there is no wood left to burn, the fire will die out. The satans, who are the evil jinns, exist by consuming the evil deeds of human beings and by discouraging good deeds. Without the evil deeds of humans to feed on, these jinns would die.

Jabir reported: I heard the Messenger of Allah (saw) saying, "If a person mentions the Name of Allah upon entering his house or eating, Satan says, addressing his followers: 'You will find nowhere in which to spend the night and no dinner.' But if he enters without mentioning the Name of Allah, Satan says (to his followers); 'You have found a place in which to spend the night', and if he does not mention the Name of Allah at the time of eating, Satan says: 'You have found a place in which to spend the night, as well as food.'" [Muslim].

Human beings are made of clay and have many of the characteristics associated with clay. Clay is made of a myriad of colours and substances, just as humans come in a myriad of colours, sizes and abilities. A clay container is opaque and will hide its contents when seen from a distance; similarly, humans hide a myriad of emotions, capabilities and experiences within their bodies. Simply looking at a human is not enough to determine the complexity and intricacy of his character. Because of this opaqueness of character, humans can commit sins or do good deeds with equal secrecy, hiding from other creatures their true potential. Iblis made the mistake of judging Adam lightly, assuming that he could not see through Adam because there was nothing to see. In fact, Adam was Allah's greatest creation as he had a potential to obey or disobey Allah with an intensity far superior to that of other creatures.

Belief in Angels is a basic tenet of the Islamic faith. The angels are the most numerous of the creation of Allah, the entire universe being filled with their forms. The angels do not eat or drink, they have been created without distinction of sex, they do not marry or reproduce, and they have no will of their own. They are the slaves of Allah who rush around fulfilling His Commands. They were created for the sole purpose of obeying Allah and cannot disobey Him. In their case, to hear really is to obey. The entire running of the universe is dependent

on these angels, who take orders from Allah and then rush to implement them. They are huge, winged creatures of immense beauty and nobility. The Prophet (saw) once saw Jibril resplendent with six hundred wings! The number of angels is impossible to calculate or even imagine. The Prophet (saw) once said *“The heaven groans and it has a right to groan. On the Final Day, Hell will be pulled up by 70,000 thongs, and holding each thong there will be 70,000 angels.”*

During his Mi'raj journey to the seven heavens, the Prophet (saw) was taken to Bayt al Ma'mur (The Frequented House) opposite the Throne of Allah. This is a heavenly Ka'ba for the angels. 70,000 angels visit the House each and every day to pray and perform Tawaf, just as Muslims pray and perform Tawaf around the earthly Ka'ba. The angels visit the House only once, never to return to it again! This gives us an indication of the vast number of angels in this universe. In fact the Prophet (saw) said, *“There is no space in the seven heavens a foot's length or a handspan or a palm's width which does not have an angel standing, bowing or prostrating on it.”* (At Tabarani)

Jibreel, Mikail and Israfil are the leaders of the angels.

Jibreel is the Archangel, honoured with conveying revelation from Allah to all the prophets. He is the king of the angels and is obeyed and respected by them all. When the Prophet (saw) saw him for the first time, Jibreel seemed to be standing on a mountain in his full glory; his 600 wings fanning out in a glorious display of beauty and grandeur. Jibreel is trustworthy, pure and the embodiment of everything virtuous.

إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ (١٩) ذِي قُوَّةٍ عِنْدَ ذِي الْعَرْشِ مَكِينٍ (٢٠) مُطَاعٍ ثَمَّ أَمِينٍ (٢١)

That this is in truth the word of an honoured messenger, (19) Mighty, established in the presence of the Lord of the Throne, (20) (One) to be obeyed, and trustworthy; (21)
(Surah At Takwir 81:19-21)

Mikail is the angel in charge of plants and rainfall. He will send rain whenever Allah orders him to do so. Senior angels do not work on their own but have countless angels under their command; Mikail's army of helpers make the winds and clouds move, and thunder and lightning to echo in the land. They allow plants to thrive or die according to instructions from Allah.

Israfil is the angel of the trumpet. On the final Day he will be commanded by Allah to blow three blasts on the trumpet. The first will be the Blast of Terror which will cause all humans, animals and jinn to scream and tremble in fear; the earth will shake in terror and the mountains will crumble and fall. The people alive on earth at the time will be the worst of the people and they will endure the terrifying noise of the Trumpet and the chaos and destruction which this will cause. The second will be the Blast of Swooning which will cause every human, jinn and beast to die. The third will be the Blast of the Rising when all humans and jinns that have ever existed will be resurrected for the final judgement. Each and every particle of the earth's ground will tear open to reveal the bodies of humans long buried and forgotten.

Azrail is the angel of Death. He and his helpers draw the soul out of the dying person and carry it up to the heavens.

﴿قُلْ يَتَوَفَّاكُم مَّلَكُ الْمَوْتِ الَّذِي وُكِّلَ بِكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُونَ﴾ (١١)

Say: The angel of death, who hath charge concerning you, will gather you, and afterward unto your Lord ye will be returned. (11)

(Surah As Sajdah 32:11)

The manner in which the soul leaves the body depends on the actions of that person. In a very long hadith narrated by Al Bara b. Azib, the Prophet (saw) said, "When a believer is about to leave the world and go forward to the next world, angels with faces white as the sun come down to him from heaven with one of the shrouds of paradise and some of the perfume of paradise and sit away from him as far as the eye can see. Then the Angel of Death comes and sits at his head and says, 'Good soul, come out to forgiveness and acceptance from Allah.' The soul comes out from the body just as a drop flows from a water-skin and he seizes it; and when he does so they do not leave it in his hand for an instant, but take it and place it in that shroud and perfume, and from it there comes forth a fragrance like that of the sweetest musk found on the face of the earth...."

...But when a disbeliever is about to leave the world and proceed to the next world, angels with black faces come down to him from heaven with hair-cloth and sit away from him as far as the eye can see. Then the Angel of Death comes and sits at his head and says, 'Wicked soul, come out to displeasure from Allah.' The soul then becomes dissipated in his body, and he draws it out as a spit is drawn out from moistened wool. He then seizes it, and when he does so they do not leave it in his hand for an instant, but put it in that hair-cloth and from it comes a stench like the most offensive corpse found on the face of the earth...."

Allah Almighty says,

وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذْ يَتَوَفَّى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَضْرِبُونَ وُجُوهَهُمْ وَأَدْبَارَهُمْ وَذُوقُوا عَذَابَ
الْحَرِيقِ (٥٠)

If thou couldst see how the angels receive those who disbelieve, smiting their faces and their backs and (saying): Taste the punishment of burning! (50)

(Surah Al Anfal 8:50)

الَّذِينَ تَتَوَفَّيْهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ طَيِّبِينَ يَقُولُونَ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ ادْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٣٢)

Those whom the angels cause to die (when they are) good. They say: Peace be unto you! Enter the Garden because of what ye used to do. (32)

(Surah An Nahl 16:32)

Once the soul has left the person's body, a new life begins known as the Al-Barzakh (period in the grave), which will last until the resurrection on the Final Day. The angels in charge of the Trial of the Grave are **Munkar** and **Nakir**. After its ascent to the heavens, the

soul is restored to its body in the grave for questioning. If the person is then successful in answering the questions correctly, his grave will expand and fill with the fragrance, coolness and sounds of paradise. If the person was a disbeliever or a hypocrite during his life on earth, he will fail the test of the grave and it will fill with the heat, pain and torture of hell.

The hadith of Al Bara b. Azib quoted earlier continues with the questions put by Munkar and Nakir to the deceased person in his grave. The four questions they ask each soul is:

“Who is your Lord?”

“What is your Religion?”

“Who is the man who was sent among you?”

“What is your source of Knowledge?”

The person will be unable to give well-rehearsed answers to these questions, but will speak truthfully according to his actions when alive. On the Day of Judgement, man will be condemned to hell or welcomed into paradise on the evidence of his own actions. It will not be left to other jurors to decide his fate for eternity but it will be the testimony of his own life which will decide his fate. Each and every word that a person says on earth, each and every action he performs, and each and every thought he thinks are recorded by two **scribes**; angels which sit on his shoulders and work without fatigue to record his entire life. The Almighty reminds us,

إِذْ يَتَلَقَى الْمُتَلَقِينَ عَنِ الْيَمِينِ وَعَنِ الشِّمَالِ قَعِيدٌ (١٧)

When the two Receivers receive (him), seated on the right hand and on the left, (17)
(Surah Qaf 50:17)

Man will thus be the best proof for or against himself on the Final Day.

وَكُلَّ إِنْسَانٍ أَلْزَمْنَاهُ طَبْرِهٖ فِي عُنُقِهِ وَنُخْرِجُ لَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ كِتَابًا يَلْقَاهُ مَنشُورًا (١٣) أَقْرَأَ
كِتَابِكَ كَفَىٰ بِنَفْسِكَ الْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكَ حَسِيبًا (١٤)

And every man's augury have We fastened to his own neck, and We shall bring forth for him on the Day of Resurrection a book which he will find wide open. (13) (And it will be said unto him): Read thy Book. Thy soul sufficeth as reckoner against thee this day. (14)
(Surah Al Isra 17:13-14)

Mujahid reported that the Prophet said: “Honour the two **noble scribes** who leave you only at two times: in Janaba and when you relieve yourselves. When one of you takes a ghusul, he should screen himself with a wall or his camel, or his brother should screen him.”
(Ibn Abi Hatim)

The intentions of a person are also recorded by the angels known as the **Noble Scribes**. Sufyan was asked how the angels were aware of the nature of a person's thoughts and intentions. He replied, “When someone intends a good action, they smell the scent of musk coming from him. And when he intends an evil action, they smell a putrid smell coming from him.”

Allah Almighty has also appointed an army of **Guardian Angels** to protect His creation.

لَهُ مُعَقَّبَاتٌ مِّنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ يَحْفَظُونَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا
مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ وَإِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ سُوءًا فَلَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَالٍ (١١)

For him are angels ranged before him and behind him, who guard him by Allah's command. Lo! Allah changeth not the condition of a folk until they (first) change that which is in their hearts; and if Allah willeth misfortune for a folk there is none that can repel it, nor have they a defender beside Him. (11)

(Surah Ar Ra'd 13:11)

These angels protect each and every person from any harm reaching him, unless this harm has been decreed for him by Allah. When this happens, the angel moves away to allow the harm to reach its target. Mujahid is reported to have said, "There is no one who does not have an angel who is entrusted with protecting him both when asleep and when awake, from jinn and men and reptiles. None of them comes to him without finding an angel blocking its way except for something which Allah has given permission to reach him."

The angel described as the **Custodian of Paradise** is **Ridwan**. When the good souls will enter paradise, the angels at its gates will send greetings of peace upon them. And when the evil souls will be hurled into hell, the angels at its doors will speak to them in disgust, astonished that these people rejected the message of Prophet Muhammad (saw).

وَسِيقَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ زُمَرًا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءُوهَا فَتَحَتْ أَبْوَابُهَا وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ
رُسُلٌ مِّنكُمْ يَتْلُونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِ رَبِّكُمْ وَيُنذِرُونَكُمْ لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَٰذَا قَالُوا بَلَىٰ وَلَكِنْ حَقَّتْ كَلِمَةُ
الْعَذَابِ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ (٧١) قِيلَ ادْخُلُوا أَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا فَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ
(٧٢) وَسِيقَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ زُمَرًا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءُوهَا وَفُتِحَتْ أَبْوَابُهَا وَقَالَ لَهُمْ
خَزَنَتُهَا سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طِبْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوهَا خَالِدِينَ (٧٣)

And those who disbelieve are driven unto hell in troops till, when they reach it and the gates thereof are opened, and the warders thereof say unto them: Came there not unto you messengers of your own, reciting unto you the revelations of your Lord and warning you of the meeting of this your Day? They say: Yea, verily. But the word of doom of disbelievers is fulfilled. (71) It is said (unto them): Enter ye the gates of hell to dwell therein. Thus hapless is the journey's end of the scorers. (72) And those who keep their duty to their Lord are driven unto the Garden in troops till, when they reach it, and the gates thereof are opened, and the warders thereof say unto them: Peace be unto you! Ye are good, so enter ye (the Garden of delight), to dwell therein; (73)

(Surah Az Zumar 39:71-73)

The Quran speaks of a hierarchy of angels over Hellfire. **Malik** is the angel in charge of Hell, and he has nineteen ruthless deputies. These nineteen angels control a vast army of angels who are unflinching in their task of ensuring that no wrong-doer will be allowed to escape from hell. The humans and jinn condemned to burning in hell will beg the angels to give them some respite, and to beseech Allah on their behalf for clemency. But their cries will have no effect on the angels. The Almighty warns His creation of this:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا قُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَظٌ شِدَادٌ
لَّا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ (٦)

O ye who believe! Ward off from yourselves and your families a Fire whereof the fuel is men and stones, over which are set angels strong, severe, who resist not Allah in that which He commandeth them, but do that which they are commanded. (6)

(Surah At Tahrir 66:6)

The Prophet (saw) once said, “On the Day of Rising, Hell will be drawn up by 70,000 thongs, and on each thong there will be 70,000 angels.”

(Sahih Muslim)

In previous lessons we have mentioned stories of nations such as ‘Ad and Thamud who were destroyed for their sins. They were annihilated so completely that no remnants of their civilizations were left behind. These communities may have been destroyed by the **Angel of the Mountains**. After an unhappy visit by the Prophet (saw) to a neighbouring tribe, Jibreel came to him and offered to have them destroyed. He told the Prophet, “Allah has heard what your people said to you and the reply they gave you. He has sent the Angel of the Mountains with me so that you can command him as you wish. If you wish, he will crush your people by causing the mountains to fall on top of them, or if you wish, he will make the earth swallow them up.”

The Prophet (saw) however, declined the offer, citing his hope that one day the descendants of these rebellious people would turn to Tawheed and Islam.

Hadith literature also mention the **Angel of the Womb** who directs the sperm into the egg, destroys the foetus if it is not destined to survive (miscarriage), and breathes the spirit of life into the egg in the womb. He is also entrusted with recording the destiny of the person even before he is born.

Anas b. Malik narrated that the Prophet said, “Allah has put an angel in charge of the womb. He asks, ‘O Lord, a drop? O Lord, a clot? O Lord, a morsel?’ When Allah desires to complete the creation of the foetus, he asks, ‘O Lord, male or female? Wretched or happy? How much provision? How long a lifespan?’ The person’s destiny is thus written while he is still in his mother’s womb.”

(Agreed upon)

There are many angels that bear the Throne of Allah, and others whose duties are to praise and fear Him. Some groups of angels are described as the **Mala’il A’laa** (the highest assembly). Other angels help true believers in times of war; the Prophet (saw) was aided by these angels during the battle of Badr and during the conquest of Makkah.

إِذْ تَسْتَعِينُونَ رَبُّكُمْ فَأَسْتَجَابَ لَكُمْ أَنَّىٰ مُمِدُّكُمْ بِالْأَفِّ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ مُرْدِفِينَ (٩)

When ye sought help of your Lord and He answered you (saying): I will help you with a thousand of the angels, rank on rank. (9)

(Surah Al Anfal 8:9)

Finally, we end with an account of the **Angels of Zikr** who travel the earth looking for gatherings in which Allah's religion is being taught. When they find such gatherings, they sit among the participants, enveloping them in their wings and filling the gathering with peace and mercy.

Abu Huraira reported that the Prophet (saw) said, "*Allah has supernumerary angels who travel around seeking gatherings in which Allah's name is being invoked; they sit with them and fold their wings round each other, filling that which is between them and between the lowest heaven.*"

When the gathering disperses, the angels ascend to heaven where they report to Allah. The hadith quoted above ends thus: "*Allah says (to the angels): 'I have forgiven them and I have bestowed upon them what they have asked for, and I have granted them sanctuary from that from which they asked for protection.'*"

The angels ask: 'O Lord, among them is so-and-so, a much sinning servant, who was merely passing by and sat down with them.'

Allah says: 'And to him too I have given forgiveness. He who sits with such people shall not suffer.'"

(Muslim)



LESSON
6

Chapter 1 PROPHET ISMA'IL (ISHMAEL)

According to established traditions, Prophet Ibrahim lived from 1940 B.C. to 1765 B.C. His son Ismail was born in approx 1854 B.C. when Ibrahim was 86years old and had been supplicating to Allah to grant him pious offspring. The Quran has recorded this du'a:

وَقَالَ إِنِّي ذَاهِبٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي سَيِّدِينَ (٩٩) رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (١٠٠) فَبَشَّرْنَاهُ بِغُلَامٍ حَلِيمٍ (١٠١)

And he said: Lo! I am going unto my Lord Who will guide me. (99) My Lord! Vouchsafe me of the righteous. (100) So We gave him tidings of a gentle son. (101)
(Surah Al Saffat 37:99-101)

Soon after the birth of his first son, Ibrahim was commanded by Allah Almighty to travel to Makkah and leave Hajirah and their infant son Ismail in its barren valley. It is mistakenly believed that Ibrahim abandoned his new family in such a remote place because his first wife Sarah, who was still childless, was becoming jealous of Hajirah and was beginning to voice her feelings. Although this rivalry between the co-wives did surface, it was not the reason behind Ibrahim's long journey from Palestine to Makkah. The truth was that Allah Almighty had a divine scheme to establish an Islamic nucleus in Makkah, which would remain strong until the day of Judgement. Ismail was destined to be the father of this new Islamic civilization, so his journey to this distant land was necessary for the divine plan.

Abdullah b. Abbas narrated a long hadith from the Prophet (saw) in which Ismail's life in Makkah was recounted. This hadith is reproduced below:

“The first lady to use a girdle was the mother of Ismail. She used a girdle so that she might hide her tracks from Sarah. Ibrahim brought her and her son Ismail while she was suckling him, to a place near the Ka'ba under a tree on the spot of Zamzam, at the highest place in the mosque. During those days there was nobody in Makkah, nor was there any water. So he made them sit there and placed near them a leather bag containing some dates, and a small water-skin containing some water, and set out homeward. Ismail's mother followed him saying, “O Ibrahim! Where are you going, leaving us in this valley where there is no person whose company we may enjoy, nor is there anything else?” She repeated that to him many times, but he did not look back at her. Then she asked him, “Has Allah ordered you to do so?” He said, “Yes.” She said, “Then He will not neglect us,” and returned to her son. Ibrahim proceeded onwards, and on reaching the Thaniya where they could not see him, he faced the Ka'ba, and raising both hands, invoked Allah saying the following prayers:-

‘O Lord! I have made some of my offspring dwell in a valley without cultivation, by Your Sacred House in order, O our Lord, that they may offer prayer perfectly. So fill some hearts among men with love towards them, and (O Allah) provide them with fruits, so that they may give thanks.’ (14:37)

Ismail's mother went on suckling Ismail and drinking from the water. When the water in the water-skin had finished, she became thirsty and her child also became thirsty. She started looking at him tossing in agony. She left him, for she could not bear to see his discomfort, and found that the mountain of Safa was the nearest mountain to her on that land. She stood on it and started looking at the valley, hoping that she might see somebody, but she could not see anyone. Then she descended from Safa and when she reached the valley, she tucked up her robe and ran in the valley like a person in distress and trouble. She crossed the valley and reached the Marwa mountain where she stood and started looking, expecting to see somebody, but she could not see anybody. She repeated that (running between Safa and Marwa) seven times."

The Prophet said, "This is the source of the tradition of the walking of people between them (ie. Safa and Marwa). When she reached Marwa (for the last time) she heard a voice, and she asked herself to be quiet and listened attentively. She heard the voice again and said, 'O (whoever you may be)! You have made me hear your voice; have you got something to help me?' And behold! She saw an angel at the place of Zamzam, digging the earth with his heel (or his wing), until water flowed from that place. She started to make something like a basin around it using her hands, and started filling her water-skin with water with her hands, but the water continued to flow after she had scooped out some of it."

The Prophet (saw) added, "May Allah bestow mercy on Ismail's mother! Had she let the Zamzam flow (without trying to control it or had she not scooped from that water to fill her water-skin), Zamzam would have been a stream flowing on the surface of the earth." The Prophet (saw) further added, "Then she drank (water) and suckled her child. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid of being neglected, for this is the House of Allah which will be built by this boy and his father, and Allah never neglects His people.'" The House (ie. Ka'ba) at that time was on a high place resembling a hillock, and when torrential rain came, it flowed to its right and left. She lived in that way until some people from the tribe of Jurhum or a family from Jurhum passed by her and her child while travelling through Kada'. They were in the lower part of Makkah when they saw a bird known for its habit of flying around water and not leaving it. They said, "This bird must be flying around water, though we know that there is no water in this valley.' So they sent some messengers who discovered the source of water, so they all came (towards the water)."

The Prophet (saw) added, "Ismail's mother was sitting near the water. They asked her, 'Will you allow us to camp here?'" She replied, 'Yes, but you will have no right to possess the water.' They agreed to that." The Prophet (saw) further said, "Ismail's mother was pleased with the whole situation as she enjoyed the company of the people. So they settled there, and later on they sent for their families who came and settled with them so that some families became permanent residents there. The child (ie. Ismail) grew up and learnt Arabic from them; his virtues caused them to love and admire him as he grew up, and when he reached the age of puberty, they arranged for his marriage with a woman from amongst them. After the death of Ismail's mother, Ibrahim came to see the family he had left years before, but he could not find Ismail. When he asked Ismail's wife about him, she replied, 'He has gone in search of our livelihood.' Then he asked her about their way of living and their condition. She responded by complaining, 'We are living in misery; we live in hardship and destitution.'

He said, 'When your husband returns, convey my salutations to him and tell him to change the threshold of his house.' When Ismail came, he sensed something unusual, so he asked his wife, 'Has anyone visited you?'

She replied, 'Yes, an old man of such-and-such description came and asked me about your whereabouts and I told him. Then he asked about our state of living, and I told him that we were living in hardship and poverty.' On that Ismail said, 'Did he give you any advice?'

She replied, 'Yes, he told me to convey his salutations to you and to tell you to change the threshold of your gate.'

Ismail said, 'That was my father, and he has ordered me to divorce you. Go back to your family.'

So Ismail divorced her and married another woman from amongst them (ie. Jurhum). Then Ibrahim stayed away from them for a period as long as Allah wished and called on them again but did not find Ismail. So he came to Ismail's wife and asked her about their sustenance and living. She replied, 'We are prosperous and we have everything in abundance.' Then she thanked Allah Almighty.

Ibrahim asked, 'What kind of food do you eat?' She said, 'Meat.'

He asked, 'What do you drink?' She said, 'Water.'

He said, "O Allah, bless their meat and water."

The Prophet (saw) added. "At that time they did not have grain, and if they had grain, he would have also invoked Allah to bless it." The Prophet (saw) added, "If somebody has only these two things as his sustenance, his health and disposition will be badly affected, unless he lives in Makkah."

The Prophet (saw) added, "Then Ibrahim said to Ismail's wife, 'When your husband comes, give my regards to him and tell him that he should keep firm the threshold of his gate.' When Ismail came back, he asked his wife, 'Did anyone call on you?'

She replied, 'Yes, a good-looking old man came to me;' she praised him and added, 'He asked about you, and I informed him, and he asked about our livelihood and I told him that we were in a good condition.' Ismail asked her, 'Did he give you any advice?' She said, 'Yes, he told me to give his regards to you and ordered that you should keep firm the threshold of your gate.' On that Ismail said, 'That was my father, and you are the threshold (of the gate). He has ordered me to keep you with me.'

Then Ibrahim stayed away from them for a period as long as Allah wished, and called on them afterwards. He saw Ismail under a tree near Zamzam, sharpening his arrows. When he saw Ibrahim, he rose up to welcome him (and they greeted each other as a father does with his son or a son does with his father). Ibrahim said, 'O Ismail! Allah has given me an order.'

Ismail said, 'Do what your Lord has ordered you to do.' Ibrahim asked, 'Will you help me?' Ismail said, 'I will help you.' Ibrahim said, 'Allah has ordered me to build a house here,' pointing to a hillock higher than the land surrounding it."

The Prophet added, "Then they raised the foundations of the House (ie. the Ka'ba). Ismail brought the stones and Ibrahim built them up. When the walls became high, Ismail brought this stone and put it for Ibrahim who stood on it and carried on building. Ismail would hand him the stones while both of them prayed,

وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (١٢٧)

And when Abraham and Ishmael were raising the foundations of the House, (Abraham prayed): Our Lord! Accept from us (this duty). Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Hearer, the
Knower. (127)

Surah al Baqarah 2:127)

The Offspring of Ismail

Ismail had twelve sons and one daughter. His geneology through his son Kidar culminated with the birth of the seal of the Prophets, Muhammad (saw), a result of the joint prayer of Ibrahim and Ismail:

وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (١٢٧)
رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمِينَ لَكَ وَمِن دُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُّسْلِمَةً لَّكَ وَأَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ
الرَّحِيمُ (١٢٨) رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ
وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (١٢٩)

And when Abraham and Ishmael were raising the foundations of the House, (Abraham prayed): Our Lord! Accept from us (this duty). Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Hearer, the Knower. (127) Our Lord! And make us submissive unto Thee and of our seed a nation submissive unto Thee, and show us our ways of worship, and relent toward us. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Relenting, the Merciful. (128) Our Lord! And raise up in their midst a messenger from among them who shall recite unto them Thy revelations, and shall instruct them in the Scripture and in wisdom and shall make them grow. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Mighty, Wise. (129)

(Surah Al Baqarah 2:127-129)

Ismail lived for 137 years and was buried beside his mother at the threshold of the Ka'ba.

The attributes of Ismail in the Quran

1.

وَأَذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِسْمَاعِيلَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صَادِقَ الْوَعْدِ وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَّبِيًّا (٥٤) وَكَانَ يَأْمُرُ أَهْلَهُ
بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ وَكَانَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ مَرْضِيًّا (٥٥)

And make mention in the Scripture of Ishmael. Lo! he was a keeper of his promise, and he was a messenger (of Allah), a prophet. (54) He enjoined upon his people worship and almsgiving, and was acceptable in the sight of his Lord. (55)

(Surah Maryam 19:54-55)

Ismail is described as being truthful in his promises because he had promised to remain patient at the time of his own sacrifice. This was a very difficult promise to make, but he remained true to his word.

He was also a Messenger and a Prophet to his own people, conveying to them the words of Allah Almighty. Prayer and Charity were two commandments practised and preached by all the prophets of Allah, including Ismail. Because of these noble qualities, Allah Almighty declares His pleasure with Prophet Ismail.

2.

فَبَشِّرْنَاهُ بِغُلَامٍ حَلِيمٍ (١٠١) فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعَىٰ قَالَ يَا بُنَىٰ إِنِّيٰ أَرَىٰ فِي الْمَنَامِ أَنِّيٰ أَذْبَحُكَ
فَانظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَىٰ قَالَ يَا أَبَتِ أَفْعَلْ مَا تُؤْمَرُ سَتَجِدُنِيٰ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ (١٠٢)

So We gave him tidings of a gentle son. (101) And when (his son) was old enough to walk with him, (Abraham) said: O my dear son, I have seen in a dream that I must sacrifice thee. So look, what thinkest thou? He said: O my father! Do that which thou art commanded. Allah willing, thou shalt find me of the steadfast. (102)

(Surah Al Saffat 37:101-102)

وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِدْرِيسَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ كُلٌّ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ (٨٥)

And (mention) Ishmael, and Idris, and Dhu'l-Kifl. All were of the steadfast. (85)
(Surah Al Anbiya 21:85)

Ismail is described as forbearant and patient, two characteristics which became evident during the test of the sacrifice.

Prophet Is'haq (Isaac)

Is'haq was the younger brother of Ismail, born to Ibrahim's first wife Sarah in her old age, and his lineage too was blessed with a tremendous succession of Prophets. Biblical claims that Is'haq was the intended sacrifice have been refuted earlier. Ishaq married his cousin Rufqa who gave birth to twin-boys Esau (Al Eis) and Jacob (Yaqub). Is'haq lived for 180 years and was buried at Hebron (Khalil) in Palestine. Yaqub was favoured by Allah and chosen to be a Prophet, so sibling rivalry grew until Yaqub was forced to leave his native country.

The Quran gives few details about the life of Is'haq, reiterating only that he was a pious man and blessed with pious descendants, among them numerous prophets. His birth was special as it was a miraculous gift for Sarah in her old age.

His description in the Quran

1. He was divinely guided

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ كُلًّا هَدَيْنَا وَنُوحًا هَدَيْنَا مِن قَبْلُ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِهِ دَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ
وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُوسُفَ وَمُوسَى وَهَارُونَ وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٨٤)

And We bestowed upon him Isaac and Jacob; each of them We guided; and Noah did We guide aforetime; and of his seed (We guided) David and Solomon and Job and Joseph and Moses and Aaron. Thus do We reward the good. (84)

(Surah Al An'am 6:84)

2. He was a Prophet, remembered always for his truthfulness.

فَلَمَّا أَعْتَزَلَهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ وَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا نَبِيًّا (٤٩)
وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُم مِّن رَّحْمَتِنَا وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُم لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ عَلِيًّا (٥٠)

So, when he had withdrawn from them and that which they were worshipping beside Allah, We gave him Isaac and Jacob. Each of them We made a prophet. (49) And we gave them of Our mercy, and assigned to them a high and true renown. (50)

(Surah Maryam 19:49-50)

3. Prophet Is'haq is usually mentioned with his son Yaqub. As members of the noble family of Ibrahim, they excelled in goodness and piety.

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ نَافِلَةً وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا صَالِحِينَ (٧٢) وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَيْمَةً يَهْتَدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا
وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ وَكَانُوا لَنَا عَابِدِينَ (٧٣)

And We bestowed upon him Isaac, and Jacob as a grandson. Each of them We made righteous. (72) And We made them chiefs who guide by Our command, and We inspired in them the doing of good deeds and the right establishment of worship and the giving of alms, and they were worshippers of Us (alone). (73)

(Surah Al Anbiya 21:72-73)

4. Prophet Ibrahim's lineage through Is'haq and Yaqub was blessed with a long chain of Prophets in Palestine and Egypt, who held the banner of Islam for centuries.

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي ذُرِّيَّتِهِ النُّبُوَّةَ وَالْكِتَابَ وَعَاقَبْنَاهُ أَجْرَهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَإِنَّهُ
فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (٢٧)

And We bestowed on him Isaac and Jacob, and We established the prophethood and the Scripture among his seed, and We gave him his reward in the world, and lo! in the Hereafter he verily is among the righteous. (27)

Surah Al Ankabut 29:27

5. Although Is'haq's offspring were exceptionally blessed, there were many among them who followed the path of evil. Good lineage does not necessarily equate with good character, as we see from the stories of Prophet Adam's son Qabil (the first murderer) and Prophet Nuh's son (who drowned in the flood).

وَبَشَّرْنَاهُ بِإِسْحَاقَ نَبِيًّا مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (١١٢) وَبَارَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَىٰ إِسْحَاقَ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا مُحْسِنٌ
وَوَظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ مُبِينٌ (١١٣)

And we gave him tidings of the birth of Isaac, a prophet of the righteous. (112) And We blessed him and Isaac. And of their seed are some who do good, and some who plainly wrong themselves. (113)

(Surah Al Saffat 37:112-113)

6. Prophet Ibrahim and his sons were endowed with vision and understanding. They understood that this life is transient and only the Hereafter is permanent, and they called on others to understand these facts as well.

وَأَذْكُرُّ عَبْدَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ أُولَى الْأَيْدِي وَالْأَبْصَارِ (٤٥) إِنَّا أَخْلَصْنَاهُمْ بِخَالِصَةٍ
ذِكْرَى الدَّارِ (٤٦) وَإِنَّهُمْ عِنْدَنَا لَمِنَ الْمُصْطَفَيْنِ الْأَخْيَارِ (٤٧)

And make mention of Our bondmen, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, men of parts and vision. (45)

Lo! We purified them with a pure thought, remembrance of the Home (of the Hereafter). (46)

Lo! in Our sight they are verily of the elect, the excellent. (47)

(Surah Saad 38: 45-47)

Prophet Lut (Lot)

Prophet Lut was a nephew of Prophet Ibrahim. He was a strong believer who accompanied his uncle during his journey to Palestine and Egypt after his expulsion from his native land of Iraq. Lut then travelled to Sodom and Gomorrah, two cities near the Dead Sea. The people of these cities were extremely evil and would rob and kill any travellers who passed through their land. Lawlessness and injustice prevailed and truth was rejected. But the most disgusting crime for which these people became notorious was that of homosexuality. These people invented this perversion, hence the term Sodomy.

Sodomy is an evil act which goes against both human nature and the rules set by God. It is unnatural, immoral and destroys the healthy fabric of decent society.

Prophet Lut was sent to these people to invite them to the pure teachings of Islam and to warn them of severe divine retribution if they did not abandon their filthy practices. He spent years preaching to them, but to no avail. They were too busy in their vice and crimes to listen to his message.

Two stories are told to illustrate the criminal behaviour of these people to travellers and visitors. Any new merchant who went to trade in Sodom or Gomorrah would find that the townspeople would approach him, one by one, and take something from his stock. Soon he

would be left empty-handed. While wringing his hands and bemoaning his treatment, he would see one of the looters returning with a stolen article and disdainfully returning it to him. Contemptuously the merchant would refuse to take it; after all, one meager article was worthless when the entire stock was gone. Other looters would then return to mock him and make a display of returning his goods. But eventually, the merchant would be forced to leave the town, empty-handed and humiliated.

A second story is told of Eliezer, who was sent to Sodom by Sarah to enquire after the welfare of Lut. As soon as he entered the town, a man hit him on the head with a stone, causing heavy bleeding. The attacker then asked for money for his 'services', claiming that his intention was to remove excess and harmful blood from Eliezer's head. Dumbfounded by the attack and the demand for money, Eliezer went to the nearest court looking for justice. But the judge was from the same depraved community, and ordered Eliezer to pay the man who had attacked him for the 'service' rendered. Furious at this verdict, Eliezer gave the judge a taste of his own medicine by cracking his head with a stone, and ordering him to give payment for this 'service.'

Lut struggled to guide these people for many years, but his efforts were in vain. Even his own wife was a disbeliever. As discussed earlier in Lesson 4, angels appointed with the task of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah were sent to earth. They first visited Ibrahim, where they gave Sarah the news of a son, Is'haq. When Ibrahim learned of their mission, he pleaded with Allah to allow the cities to stand if even ten decent believers were to be found among them. But the people of these cities were so corrupt that not even ten good men could be found among them. Lut's house was the only one containing believers, and even among this small number was one disbeliever, Lut's wife.

Instead of fearing Allah's punishment, the depraved community mocked Lut and dared him to bring the punishment he had been promising.

وَلَوْطًا إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّكُمْ لَأَفْلَحُونَ الْفَلْحِشَةَ مَا سَبَقَكُمْ بِهَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِّنَ الْعَالَمِينَ (٢٨) أَيْنَكُمْ
لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ وَتَقْطَعُونَ السَّبِيلَ وَتَأْتُونَ فِي نَادِيكُمُ الْمُنْكَرَ فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا
أُنْتِنَا بِعَذَابِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ (٢٩) قَالَ رَبِّ انصُرْنِي عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْمُفْسِدِينَ (٣٠)

And Lot! (Remember) when he said unto his folk: Lo! ye commit lewdness such as no creature did before you. (28) For come ye not in unto males, and cut ye not the road (for travellers), and commit ye not abomination in your meetings? But the answer of his folk was only that they said: Bring Allah's doom upon us if thou art a truth-teller! (29) He said: My Lord! Give me victory over folk who work corruption. (30)

(Surah Al Ankabut 29:28-30)

كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ لُوطٍ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (١٦٠) إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ لُوطُ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ (١٦١) إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ
أَمِينٌ (١٦٢) فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ (١٦٣) وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ
الْعَالَمِينَ (١٦٤) أَتَأْتُونَ الذُّكْرَانَ مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٦٥) وَتَذَرُونَ مَا خَلَقَ لَكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ مِنْ أَرْوَاجِكُمْ
بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ عَادُونَ (١٦٦) قَالُوا لَئِنْ لَمْ تَنْتَهِ يَلُوطُ لَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُخْرَجِينَ (١٦٧) قَالَ إِنِّي
لِعَمَلِكُمْ مِنَ الْقَالِينَ (١٦٨) رَبِّ نَجِّنِي وَأَهْلِي مِمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ (١٦٩) فَنجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ أَجْمَعِينَ

(١٧٠) إِلَّا عَجُوزًا فِي الْعَلْبَرِينَ (١٧١) ثُمَّ دَمَرْنَا الْآخَرِينَ (١٧٢) وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَطْرًا فَسَاءً
 مَطْرُ الْمُنذَرِينَ (١٧٣) إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (١٧٤) وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُو الْعَزِيزُ
 الرَّحِيمُ (١٧٥)

The folk of Lot denied the messengers (of Allah), (160) When their brother Lot said unto them: Will ye not ward off (evil)? (161) Lo! I am a faithful messenger unto you, (162) So keep your duty to Allah and obey me. (163) And I ask of you no wage therefor; my wage is the concern only of the Lord of the Worlds. (164) What! Of all creatures do ye come unto the males, (165) And leave the wives your Lord created for you? Nay, but ye are forward folk. (166) They said: If thou cease not, O Lot, thou wilt soon be of the outcast. (167) He said: I am in truth of those who hate your conduct. (168) My Lord! Save me and my household from what they do. (169) So We saved him and his household, every one, (170) Save an old woman among those who stayed behind. (171) Then afterward We destroyed the others. (172) And We rained on them a rain. And dreadful is the rain of those who have been warned. (173) Lo! herein is indeed a portent, yet most of them are not believers. (174) And lo! thy Lord, He is indeed the Mighty, the Merciful. (175)

(Surah Al Shu'ara 26:160-175)

When the three angels arrived in the shape of handsome young men, Prophet Lut's daughters were the first to meet them. They were young women of faith and knew that these men would become the objects of the townspeople's obscene carnal desires. Lut quickly took them to his house to evade notice, but his wife slipped out to spread the news of the handsome new guests. The people surrounded the house and demanded that the men be given over to them. Lut was embarrassed and fearful for his guests, unaware that they were angels. He implored his people not to humiliate him, and advised them to marry women instead.

وَجَاءَهُ قَوْمُهُ يُهْرَعُونَ إِلَيْهِ وَمِنْ قَبْلُ كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ قَالَ يَلْقَوْمِ هَؤُلَاءِ بَنَاتِي هُنَّ أَطْهَرُ
 لَكُمْ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُخْزُونِ فِي ضَيْفِي أَلَيْسَ مِنْكُمْ رَجُلٌ رَشِيدٌ (٧٨)

And his people came unto him, running towards him - and before then they used to commit abominations - He said: O my people! Here are my daughters! They are purer for you. Beware of Allah, and degrade me not in (the presence of) my guests. Is there not among you any upright man? (78)

(Surah Hud 11:78)

Two interpretations are given by scholars for this verse. One is that Lut offered the hands of his two daughters in marriage to the leaders of the people, thus hoping to avert their attention from his guests. But the stronger interpretation seems to be that the 'daughters' he referred to were the girls of the town; they were all his daughters, and he advised the townspeople to fulfil their legitimate sexual needs with women in the state of matrimony. This would be purer for their community. The people however continued to clamour for Lut's guests and, feeling utterly helpless during this dreadful ordeal, Lut cried out:

قَالَ لَوْ أَنَّ لِي بِكُمْ قُوَّةً أَوْ آوَىٰ إِلَىٰ رُكْنٍ شَدِيدٍ (٨٠)

He said: Would that I had strength to resist you or had some strong support (among you),
(Surah Hud 11:80)

But powerful help was at hand. The angels revealed their true nature to Lut and advised him to escape from Sodom during the night, taking his two daughters with him. That night the townspeople attacked Lut's home, but Allah Almighty blinded them so they were unable to catch anyone. Lut, his wife and daughters fled from their home in the darkness, with strict instructions not to look back at the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. As they made their escape, Allah Almighty sent His punishment. A massive earthquake ripped the cities out of their foundations. Stones rained down from the sky, crushing and obliterating all signs of existence. Sodom and Gomorrah were wiped off the map, as if they had never existed.

وَنَبَّهَهُمْ عَنْ ضَيْفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ (٥١) إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَقَالُوا سَلَامًا قَالَ إِنَّا مِنْكُمْ وَجِلُونَ (٥٢) قَالُوا لَا تَوْجَلْ إِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلَامٍ عَلِيمٍ (٥٣) قَالَ أَبَشَّرْتُمُونِي عَلَىٰ أَنْ مَسَّنِيَ الْكِبَرُ فَبِمِ تَبَشِّرُونَ (٥٤) قَالُوا بَشِّرْنَا بِالْحَقِّ فَلَا تَكُن مِّنَ الْكَافِرِينَ (٥٥) قَالَ وَمَنْ يَقْنَطُ مِن رَّحْمَةِ رَبِّهِ إِلَّا الضَّالُّونَ (٥٦) قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكُمْ أَيُّهَا الْمُرْسَلُونَ (٥٧) قَالُوا إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَىٰ قَوْمٍ مُّجْرِمِينَ (٥٨) إِلَّا عَالِ لُوطٍ إِنَّا لَمُنَجُّوهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٥٩) إِلَّا أَمْرًا تَهُدُّ قَدَرْنَا إِنَّمَا لِمَنِ الْغَيْبُ (٦٠) فَلَمَّا جَاءَ عَالِ لُوطٍ الْمُرْسَلُونَ (٦١) قَالَ إِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّنْكَرُونَ (٦٢) قَالُوا بَلْ جِنَّاتِكُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَمْتَرُونَ (٦٣) وَأَتَيْنَكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّا لَصَادِقُونَ (٦٤) فَأَسْرِبْ لَهُمْ بِقِطْعٍ مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ وَأَتَّبِعْ أَدْبَارَهُمْ وَلَا يَلْتَفِتْ مِنْكُمْ أَحَدٌ وَامْضُوا حَيْثُ تُؤْمَرُونَ (٦٥) وَقَضَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ ذَٰلِكَ الْأَمْرَ أَنَّ دَابِرَ هَٰؤُلَاءِ مَقْطُوعٌ مُّصْبِحِينَ (٦٦) وَجَاءَ أَهْلَ الْمَدِينَةِ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ (٦٧) قَالَ إِنَّ هَٰؤُلَاءِ ضَيْفِي فَلَا تَفْضَحُونِ (٦٨) وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تَخْزُونِ (٦٩) قَالُوا أَوْلَمْ تَنْهَكَ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ (٧٠) قَالَ هَٰؤُلَاءِ بَنَاتِي إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ (٧١) لَعَمْرُكَ إِنَّهُمْ لَفِي سَكْرَتِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ (٧٢) فَأَخَذْتَهُمُ الصَّيْحَةَ مُشْرِقِينَ (٧٣) فَجَعَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَافِلَهَا وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ حِجَارَةً مِّن سِجِّيلٍ (٧٤) إِنْ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْمُنْذَرِينَ (٧٥) وَإِنَّهَا لَبِسَبِيلٍ مُّقِيمٍ (٧٦) إِنْ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٧٧)

And tell them of Abraham's guests, (51) (How) when they came in unto him, and said: Peace. He said: Lo! we are afraid of you. (52) They said: Be not afraid! Lo! we bring thee good tidings of a boy possessing wisdom. (53) He said: Bring ye me good tidings (of a son) when old age hath overtaken me? Of what then can ye bring good tidings? (54) They said: We bring thee good tidings in truth. So be not thou of the despairing. (55) He said: And who despaireth of the mercy of his Lord save those who are astray? (56) He said: And afterward what is your business, O ye messengers (of Allah)? (57) They said: We have been sent unto a guilty folk, (58) (All) save the family of Lot. Them we shall deliver every one, (59) Except his wife, of whom We had decreed that she should be of those who stay behind. (60) And when the messengers came unto the family of Lot, (61) He said: Lo! ye are folk unknown (to me). (62) They said: Nay, but we bring thee that concerning which they keep disputing, (63) And bring thee the Truth, and lo! we are truth-tellers. (64) So travel with thy household in a portion of the night, and follow thou their backs. Let none of you turn round, but go whither ye are commanded. (65) And We made plain the case to him, that the root of them (who did wrong) was to be cut at early morn. (66) And the people of the city came, rejoicing at the news (of new arrivals). (67) He said: Lo! they are my guests. Affront me not! (68) And keep

your duty to Allah, and shame me not! (69) They said; Have we not forbidden you from (entertaining) anyone? (70) He said: Here are my daughters, if ye must be doing (so). (71) By thy life (O Muhammad) they moved blindly in the frenzy of approaching death. (72) Then the (Awful) Cry overtook them at the sunrise. (73) And We turned it upside down and We rained upon them stones of heated clay. (74) Lo! therein verily are portents for those who read the signs. (75) And lo! it is upon a road still uneffaced. (76) Lo! therein is indeed a portent for believers. (77)

(Surah Al Hijr 15:51-77)

Lut's wife was not a believer, and as Allah's Punishment struck down on her people, she turned round to look at them. Destruction was awaiting her too and she joined her people in death.

قَالُوا يَلُوطُ إِنَّا رُسُلُ رَبِّكَ لَنْ يَصِلُوا إِلَيْكَ فَأَسْرَبَ بِأَهْلِكَ بِقِطْعٍ مِنَ اللَّيْلِ وَلَا يَلْتَفِتْ مِنْكُمْ أَحَدٌ إِلَّا أَمْرَاتُكَ إِنَّهُ مُصِيبُهَا مَا أَصَابَهُمْ إِنَّ مَوْعِدَهُمُ الصُّبْحُ أَلَيْسَ الصُّبْحُ بِقَرِيبٍ (٨١) فَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا جَعَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا سَافِلَهَا وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا حِجَارَةً مِنْ سِجِّينٍ مَنضُودٍ (٨٢)

(The messengers) said: O Lot! Lo! we are messengers of thy Lord; they shall not reach thee. So travel with thy people in a part of the night, and let not one of you turn round - (all) save thy wife. Lo! that which smiteth them will smite her (also). Lo! their tryst is (for) the morning. Is not the morning nigh? (81) So when Our commandment came to pass We overthrew (that township) and rained upon it stones of clay, one after another, (82)

Surah Hud 11:81-82

Despite being married to a noble Messenger from Allah, her heart was with the evil people of Sodom, and so she shared the same fate as them. Allah Almighty tells us,

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَمْرَاتِ نُوحٍ وَأَمْرَاتِ لُوطٍ كَانَتَا تَحْتَ عَبْدَيْنِ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا صَالِحِينَ فَخَانَتَاهُمَا فَلَمْ يُغْنِيَا عَنْهُمَا مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَقِيلَ ادْخُلَا النَّارَ مَعَ الدَّاخِلِينَ (١٠) وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَمْرَاتِ فِرْعَوْنَ إِذْ قَالَتْ رَبِّ ابْنِ لِي عِنْدَكَ بَيْتًا فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَنَجِّنِي مِنْ فِرْعَوْنَ وَعَمَلِهِ وَنَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ (١١) وَمَرْيَمَ ابْنَتْ عِمْرَانَ الَّتِي أَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِنَا وَصَدَقَتْ بِكَلِمَاتِ رَبِّهَا وَكُتِبَ عَلَيْهَا وَكَانَتْ مِنَ الْغَابِتِينَ (١٢)

Allah citeth an example for those who disbelieve: the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot, who were under two of Our righteous slaves yet betrayed them so that they (the husbands) availed them naught against Allah and it was said (unto them): Enter the Fire along with those who enter. (10) And Allah citeth an example for those who believe: the wife of Pharaoh when she said: My Lord! Build for me a home with thee in the Garden, and deliver me from Pharaoh and his work, and deliver me from evil-doing folk; (11) And Mary, daughter of 'Imran, whose body was chaste, therefor We breathed therein something of Our Spirit. And she put faith in the words of her Lord and His scriptures, and was of the obedient. (12)

Surah At Tahreem 66:10-12

Prophet Lut's wife, Prophet Nuh's wife, Pharaoh's wife and Maryam (mother of Jesus) are singled out for specific mention by the Quran. The former two were married to Prophets but were disbelievers at heart. They perished with their doomed people. Being a relative of a pious person does not mean salvation or special considerations. Each and every person is born alone, dies alone, and will be responsible for his own, individual acts. In Muslim communities around the world it is common to hear people boasting of their caste and lineage (known as jaat or zaat in the Asian community). There is nothing wrong with identifying and tracing one's family tree, as Allah has created us in nations and tribes so that we may recognize one another. But lineage and background should not become an excuse for racism, arrogance, xenophobia and hatred. As Allah Almighty says, the best people are those who have the best actions.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ
 أَتَقْوَاهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ (١٣)

O mankind! Lo! We have created you from male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Lo! Allah is Knower, Aware. (13)

Surah Al Hujurat 49:13

Pharaoh's wife was a believer, despite being married to one of the most arrogant, ungrateful and despotic rulers in history. He was destroyed for his actions but she was saved. Maryam was the mother of Isa, and endured her peoples' taunts for having a baby out of wedlock. She too is one of the women of Paradise.

Chapter 2 FUNERAL REGULATIONS

Ibn Umar used to say, *"In the evening do not expect to see the morning, and in the morning do not expect to see the evening. But take something in times of health to serve you in times of illness. And take something from your life to serve you in your death."*
(Bukhari)

Abdullah b. Umar said that the Prophet (saw) took him by the shoulders and said, *"Be in this world as though you are a stranger or a traveller."*

Allah Almighty says in the Quran,

"Each Soul shall taste death."
(Surah Aal-Imran)

It is the duty of the Muslims to pray the funeral prayer (Salatul Janazah) for their dead and to observe funeral regulations according to the Sunnah. Among the most important of these regulations are the Ghusul (washing the deceased), the Shroud and the Janazah prayer, and these are described below.

1. A Message of Hope

Abu Dharr reported that the Messenger of Allah said, *"Someone came to me from my Lord and gave me the good news that if anyone of my followers dies having associated no one with Allah, he will enter Paradise."* I asked, *"Even if he has committed adultery and theft?"* He replied, *"Even if he has committed adultery and theft."*

This hadith should be given as good news to a Muslim on his deathbed. It is not a licence to indulge in the sins mentioned, but gives hope at this last stage of life in the Mercy and continuing Guidance from Allah. Those around the dying person should say it to him and encourage him to say it once, but it is not advised to force him to repeat it again and again, and so possibly distress him.

A man was visiting Ibn al Mubarak and kept exhorting him, *"Say: La ilaha illallah."* Ibn al Mubarak was a great authority in theology and fiqh, and he replied. *"If I say La ilaha illallah once, it is enough, unless I speak again."*

The consensus of the ulamah (scholars) is that the dying person should be reminded to say the shahada (*La ilaha illallah*), but its continual repetition is discouraged in order not to distress the person at such a difficult time. Another hadith encourages good people to sit near the dying person, to comfort him, attend to his needs and show him love and affection.

2. Final preparations

a. When a Muslim is passing away, it is Sunnah to turn him towards the Qiblah. He should lie on his right side so that his face and body are facing the Qiblah. It is reported that when the

Prophet's daughter Fatima was dying, she put her right hand under her head and faced the Qiblah.

b. Once the person has passed away, his eyes should be closed and words of du'a and remembrance of his good deeds said. It is forbidden to abuse him or remember his faults. The Prophet (saw) said, "Do not make du'a for yourselves except to say what is good, for surely the angels say Ameen to what you say."

Those at the bedside of a dying person should ask for Istighfar (forgiveness) and make general du'as for him, praying to Allah to lighten his burden, show him Mercy, and be kind to him. His eyes should be closed, as their fixed expression looks distressing. The recitation of Surah Yasin is strongly recommended.

c. The family of the deceased should pay off any debts that the deceased left behind. The Prophet (saw) said, "The soul of the dead is tied to his debt until it is paid." In the early days of life in Madinah, the Prophet (saw) would always enquire at funerals if the deceased had left any debts. If so, he would not lead the prayer but ask someone else to do so. In later years he would pay off the debts of the poor who had left no property.

3. Washing the Dead

Umm Atiya said: "*Allah's Messenger came in when we were washing his daughter and said, 'Wash her with water and lotus leaves three or five times, or more than that if you think fit, and put camphor in the last washing.'*"

In another version he said: "*Wash her an odd number of times; three, five or seven, beginning with the right side and the places where ablution is performed.*"

(Bukhari and Muslim)

It is recommended that preparations for the funeral should commence immediately after death. The Prophet (saw) visited Talha ibn al Baraa who was on his deathbed and said, "*I am afraid Talha is about to pass away. Let me know immediately he breathes his last and hurry with his preparations. For it is not proper for the body of a deceased Muslim to stay for long among his family.*"

All clothes must be removed from the body and it should be covered with a sheet until preparations for washing are complete. The Prophet (saw) was covered with a cloth after his death, and Abu Bakr came, uncovered his face and kissed it. As Muslims we are taught that Allah honoured the children of Adam, and we too must honour the living among us as well as the dead. The Prophet (saw) once said, "*To break the bones of a dead person is like breaking the bones of a living person.*"

Washing the deceased should be done by the nearest of kin, but only if he knows the correct procedure. Aisha reported that the Prophet (saw) said, "*Whoever washes a dead person properly and does not expose any faults in its condition will be as free of sins as he was on the day he was born.*"

As a sign of honour, martyrs who died fighting for Islam are not washed or shrouded, and there is no Janazah prayer for them. Jabir reported, *“After the Battle of Badr, the Messenger of Allah ordered that the martyrs should be buried in their blood, they should not be washed, and a prayer should not be offered for them.”*

(Bukhari)

The washing of the dead (Ghusul) follows a set procedure. The body of the deceased is placed on a table in a room in which only those washing the body should be present. If possible, burning incense should be used to fragrance the room. The body is stripped of all clothes except those that cover the private parts and a large sheet should be placed over it. It is gently placed in a sitting position and the stomach pressed until it has released all its contents. Water should be used generously to clean the discharge. The person washing the body should wrap a cloth around his hand and clean the private parts with it. Neither he, nor anyone else present, are permitted to look at the private parts. He should then wrap another piece of rough cloth around one finger and use it to clean the mouth and nose. He should then make the intention (Niyah) of washing the deceased, beginning with the words, *“Bismillah.”*

The body is given an ablution and then washed with water and lotus leaves, beginning with the right hand side. Camphor is added to the water of the third wash for its pleasant fragrance. Camphor also contracts the body, deters insects and keeps the body firm for a little while.

After the third, fifth or even seventh wash, perfume is applied to the parts of Sujud (Prostration), ie. the forehead, palms, knees and feet, as well as under the arms and the navel. The natural passages of discharge should be filled with cotton.

Umm Attiya also mentioned in her description of the ghusul of the Prophet's daughter that, *“We combed her hair and divided it into three plaits.”* The body is then dried well.

4. Shrouding the Body

The cloth for the shroud should come from the debt-free belongings of the deceased. It is narrated in Sahih al Bukhari that Abdul Rahman ibn Auf said, *“Mus'ab ibn Umayr was martyred. He was a much better man than me, yet he had nothing but a white garment for a shroud. Hamzah was the other man to be martyred and he was also a better man than me, yet he had nothing in which he could be shrouded.”*

Imam Al Bukhari said in explanation, *“The shroud comes from the property of the deceased.”* Ibrahim said, *“First shroud the person, then pay his debts, and then fulfil his will.”* The best shroud is white in colour. Al Bukhari reported that Aisha said, *“The Messenger of Allah (saw) was shrouded in three white cotton garments, none of which were a long shirt or turban.”*

If the deceased was well-off, he should be shrouded according to his means; the cloth should be neither too expensive nor too cheap, unless he made a will to this effect. The body is shrouded in one or all three of the following:

- a - Qamis: a long shirt from the neck to the feet.
- b - Izar: a wrap from the top of the head to the feet.
- c - Lifafa: a long winding sheet.

The shrouds are spread out, one on top of the other, and are perfumed. If the person died while performing Hajj, he is not perfumed and his head is left uncovered.
(Bukhari)

A woman is shrouded in five white garments: an Izar, a Khumar (to cover the head and face), a Qamis and two winding sheets.

5. Salatul Janazah

The funeral prayer is a duty for the community to perform. It is a way of expressing grief at the loss of someone, it testifies to Allah that the person was a good Muslim and it is a time for individuals to make a final du'a for a friend or a loved one. The Prophet (saw) said, *"If a Muslim passes away and forty people, who do not commit Shirk, stand up to pray for him, Allah will allow them to intercede on the person's behalf."*
(Sahih Muslim)

The conditions for the funeral prayer are the same for other prayers, such as purity and facing the Qiblah. The Imam stands at the head of the congregation, and the worshippers pray behind him in a minimum of three rows. The body of the deceased is placed horizontally at the front. If the deceased is male, the imam stands facing the head of the body. If it is female, the Imam stands facing the waist.

The funeral prayer is conducted in the standing position, and is the only prayer with no ruku (bowing) or sujood (prostration). Female worshippers should also join in the prayer which consists of four Takbirs, for each of which the hands are raised.

1. The Imam says the Takbiratul Ihram ('Allahu Akbar') to begin the prayer, and the congregation recites Surah Al Fatiha quietly. Ibn Abbas once offered a Janazah prayer in which he recited the Fatiha audibly, saying that this too was permissible. (Bukhari)
2. The Imam pronounces the second takbir, after which the Durood (prayers for the Prophet) is recited.
3. After the third takbir, the hands are raised in a du'a for the deceased. There are a number of du'as reported from the Prophet (saw), any of which can be recited.
4. The prayer ends after the fourth takbir, with Tasleem said once or twice.

Salatul Janazah can be repeated by those who missed the original prayer. Ibn Majah reported that the Janazah prayer for the Messenger of Allah (saw) was offered individually by the men. The women then did the same, followed by the children. The prayer can be offered at home, or in a masjid, or in a place of prayer such as a ground used for Eid. If a person passes away and his relatives or friends are in a distant country, they may offer the prayer in absentia. Al Bukhari reported that the Prophet (saw) offered the Janazah prayer in Madinah for Negus, the King of Abyssinia.

Hadith books give much information on matters following the funeral prayer, such as burial, visiting graves, and the etiquette of consoling the bereaved. For the sake of brevity, these subjects are dealt below through quotations from hadith.

Walking with the Bier.

Abu Saeed reported that Allah's Messenger (saw) said, *"When a corpse is placed on a bier and the bearers walk with it on their shoulders, it speaks. If he was a good man, he will say, 'Take me quickly.' But if he was not good, he will say, 'Woe to me, where are you taking me?' Everything on earth except mankind hears its voice, and were a human being to hear it, he would faint."*

(Bukhari)

Abu Saeed reported that the Prophet (saw) said, *"When you see a funeral, stand up in respect; and anyone who follows it must not sit down until the bier is placed in the ground."*

(Agreed upon)

Abu Huraira reported that the Prophet (saw) said, *"If anyone attends the funeral of a Muslim out of faith and seeking reward from Allah, and he stays until the prayer is offered and the burial is complete, he will return with a reward of two qirats, each qirat being the size of Mount Uhud. If anyone prays over the dead but returns before the burial, he will come back with one qirat of reward."*

(Agreed upon)

Levelling the Graves

Abul Hayyaj al Asadi said that Ali said to him, *"I am sending you on the same mission that Allah's Messenger sent me on. Do not leave an image without obliterating it, or a high grave without levelling it."*

(Muslim)

Jabir said that the Prophet (saw) forbade that graves be plastered with gypsum, that any monument be built over them, or that people sit on them.

(Muslim)

Prohibition of Wailing

Abdullah b. Masud reported that the Prophet (saw) said, *"He who beats the cheeks, tears his clothes and wails as people did in pre-Islamic times, does not belong to our community"*

(Agreed Upon)

Anas said, *"We went with Allah's Messenger (saw) to visit Abu Saif, the foster father of Ibrahim. Allah's Messenger picked up Ibrahim (who was his son), kissed him and smelt him. We went again to visit him when Ibrahim was dying, and tears began to fall from the Prophet's eyes. Abdul Rahman b. Awf said, 'You too, Messenger of Allah?' He replied, 'Ibn Awf, it is compassion.' He cried some more and said, 'The eye weeps and the heart grieves, but we say only what our Lord is pleased with, and we are grieved at being separated from you, O Ibrahim.'"*

(Agreed upon)

Abdullah b. Umar said that the Prophet (saw) said, *“Allah does not punish for the tears the eyes shed or the grief the heart experiences, but He punishes for this (pointing to his tongue) or He shows compassion. And the dead is punished because of his family’s lamenting and wailing for him.”*

(Agreed upon)

Consoling and Feeding the Bereaved

Amr b. Hazam reported that the Prophet (saw) said, *“Every believer who consoles his brother in distress will be dressed by Allah in clothes of honour on the Day of Resurrection.”*

(Ibn Majah)

Usamah b. Zayd reported that a grandchild of the Prophet died so he sent this message to his daughter with his regards: *“Verily, to Allah belongs what He has taken, and to Him belongs what He has given. For everything He has set a term, so be patient and be content.”*

(Bukhari)

Condolences can be offered up to three days after the burial, as Islam does not permit long periods of mourning.

Abdullah b. Jafar said that when the news of Jafar’s death reached the Prophet (saw), he said, *“Prepare food for Jafar’s family, for they have heard something which has distressed them.”*

(Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud)

Death of Children

Abu Huraira reported that the Prophet (saw) said to the women of the Ansar, *“If someone has three children that are too young to sin, but they die, and she seeks a reward from Allah, she will enter Paradise.” One of the women asked, ‘Or two, Messenger of Allah?’ He replied, ‘Or two.’*

(Bukhari)

Abu Musa al Ashari reported that Allah’s Messenger (saw) said, *“When a man’s child dies, Allah Almighty asks his angels whether they have taken His servant’s child, and they reply in the affirmative. He then asks whether they have taken the fruits of his heart, and they reply that they have. Allah asks what His servant said, and they say that he praised Allah and said, ‘To Allah we belong and to Him we shall return.’ Allah says, ‘Build a house in paradise for My servant and call it the House of praise.’”*

(Ahmed, Tirmidhi)

Visiting Graves

Ibn Mas’ud reported that Allah’s Messenger (saw) said, *“I forbade you to visit graves, but you may now visit them for they produce abstinence in this world and act as a reminder of the next.”*

(Ibn Majah)

Buraydah reported that the Prophet (saw) taught them the following du'a to recite when visiting graveyards: *"Peace be upon you, inhabitants of the graves, among the believers and muslims. If Allah wills, we shall join you. We ask Allah to grant well-being to us and to you."* (Muslim)

Chapter 3

BELIEF IN PREVIOUS PROPHETS AND SCRIPTURES

ءَامَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ كُلٌّ ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ لَا
نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْ رُسُلِهِ وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ (٢٨٥)

The messenger believeth in that which hath been revealed unto him from his Lord and (so do) believers. Each one believeth in Allah and His angels and His scriptures and His messengers - We make no distinction between any of His messengers - and they say: We hear, and we obey. (Grant us) Thy forgiveness, our Lord. Unto Thee is the journeying. (285)
(Surah Al Baqarah 2:285)

Belief in all the previous prophets and divine scriptures is one of the tenets of Iman (Faith). When Allah Almighty created Adam, the first man and Prophet, He promised that the sons of Adam would not be forced to stumble in darkness or suffer in confusion on earth. Instead they would be blessed with prophets to provide them with guidance and enlightenment. Left to his own devices, man would certainly create a world of chaos, injustice, misery and bloodshed.

فَلَنَّا أَهْبَطُوهَا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا فَاِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (٣٨)

We said: Go down, all of you, from hence; but verily there cometh unto you from Me a guidance; and whoso followeth My guidance, there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve. (38)
(Surah Al Baqarah 2:38)

Adam was the first prophet and as the population increased, the descendants of Adam spread all over the earth. Man is by nature forgetful, and the new communities were quick to forget the teachings of their father, even to forget the differences between right and wrong. Murder had already been committed on earth by Prophet Adam's own son. Sin and disobedience were becoming common. But Allah Almighty kept His promise, sending an army of prophets over the centuries to guide the people. One report says that over one hundred and twenty thousand prophets were sent through the ages. This is a staggering total, reflecting the extreme benevolence of Allah Almighty, who left no community without guidance. Only a select few prophets are mentioned by name in the Quran, perhaps because they were sent to the largest communities, or perhaps because their experiences were representative of the experiences of all the other prophets.

All the prophets preached the same religion of Tawhid (pure monotheism). Tawhid is total obedience to Allah, worship of Him alone, and rejection of all forms of worship to others. The prophets mentioned by name in the Quran are listed below.

1. Adam	6. Ibrahim	11. Yusuf	16. Dhul Kifl	21. Yunus
2. Idris	7. Ismail	12. Shu'ayb	17. Dawud	22. Zakariyya
3. Nuh	8. Is'haq	13. Ayyub	18. Sulayman	23. Yahya
4. Hud	9. Lut	14. Musa	19. Ilyas	24. Isa
5. Salih	10. Yaqub	15. Harun	20. Al-Yasa	25. Muhammad

Many of the prophets came with divine scriptures, only four of which are mentioned in the Quran: Tawrat (Torah) revealed to Musa, Zabur (Psalms) revealed to Dawud, Injil (Bible) revealed to Isa, and the Quran revealed to Prophet Muhammad, Peace be upon them all.

إِنَّا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ كَمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى نُوحٍ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَعِيسَى وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُونُسَ وَهَارُونَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَآتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ زَبُورًا (١٦٣) وَرُسُلًا قَدْ قَصَصْنَاهُمْ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَرُسُلًا لَمْ نَقْصُصْهُمْ عَلَيْكَ وَكَلَّمَ اللَّهُ مُوسَى تَكْلِيمًا (١٦٤) رُسُلًا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ لِنَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةً بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا (١٦٥)

Lo! We inspire thee as We inspired Noah and the prophets after him, as We inspired Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and Jesus and Job and Jonah and Aaron and Solomon, and as We imparted unto David the Psalms; (163) And messengers We have mentioned unto thee before and messengers We have not mentioned unto thee; and Allah spake directly unto Moses; (164) Messengers of good cheer and of warning, in order that mankind might have no argument against Allah after the messengers. Allah was ever Mighty, Wise. (165)

(Surah An Nisa 4:163-165)

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَسْتُمْ عَلَى شَيْءٍ حَتَّى تُقِيمُوا التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَلَيَزِيدَنَّ كَثِيرًا مِنْهُمْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا فَلَا تَأْسَ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ (٦٨)

Say O People of the Scripture! Ye have naught (of guidance) till ye observe the Torah and the Gospel and that which was revealed unto you from your Lord. That which is revealed unto thee (Muhammad) from thy Lord is certain to increase the contumacy and disbelief of many of them. But grieve not for the disbelieving folk. (68)

Surah Al Maidah 5:68

It is a reflection of the generosity and love of Allah for His creation that He continued to send messengers to the people, time and time again. But man was either quick to forget the prophetic message, or downright disobedient. Some communities accepted the teachings of their Prophets, but over time they lost these teachings to folklore and Shirk. Other communities (like the Children of Israel) continued to hold tight to their Scripture, but made extensive changes to its text to suit their own inclinations. Many communities (like Ad and Thamud) refused point-blank to listen to their Messengers, and for this they were wiped off the face of the earth. The Islamic prohibition on making sculptures and paintings of living beings stems partially from the early appearance of idol worship. When a pious person in a community died, his family would build a statue of him as a mark of respect and as a

reminder to follow the path of their elder. But with time, this memorial to piety became a focus for idolatory; instead of worshipping the God of their ancestor, they began to worship the ancestor himself. It is reported that Lat, Uzzah and Manat, the main idols of the Quraysh in Makkah during the time of Prophet Muhammad (saw), were once pious men among the Arabs. Statues were built to remember their piety, but became instead a focus of idol-worship, a practice that has continued to this day. For example, Prophet Isa was a pious and obedient servant of Allah, but after his death, his followers distorted his teachings beyond recognition. Instead of worshipping the Lord of Jesus, the Christians insisted on worshipping Jesus as Lord.

وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يٰعِيسَىٰ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ ءَأَنْتَ قُلْتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُونِي وَأُمِّيَ إِلَهَيْنِ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ قَالِ
سُبْحٰنَكَ مَا يَكُونُ لِيْ أَنْ أَقُولَ مَا لَيْسَ لِيْ بِحَقِّ إِنْ كُنْتُ قُلْتُهُ فَقَدْ عَلِمْتَهُ تَعَلَّمَ مَا فِي نَفْسِي وَلَا
أَعْلَمُ مَا فِي نَفْسِكَ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ عَٰلِمُ الْغُيُوبِ (١١٦) مَا قُلْتُ لَهُمْ إِلَّا مَا أَمَرْتَنِي بِهٖ أَنْ أَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ
رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ وَكُنْتُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيدًا مَّا دُمْتُ فِيهِمْ فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيْتَنِي كُنْتُ أَنْتَ الرَّقِيبَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَنْتَ عَلَىٰ
كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ (١١٧)

And when Allah saith: O Jesus, son of Mary! Didst thou say unto mankind: Take me and my mother for two gods beside Allah? he saith: Be glorified! It was not mine to utter that to which I had no right. If I had ever said it, then Thou wouldst have known it. Thou knowest what is in my mind, and I know not what is in Thy Mind. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Knower of Things Hidden? (116) I spake unto them only that which Thou commandedst me, (saying): Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. I was a witness of them while I dwelt among them, and when Thou tookest me Thou wast the Watcher over them. Thou art Witness over all things. (117)

Surah Al Maidah 5:116-117

It should be noted that although Muslims respect and honour all the previous prophets and their revealed scriptures, they do not obey their teachings. This is for a dual reason. Firstly, the rules and regulations given to the earlier prophets were designed for a specific community at a specific point in history. Their laws did not have universal application. Secondly, the scriptures extant today have been so distorted and confused with falsehood that they are beyond recognition. Although we do not have any records of the pure scriptures given to all the prophets, the Quran exhorts us to remember one thing: each one of the previous prophets came with a message of pure Tawhid. They worshipped Allah alone, and taught their people to do the same. It is therefore a basic tenet of the Muslim's faith to respect and revere all the prophets sent by Allah, from Adam to Jesus, peace be upon them.

يٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ءَامِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ءَأَلِكِتَابِ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ عَلَىٰ رَسُولِهِ ءَوَالِكِتَابِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ
مِن قَبْلُ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَٰئِكَتِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَآيَاتِهِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا (١٣٦)

O ye who believe! Believe in Allah and His messenger and the Scripture which He hath revealed unto His messenger, and the Scripture which He revealed aforetime. Whoso disbelieveth in Allah and His angels and His scriptures and His messengers and the Last Day, he verily hath wandered far astray. (136)

Surah An Nisa 4:136

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا النَّبُوَّةَ وَالكِتَابَ فَمِنْهُمْ مُهْتَدٍ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَسِقُونَ (٢٦) ثُمَّ قَفَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ عَائِثِهِم بِرُسُلِنَا وَقَفَّيْنَا بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَءَاتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنجِيلَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ رَأْفَةً وَرَحْمَةً وَرَهْبَانِيَّةً ابْتَدَعُوهَا مَا كَتَبْنَاهَا عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ رِضْوَانِ اللَّهِ فَمَا رَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا فَآتَيْنَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مِنْهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَسِقُونَ (٢٧)

And We verily sent Noah and Abraham and placed the prophethood and the scripture among their seed, and among them there is he who goeth right, but many of them are evil-livers. (26) Then We caused Our messengers to follow in their footsteps; and We caused Jesus, son of Mary, to follow, and gave him the Gospel, and placed compassion and mercy in the hearts of those who followed him. But monasticism they invented - We ordained it not for them - only seeking Allah's pleasure, and they observed it not with right observance. So We give those of them who believe their reward, but many of them are evil-livers. (27)

Surah Al Hadid 57:26-27

Each one of the earlier prophets was sent to a specific group of people, with a message designed specifically for their particular needs and situation. Some of the people lived simple, nomadic lives and needed simple teachings and regulations. Others lived in large, organized cities with complex systems of government and behaviour, and these needed a large canon of teachings and rules. The world was full of scattered and fairly isolated communities; distances were long, travel was arduous, and transport was primitive. Allah Almighty's Generosity and Love is so immense and plentiful that He sent prophets in a steady stream to all these communities. This continued from the time of Adam until the departure of Prophet Isa, when the world stood poised on the threshold of a New Age. The world was about to undergo a variety of dramatic changes which would result in fantastic new inventions, transport and communication would become faster than man's wildest dreams could ever have imagined, and communities would no longer be as isolated as they had been in the past. The world was taking its first, slow steps towards becoming a global village of satellites, television, telecommunications, air travel and much more. The army of prophets was brought to a halt, and for the new global village came one, universal Prophet whose message replaced all previous teachings. His message was the final communique from God to man, and this message was destined to survive unadulterated until the final Hour. Muhamad (saw) was that final Prophet, Islam was that final Message and the Quran was that final Scripture.

ALLAH'S ETERNAL INK

I dreamed I was in heaven
Where an angel kept Allah's Book.
He was writing so intently
I just had to take a look.

It was not, at first, his writing
That made me stop and think
But the fluid in the bottle
That was marked eternal ink.

This ink was most amazing,
Dark black upon his blotter
But as it touched the parchment
It became as clear as water.

The angel kept on writing,
But as quickly as a wink
The words were disappearing
With that strange eternal ink.

The angel took no notice,
But kept writing on and on.
He turned each page and filled it
Till all its space was gone.

I thought he wrote to no avail,
his efforts were so vain
For he wrote a thousand pages
That he'd never read again.

And as I watched and wondered that
This awesome sight was mine,
I actually saw a word stay black
As it dried upon the line.

The angel wrote and I thought I saw
A look of satisfaction.
At last he had some print to show
For all his earnest action.

A line or two dried dark and stayed
As black as black can be,
But strangely the next paragraph
Became invisible to see.

The Book was getting fuller,
The angel's record true,
But most of it was blank, with
Just a few words coming through.

I knew there was some reason,
But as hard as I could think,
I couldn't grasp the significance
Of that eternal ink.

The mystery burned within me,
And I finally dared to ask
The angel to explain to me
Of his amazing task.

And what I heard was frightful
As the angel turned his head.
He looked directly at me,
And this is what he said...
I know you stand and wonder
At what my writing's worth
But Allah has told me to record
The lives of those on earth.

The book that I am filling
Is an accurate account
Of every word and action
And to what they do amount.

And since you have been watching
I must tell you what is true;
The details of my journal
Are the strict accounts of YOU.

The Lord asked me to watch you
As each day you worked and played.
I saw you as you went to the masjid,
I saw you as you prayed.

But I was told to document
Your life through all the week.
I wrote when you were proud and bold,
I wrote when you were meek.

I recorded all your attitudes
Whether they were good or bad.
I was sorry that I had to write
the things that make Allah sad.

So now I'll tell the wonder
Of this eternal ink,
For the reason for its mystery
Should make you stop and think.

This ink that Allah created
To help me keep my journal
Will only keep a record of
Things that are eternal.

So much of life is wasted
On things that matter not
So instead of my erasing,
Smudging ink and ugly blot.

I just keep writing faithfully and
Let the ink do all the rest
For it is able to decide
What's useless and what's best.

And Allah ordained that as I write
Of all you do and say
Your deeds that count for nothing
Will just disappear away.

When books are opened someday,
As sure as heaven is true;
The Lord's eternal ink will tell
What mattered most to you.

If you just lived to please yourself
The pages will be bare,
And Allah will issue no reward
For you when you get there.

In fact, you'll be embarrassed,
You will hang your head in shame
because you did not give yourself
in love to Allah's name.

Yet maybe there will be a few
recorded lines that stayed
That showed the times you truly cared,
Sincerely loved and prayed.

But you will always wonder
As you enter heaven's door
how much more glad you
would have been
If only you'd done more.

For I record as Allah sees,
I don't stop to even think
because the truth is written
With Allah's eternal ink.

When I heard the angel's story
I fell down and wept and cried
For as yet I still was dreaming
I hadn't really died.

And I said: O angel tell the Lord
That soon as I awake
I'll live my life for Allah-
I'll do all for his dear sake.

I'll give in full surrender;
I'll do all He wants me to;
I'll turn my back on self and sin
And whatever isn't true.

And though the way seems long and rough
I promise to endure.
I'm determined to pursue the things
that are holy, clean and pure.

With Allah as my helper,
I will win lost souls to Thee,
for I know that they will live
with Allah For all eternity.

And that's what really matters
When my life on earth is gone
That I will stand before the Lord
And hear him say, well done.

For is it really worth it
As my life lies at the brink?
And I realize that Allah keeps books
With His eternal ink.

Should all my life be focused
On things that turn to dust?
From this point on I'll serve the
Lord; I can, I will. I must!

I will NOT send blank pages
Up to Allah's majestic throne
For where that record's going now
Is my eternal home.

I'm giving all to Allah
I now have seen the link
For I saw an angel write my life
With Allah's eternal ink.



LESSON
7

Chapter 1

PROPHET YUSUF (JOSEPH)

Surah Yusuf is the twelfth chapter of the Quran, and is devoted entirely to the biography of Prophet Yusuf. It traces his life and adventures from early childhood in Kan'an, Palestine, to his post as the King's vizier in Egypt. As with all other biographical narratives in the Quran, the incidents recounted are not presented solely for the historical interest in them, but for the important lessons that can be gauged from them. Surah Yusuf is reproduced below in full with additional commentary to help explain the text. This Surah is one of the most artistic and beautiful Surahs of the Quran. Rather like a play, it opens and closes different scenes, involving different people in different lands. It begins with a dream, and ends with the fulfilling of that dream. Human nature is explored in detail: love, lust, faith, envy, piety, goodness, corruption, beauty and evil are all to be found in its characters.

Surah Yusuf

Verses 1-4 (including Bismillah)

The Surah begins by addressing Prophet Muhammad (saw), for whom this story had added poignancy. Yusuf was his brother in the family of Prophets, and his forbearance in times of great adversity helped give Prophet Muhammad (saw) resolve during his own difficult mission.

Prophet Yaqub (Jacob) had twelve sons from his four wives. His youngest wife Rahil was the mother of Yusuf and Bin Yamin, but died when her sons were very young. Yusuf's early life was spent in a well-to-do family, living the bedouin life in the grazing pastures of Kan'an. Yaqub showed extra affection for little Yusuf, and this made the elder sons very jealous of their young brother.

Verses 5-7

One day Yusuf narrated a dream to his father which he had seen during the night. Yaqub realized the importance of the dream: his son had been chosen for prophethood, and would be the next heir to the dynasty of Prophets which began with his great grandfather Ibrahim. Fearing that this knowledge would inflame the envy and anger of his elder sons, Yaqub counselled Yusuf to keep quiet about his dream.

Verses 8-10

Yusuf's step brothers were so consumed with jealousy and anger that they decided to get rid of him. Their hope was that Yaqub would direct all his attentions and affection to them once Yusuf was gone. Bin Yamin (Benjamin) was the full-brother of Yusuf and so not included in this discussion.

At first the young men decided to murder Yusuf, but the eldest brother Judah (Yahud) felt pity and advised them to throw him down a well so that some passing caravan would take him away. Life-long banishment was a better alternative to murder.

Verses 11-15

Yaqub rarely let Yusuf and Bin Yamin out of his sight from a sense of deep foreboding. His elder sons thus had to come to him as a delegation, requesting that Yusuf be allowed to join them in a trip to the desert. Yaqub did not trust them and argued that Yusuf would be in danger from the desert wolves. But his sons pleaded with him; after all, they were a group of twelve strong, young men and well able to look after each other. Reluctantly Yaqub gave permission for the trip.

In the desert the young men hurried to a well on the pretext of drinking water. There Yusuf was overpowered by his own brothers and thrown into the well. His shirt was removed and his pleas for help ignored. It was a deep well, and Yusuf must have been terrified while he clung to a ledge in it. But in the darkness, Allah Almighty comforted Yusuf with a revelation: he would one day talk to his brothers about this incident, but they would not recognize him.

Verses 16-18

Yusuf's brothers had planned their plot meticulously. They proceeded to kill a sheep and used its blood to stain Yusuf's shirt. And then with a great deal of wailing, lamenting and crocodile tears, they arrived home to tell Yaqub their well-rehearsed story. They had been racing in the desert and had left Yusuf to guard their belongings. They returned from their games to find Yusuf missing but his shirt stained with blood. A wolf must have attacked and eaten him. Yaqub knew they were lying, but he was helpless. The shirt was stained with blood, but intact; a wolf would have ripped it with his teeth. Yaqub made it clear that he did not blame them, but he would remain patient. He cried bitterly and prayed to Allah regularly, but over the years his grief and tears caused him to lose his eyesight.

Verses 19-22

The curtain comes down on Yaqub's house, and the next scene is back in the desert. A caravan of travellers, weary and thirsty, approached the well. They lowered a bucket on a rope hoping for water but it came back up with a handsome young boy clinging to it. Ibn Kathir writes that Yusuf was eighteen years old at the time. The travellers were on their way to Egypt and saw immediately the monetary value of such a handsome young man. The slave trade was booming and Yusuf would make them a tidy little profit. Yusuf was shackled and taken on the long journey to Egypt.

At the slave market a crowd gathered around the magnificent new slave on display. Yusuf was exceedingly handsome, the most beautiful man ever created by Allah. The bidding started and Yusuf was eventually bought by Aziz, the Chief Minister to the Egyptian King. Aziz was rich, important and good. He and his beautiful wife Zulaikha had no children, and Aziz appointed Yusuf to be his wife's personal attendant. He liked the boy and started thinking of perhaps adopting him one day. Yusuf's shackles were removed and a comfortable phase began in his life. He longed for his father and for Bin Yamin, but had to be satisfied with banishment.

Yusuf matured and blossomed in his new home. He grew day by day in beauty and virtue. Prophethood was bestowed upon him and he was also taught the interpretation of dreams. He was wise, patient and humble. Despite his stunning looks, he was modest and decent.

Verses 23-29

This was Yusuf's second trial. Zulaikha had watched him blossom into a handsome, intelligent, wise and pious young man, and she was now deeply in love with him. She attempted to seduce him one day when Aziz was out of the house, but Yusuf rejected her advances and ran from her. As she tried to grab him, she tore his shirt from the back.

Verse 24 has an added significance to it: "And indeed she did desire him, and he would have inclined to her desire, had he not seen the evidence of his Lord..." Quranic commentators have said this shows some kind of temptation in Yusuf's heart toward Zulaikha, but he was a Prophet of Allah and was able to resist her advances. Zulaikha had no such strength of moral character and so she raced to seduce him.

As Yusuf ran to the door to escape her, Aziz walked in with a relative. Zulaikha immediately began to cry, claiming that Yusuf had tried to molest her. Aziz's companion was a wise man, and he suggested the importance of the torn shirt. If torn from the front, it would mean that Yusuf had attacked her and she tore it while trying to defend herself. If torn from the back, it would mean that Yusuf was trying to escape her advances. The shirt proved Yusuf's innocence. Aziz ordered Zulaikha to beg for Yusuf's forgiveness, and berated the schemes and lies of such women.

Verses 30-35

This incident soon reached the ears of other ladies in the town, and soon everyone was gossiping about it. Zulaikha heard the rumours and decided to face the gossipers. She was convinced (and rightly, it seems) that any woman who met Yusuf would become besotted by his beauty and character. So she invited the notable ladies of the town to a lavish banquet at her house. At the end of the meal, fruit was served and each guest was given a knife with which to cut it. While they were busy slicing their fruit, Zulaikha gave the order for Yusuf to enter the room. The women were transfixed by his beauty, and as they stared at him in wonderment, they continued to slice their fruit, oblivious to the fact that they were cutting their own hands. Inattentive to the pain, they stammered, "This is no ordinary man. He is an angel in human form." Zulaikha had proved her point. How could these women mock her for desiring this Hebrew slave when they themselves were so captivated by his beauty?

Zulaikha offered herself to Yusuf once again, threatening imprisonment if he did not obey. Yusuf preferred prison to sin, and so despite being aware of Yusuf's innocence, Aziz had him sent to prison. Although he knew the truth, Aziz could not bear that this truth become common knowledge. If other officials were to hear that the Chief Minister's wife had been flinging herself at a common slave, he would lose all prestige and honour. Better that the truth be hidden.

Verses 36-42

Now began Yusuf's third trial. During his long and difficult stay in prison, Allah Almighty gifted him the ability to interpret dreams.

One day two men were brought into the prison, one of whom was the King's cup-bearer and the second was the royal chef. Both had strange dreams one night, and recognising in Yusuf piety and honesty, they asked him for an explanation. Before interpreting their dreams, Yusuf

first used the opportunity to call the two men to the path of Allah. He spoke to them about Tawhid (Oneness of God), the same subject preached by every single prophet sent by Allah. He mentioned the bounties bestowed on mankind by God, as well as the arrogant refusal of most to thank and worship their Benefactor.

Having invited them to Islam, Yusuf then interpreted the dreams. The cook would be crucified and killed, but the cup-bearer would be re-instated into service. Yusuf then asked the latter to mention him to the King. The dreams were soon fulfilled; the chef was beheaded and the cup-bearer returned to the King's service. However, satan made the latter forget Yusuf's plight, and so Yusuf was forced to stay in prison for a few more years.

Verses 43-57

Some years later the king had a strange dream, for the interpretation to which he turned to his learned courtiers. They dismissed the dream as nonsense, the result perhaps of too heavy a supper before sleep. The cup-bearer then remembered Yusuf, and rushed to mention him to the King. The King sent the man to Yusuf for an interpretation, who explained that the country would experience seven years of abundant rains and healthy harvests. This would be followed by seven years of drought and famine. At the end of this would come one year of abundant rain and plenty of fruit for wine and oil. However, Yusuf did not stop with just an interpretation to the dream but gave some advice as well. He advised that the treasury should save and store enough grain during the seven years of rain to help the people survive the seven years of famine. They should also store some seeds for planting after the years of drought so that the grains in the fifteenth year would bring another harvest.

The King was fascinated by Yusuf's comments and ordered that he be released and brought to him. But to everyone's surprise, Yusuf refused to leave prison until his name had been cleared and the charges against him dropped. The king ordered that Zulaikha, Aziz and the ladies of the banquet be summoned. All of them unanimously testified that Yusuf was innocent and had not done any of them any harm. The charges were dropped and Yusuf was at last a free man, his honour and reputation spotless. He wished his good master Aziz to know that he had not betrayed him in secret, and consoled him that although Satan approaches all human beings with temptations, these can be fought with help from Allah.

The King appointed Yusuf to be Minister for the granaries. He was to oversee the storing of grains during the good years ahead, and would also distribute the grains during the drought. As the drought hit countries outside Egypt, Yusuf advised the King that they had stored much more grain than was needed for their own people and so could afford to sell it to people who came from other drought-affected countries.

Verses 58-68

The drought had reached Kana'an, Yusuf's homeland, and his ten step-brothers made the long journey to Egypt to buy provisions for themselves. They did not recognize the handsome and prestigious Minister of Egypt standing before them as their little brother Yusuf who they had thrown down a dark well many years previously.

Yusuf was overjoyed to see his step-brothers, but desperate also to see his sibling Bin Yamin, and decided on a plan to call him to Egypt without revealing his own true identity. He sold his brothers the grain they required, but told them they would not be able to buy more grain in the future unless they brought their youngest brother with them. As an added incentive, he ordered his servants to hide the money with which they had bought their supplies in their bags.

On their return to Kan'aan, the brothers were delighted to see their money hidden in their bags and became convinced of the Minister's good intentions. For their next trip they asked Yaqub to be allowed to take Bin Yamin with them. Yaqub was worried about his youngest son's safety, and made them promise to take care of him. He reminded them that Allah was a Witness to their oath. He also advised them to enter Egypt through separate gates. A large caravan of eleven brothers would almost certainly attract much notice, envy and perhaps even suspicion.

Verses 69-98

Yusuf disclosed his secret to Bin Yamin in private, consoling him over the treatment he must have received from his step-brothers over the years. He did not want Bin Yamin to leave for Egypt, so he devised the plan of hiding the King's cup in Bin Yamin's bag, and so detaining him as a thief. On discovery of the theft, his elder brothers remarked that Bin Yamin was a thief just as his brother Yusuf had been a thief. The story behind this remark is that as a child, Yusuf was brought up by an aunt who became very attached to him. When the time came for him to leave, she hid a girdle, said to be inherited from Prophet Ibrahim, among Yusuf's clothes. She then raised the alarm that her precious girdle was missing. When the 'theft' was discovered, she demanded that Yusuf stay with her a few more years as a penance.

Yusuf was shocked to hear his brothers make such a remark. But having given vent to their feelings, the brothers remembered their promise to Yaqub. The eldest brother decided to stay in Egypt and sent the rest of the party back to Canaan to get permission for him to return. His message for his father that 'your son has stolen' showed his contempt for his half-brother.

Yaqub had grieved for many years over the disappearance of his little boy Yusuf. The news of Bin Yamin's arrest for theft came as an added blow, causing him to lose his eye-sight completely. The whitening of the eyes referred to in the Quran is probably glaucoma. Yaqub had nothing but faith in Allah, and he sent his nine sons back to plead for Bin Yamin's release. After making their third, long trip to Egypt, Yusuf felt it was time to reveal his identity to them. His brothers were overjoyed, as well as deeply ashamed of their past behaviour. He forgave them and sent them back to Canaan with a shirt of his to give to Yaqub.

As the caravan made its long journey home, Yaqub sensed an inner joy which he could not explain. He remarked that he could smell Yusuf's fragrance, and was laughed at by his daughters-in-law. He will die weeping for Yusuf, they said to each other. Yaqub had been fasting that day. At night he asked for milk with which to break his fast, and then returned to his room to pray and sniff the air with deep longing. His sons entered the house with their amazing news and placed Yusuf's shirt over their father's eyes. His sight was restored to him, and his sons now begged his forgiveness for their past behaviour.

Verses 99-101

Yaqub's whole household of about seventy people now migrated to Egypt. Yusuf gave them a tumultuous welcome after the long and painful years of separation and sorrow. He seated his parents on thrones, but out of sheer joy, his parents and eleven brothers fell down in prostration before him. The dream that Yusuf had seen as a child had now come true. Yusuf immediately turned to Allah Almighty in humble and deep gratitude.

The true Muslim is the one who thanks Allah with every fibre of his being for the vast array of bounties gifted to him by his Lord. Sabr (patience) and Shukr (gratitude) are the guiding principles in the life of every Muslim.

The story of prophet Yusuf comes to an end here, but not Surah Yusuf itself. The last ten verses are for Prophet Muhammad (saw) in Makkah, at a time when he and his followers were being persecuted, boycotted and humiliated. The story of his brother- prophet Yusuf inspired in him hope and courage. Years later at the conquest of Makkah, Prophet Muhammad (saw) also found himself in the position of victor, surrounded by the men and women who had once persecuted him and tortured his followers. Prophet Muhammad (saw) uttered the same words of forgiveness to the people of Makkah as used by Prophet Yusuf to his step-brothers.

These final verses reminded the believers to avoid all forms of Shirk and to turn to Allah in sincere worship. The Prophet is commanded to call the people to the faith of Allah in its purest form. He must remind them of the awful punishments meted out to those nations who rejected the message of their prophets. The Quran is not an invention of man but a divinely-inspired book, confirming previous scriptures, and a Guide and Mercy for believers.

Lessons from the story of Yusuf

1. Prophet Yusuf came from a family which had a long history of prophethood, nobility and dedication. The prestigious position of a family does not always help to build the character of its members, but it did in the case of Yusuf. Throughout his career, Yusuf was an embodiment of his family's tradition of truth, patience, forgiveness and perseverance.
2. Faith in Allah is the key to patience and forbearance. Yaqub's grief at the disappearance of Yusuf and the incarceration of Bin Yamin was great, but he survived the double blow because of his complete dependence upon Allah. A man who has no faith in Allah will become depressed and even suicidal when faced with such terrible tragedies.
3. Satan has a very easy time spreading evil and immorality in societies where the sexes mix freely. Were it not that Yusuf had been endowed with deep faith, he would have fallen into the trap laid by Zulaikha.
4. Yusuf preferred honour and truth to lies and shame, and preferred to stay in prison until his innocence had been established. Yielding to Zulaikha's charms would have guaranteed him a life of luxury, but he chose instead to thwart her advances and keep his honour intact.

5. Patience (sabr) and God-consciousness (Taqwa) are two major characteristics of Yusuf. Even when in prison, he spread the message of Allah to his fellow inmates. For his faith he was rewarded heavily and established by Allah as the second most- powerful man in Egypt.

6. Yusuf also showed extreme forgiveness and gratitude. He forgave his brothers wholeheartedly, despite the years of suffering he had endured because of their evil behaviour. And with all humility he glorified and thanked Allah for His blessings.

7. Envy is often the root cause of much evil in society. Yusuf's elder brothers allowed envy to fester within them, resulting in terrible behaviour. However, they eventually realised their mistakes and asked for forgiveness, beginning a new life in Egypt under the guidance of their youngest brother.

Chapter 2A

HADITH: SALAH (PRAYER)

1. Anas b. Malik reported that the Messenger of Allah said: *“Whosoever prays like us, faces our Qiblah and eats our slaughtered meat, is a Muslim and under the protection of Allah and His Messenger. So do not betray Allah by betraying those who are in His protection.”*
(Bukhari)

Discussion:

Prayer is the most valuable and clearest physical sign that distinguishes between a Muslim and a non-muslim. In ordinary life it may be difficult to tell the people apart regarding their faith, as most people will be doing similar things, such as earning a living, eating, travelling and shopping. But when the call to prayer is said, it is only the Muslim who will abandon his worldly pursuits and rush to pray. He will close his business temporarily, interrupt his journey, awaken from his sleep and even leave his meal in order to answer the call to prayer. The non-muslim, on the other hand, will continue with his worldly activities, oblivious to his Creator and to worship.

Another lesson to be learned from this hadith is that any Muslim who prays facing the Qiblah and eats halal meat has the right to enjoy full protection from the Muslim state. He must not be disgraced, betrayed or treated unjustly in any manner.

2. Abdullah ibn Mas'ud reported: *“I asked the Prophet (saw): ‘Which deed takes one nearest to Allah?’*

He replied, ‘To pray on time.’

I asked, ‘What comes next?’

He replied, ‘To be good to your parents.’

I asked again, ‘What comes next?’

He replied, ‘To participate in Jihad in the cause of Allah.’”

(Agreed upon)

Discussion:

To delay the prayer from its prescribed time is a serious sin, while punctuality in prayer is the most beloved to Allah Almighty. The rights of parents are second only to the rights of Allah in Islam. Although Allah Almighty has created each individual, it is through his parents that the individual enters this world. He is thus under obligation to please and serve them both. He can fulfil his duty to Allah by worshipping him, obeying his commands and striving to earn His pleasure. And he can fulfil his duty to his parents by serving them and taking care of them, especially when they reach old-age. At the same time, he may not disobey Allah if his parents ask him to do so, as the rights of Allah are paramount over the rights of all else in the universe.

The third action most beloved to Allah is jihad in His cause. A Muslim is obliged to participate in jihad using all means available to him, such as sacrificing his time, wealth and even life in the divine cause. The highest and most meritorious form of jihad is war, in which the Muslim fights and even lays down his life against the enemies of Islam.

3. Abdullah b. 'Amr b. 'Aas reported that the Messenger of Allah (saw) said, "*Command your children to pray when they are seven years old, and punish them if they do not pray when they are ten years old, and separate their beds.*"

(Abu Dawud)

Discussion:

This hadith is an example of the great wisdom of the Prophet (saw) when teaching the faith to his companions. Prayer becomes obligatory only when the child reaches puberty, but it would be a huge mistake for the parents to leave it until then to teach him or her the words, meanings and movements of prayer. For the five daily prayers require rigorous discipline and commitment, and a child who has reached the age of puberty following his own lifestyle and routine will find it difficult to add this new requirement to his daily routine. It is much easier to mould and teach a seven year-old, and so the Prophet ordered us to teach the children at this age. This advice should be extended to cover other areas of Islamic life, such as recitation of the Quran, stories of the Prophets, fasting and even giving charity. Parents should also remember that teaching the child to pray should not be confined solely to the rituals of prayer, but should also include its meanings and the reasons behind the institution of salah.

Another advantage of teaching children at a young age is that prayer becomes second-nature to them and a normal item on the agenda of their daily lives, equally as important as food and sleep, rather than an alien concept that has been thrust upon them in their teenage years. After three years of training, the child will be well-versed and accustomed to prayer. But if he is so disobedient or stubborn that he refuses to pray after such extensive training, then the parents have the right to use physical punishment. Parents are also ordered to separate the beds of their children who have reached the age of ten as adolescence begins soon afterwards. Hayaa' (modesty) is an integral part of the Islamic character and must be instilled into children from a young age.

4. Aisha, Mother of the Believers reported that, "*Prayer was prescribed as two rak'ahs both when travelling and when resident. Later, the traveller's prayer remained as it was originally prescribed, but additions were made to the resident's prayer.*"

(Agreed upon)

Discussion:

Maintaining the rigorous discipline of the five daily prayers would have been incredibly difficult for the early Muslims, who were not only new to the faith but who also had to fight the entire system of values and lifestyle in Arabia. Allah Almighty, in His eternal wisdom and compassion, revealed the Quran and thus the commandments contained within it, slowly, over a period of twenty-three years. Salah was initially ordained to be performed only twice a day, and later the number was increased to five times a day. The two prayers were initially offered once in the morning and once in the evening. The five daily prayers were prescribed during the Mi'raj, the Prophet's night journey to the heavens, and additional rak'ahs were added to all the prayers except the Fajr prayer.

A traveller's prayers are similar to those initially introduced to the early Muslims. Each prayer, except Maghrib, is reduced to two rak'ahs, and the traveller prays three times a day (Jam'ah wa Taqseer) instead of the normal five.

(Travellers' prayers are discussed in greater detail in the next lesson.)

5. Abu Dharr reported that the Messenger of Allah (saw) once came out in the time of winter when the leaves were falling from the trees. He shook the branch of a tree, causing its leaves to fall. He then called, "O Abu Dharr!"

I replied, "Yes, O Messenger of Allah."

He said, "When a Muslim prays sincerely to Allah, his sins drop from him just as the leaves are dropping from this tree."

(Ahmad)

6. Abu Malik Al Ashja'i reported his father as saying, "Whenever a man accepted Islam, the first thing the Prophet (saw) would teach him was the prayer."

(Al Bazzar, At Tabarani)

7. Abu Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allah (saw) said, "The first of his actions for which a servant of Allah will be held accountable on the Day of Resurrection will be his prayers. If they are in order, then he will have prospered and succeeded; but if they are deficient, then he will have failed and lost. If there is something defective in his obligatory prayers, then His Lord will say,

"See if my servant has any Nafil (extra) prayers with which may be completed that which was defective in his obligatory prayers. Then the rest of his actions will be judged in a similar fashion."

(Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud)