

REMEMBERING IBRĀHĪM ﷺ

INTRODUCTION

Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ is one of the most famous prophets of Allah. He was bestowed the title of *Khalīl'Allah*, meaning the intimate friend of Allah. He has been mentioned sixty-nine times in the Qur'ān, with fifteen mentions in *Sūrah al-Baqarah* alone. Furthermore, he has a *sūrah* named after him. He is one of the Messengers of Firm Resolve ('*Ulu al-'Azam*'), taken from this Qur'ānic verse:

And remember when We
took from the prophets
their covenant, and from
you (O Muhammad),
and from Nūh, Ibrāhīm,
Mūsā and 'Isā, the son
of Maryam. And We
took from them a strong
covenant (33:7).

واذ اخذنا من النبيين ميثاقهم
ومنك ومن نوح وابراهيم
وموسي وعيسى بن مريم واخذنا
منهم ميثاقا غليظا.

Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ was born in Babylon. His father's name was Tārih. For a passage of time, Ibrāhīm ﷺ resided in Damascus. There were people there who worshipped the seven stars in the sky. Every night, they would turn their faces towards the North Pole and worship the stars in their peculiar and ignorant manner. A prophet was needed, who would, with clarity and intellect, explain the futile nature of worshipping any entity other than Allah. A prophet was needed who had unparalleled wisdom. That prophet was Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ.

Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ married Sāra, who unfortunately did not have any children at first. She herself advised Ibrāhīm to take her slave girl as a wife, who was called Hājar. She gave birth to Ismāʿīl when Ibrāhīm was eighty-six years old. Later, Allah gave glad-tidings to Ibrāhīm that Sāra too would give birth to a child. Hence, Ishāq was born to Sāra, thirteen years later after the birth of Prophet Ismāʿīl.

Thereafter, all prophets and messengers after Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ really stemmed from him ﷺ. Ismāʿīl ﷺ is the father of the Arabs who lived in Hijaz. He was the forefather of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Ibn Abbās reports that five prophets spoke Arabic - Prophet Muhammad, Ismāʿīl, Shuʿayb, Ṣāliḥ and Hūd ﷺ. All others spoke the Syriac language, with the exception of Mūsā, who spoke Hebrew.

Prophet Ishāq ﷺ, on the other hand, was the father of Prophet Yaʿqūb, also called Isrāʿīl. All the prophets of Banū Isrāʿīl, like Prophet's Mūsā and ʿĪsā, came from this side of the family. Any book revealed to a Messenger after Prophet Ibrāhīm was revealed to his children.

Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ is so important that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ met him on the night of *al-Isrā wa al-Miʿrāj* (The Night Journey and Heavenly Ascension). He saw him on the highest heaven, resting next to the *al-Bayt al-Maʿmūr* (The Frequented House), the replica of the Kaʿba in the heavens. Our Prophet described Prophet Mūsā and ʿĪsā in great detail. When he was asked to describe Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ, he simply replied: 'Look at me'.

Allah has described Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ with many favourable titles in the Holy Qurʾān:

Certainly Ibrāhīm was an Ummah, subservient to Allah and *ḥanīf* (inclined to Allah). And he was not from the polytheists. [He was] thankful for Allah's favours (16:120-1).

ان ابراهيم كان امة قانتا لله
حنيفا ولم يك من المشركين
شاكرا لانعمه.

Indeed, Ibrāhīm was one who invoked Allah, forbearing (9:114).

ان ابراهيم لأواه حلیم.

Ibrāhīm was neither a Jew or Christian, but he was a Muslim, inclined to Allah. And he was not a polytheist (3:67).

ما كان ابراهيم يهوديا ولا
نصرانيا ولكن كان حنيفا
مسلمما وما كان من المشركين.

Remember when his Lord said 'Submit!' He replied 'I have submitted to the Lord of the worlds (2:131).

اذ قال له ربه أسلم قال اسلمت
لرب العالمين.

HIS RELIGIOUS LEGACY

Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ may have lived thousands of years ago, but our religion today owes a lot to him and indeed we remember him abundantly on a daily basis. For example:

- i. *Ṣalawāt al-Ibrāhīmiyyah* (The Abrahamic Benedictions): In each *ṣalāh*, we extend blessings upon him and his family. Within each *ṣalāh*, we recite his supplications. Why is Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ mentioned in our *ṣalāh*? The answer given by the ulema is that Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ and his son were responsible for reconstruction of al-Ka'ba *al-Musharrafah* (Kaaba the Honoured), the *Qibla*, or

focal point of all Muslims. In reward for their efforts, he, along with his family are commemorated in every *ṣalāh* performed in that direction.

- ii. *Sunan al-Fitra* (The First Nature): refers to the hygienic practices to which all prophets and messengers steadfastly adhered, encouragement to which has also been imparted to us. The purpose is two-fold (i) to ensure basic hygiene and cleanliness (ii) a means to distinguish Muslims from non-Muslims.

These encompass acts such as circumcision, shaving of the private hair, trimming of the moustache, clipping of the finger nails, and removal of underarm hair. We are informed that these practices originally stem from Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام.

- iii. Hajj (The Major Pilgrimage): Most of the sites and rituals of Hajj draw their significance from connections to Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and his family such as *ṭawāf*, *sa'y*, Zamzam, the Station of Ibrāhīm (*Maqām Ibrāhīm*) and Mina. Moreover, he was the first to rebuild the Ka'ba after the flood of Prophet Nūḥ عليه السلام. Upon completion, he did nothing but pray for Allah to accept his efforts: *Our Lord! Please accept from us, certainly You are the all-Listening, the all-Knowing* (2:127).

This itself is an important lesson for us. When we accomplish something, we should first ask Allah to accept the endeavours.

HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH PROPHET MUHAMMAD ﷺ

Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was the forefather of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Any remembrance of Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام is in reality the remembrance of the Chosen One, peace be upon him. When people speak well of our father, grandfathers and forefathers, we feel happy and proud. So Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would certainly approve of us remembering his forefather Ibrāhīm عليه السلام.

Our Prophet ﷺ famously declared that all of his male and female ancestors till Adam were all Muslims. This means that Ibrāhīm's ancestors were also Muslims.

This is important to mention because seemingly, the Qur'ān describes Ibrāhīm's father as a *musbrik*. This is not the case. Rather the word *ab* here means uncle and not father. Semites used to call their uncles 'father'. This practice is validated by the Qur'ān too. Prophet Ya'qūb ﷺ was about to leave this world when he asked his sons who they would worship after him. They replied:

'We shall worship your Lord, the Lord of your fathers Ibrāhīm, Ismā'īl and Ishāq' (2: 133).

نعبد الهك واله ابائك ابراهيم
واسماعيل واسحاق.

Prophet Ismā'īl was the uncle of Prophet Ya'qūb ﷺ and not the father. Yet he has been described with the word *abā* (plural of *ab*).

There is additional proof in the Qur'ān. Praying for the infidels is clearly forbidden in Islam. In the Qur'ān, Allah describes the supplication made by Ibrāhīm: *'O our Lord! Forgive me, and my parents and the believers on the day when the reckoning shall come to pass'* (14:41).

Clearly, this verse indicates that Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ prayed to Allah for the forgiveness of his parents. He would only be permitted to do this if they were Muslims, not polytheists.

May Allah enable us all to learn from the radiant life of Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ, *āmin*.