

Prophet Abraham (as)

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Abraham was as a prophet and messenger of God, and an ancestor to the Ishmaelite Arabs and Israelites. Abraham plays a prominent role as an example of faith in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In Muslim belief, Abraham fulfilled all the commandments and trials of God. As a result of his faith in God, Abraham was promised leadership to all the nations of the world. The Qur'an extols Abraham as a model, an exemplar, obedient and not an idolater. The Kaaba in Mecca was built by Abraham and his son Ishmael as the first house of worship on earth. The Islamic holy day 'Eid ul-Adha is celebrated in commemoration of Abraham's willingness to 'sacrifice his son on God's command, as well as the end of the Hajj pilgrimage to the Kaaba.

Abraham, also known as Khalilullah (**friend of God**), became leader of the righteous in his time and through him the Arab's and Israelites came. Abraham was instrumental in cleansing the world of idolatry. Abraham and Isma'il (**Ishmael**) further established the rites of pilgrimage, or Hajj Pilgrimage, which are followed by Muslims today. Abraham further asked God to bless both the lines of his progeny, Isma'il and Ishaq (**Isaac**), and to keep all of his descendants in the protection of God.

Quranic account and Islamic Tradition

Family

Abraham's father was Aazar, who is known in the Hebrew Bible as Terah. Abraham had two children, Ishmael and Isaac, who both later became prophets. Abraham is a descendant of Nuh through his son Shem.

Personality and Wisdom

Abraham's personality and character is one of the most in-depth in the whole Qur'an, and Abraham is specifically mentioned as being a kind and compassionate man. Abraham's father is understood to have been a wicked man, ignorant and idolatrous, who ignored his son's advice. The Qur'an mentions that Abraham's father threatened to stone his son to death if he did not cease his preaching. Despite this, the Qur'an states that Abraham in his later years prayed to God to forgive the sins of all his descendants and his parents. Abraham's character is an example of how kind you should be towards people, especially to parents. A similar example of Abraham's compassionate nature is demonstrated when Abraham began to pray for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah after hearing of God's plan through angel Gabriel for them.

Gabriel told Abraham that God's plan was final, and therefore his prayer would have no effect, the Qur'an nonetheless reinforces Abraham's kind nature through this particular event.

Youth

Ibrahim was born in a house of idolaters in the ancient city of Ur of the Chaldees, likely the place called 'Ur' in present-day Iraq, in which case, the idolaters would have been practitioners of the hypothesized Ancient Mesopotamian religion. His father Azar was a well-known idol-sculptor. As a young child, Ibrahim used to watch his father sculpting these idols from stones and wood. When his father was finished with them, Ibrahim would ask his father why they could not move or respond to any request, and then would mock them; therefore, his father would always scold him for not following his ancestors' rituals.

Despite his opposition to idolatry, his father Azar would still send Ibrahim to sell his idols in the marketplace. Once there, Abraham would call out to passers-by, "Who will buy my idols? They will not help you and they cannot hurt you! Who will buy my idols?" Then Ibrahim would mock the idols. He would take them to the river, push their faces into the water and command them, "Drink! Drink!" Once again, Ibrahim asked his father, "How can you worship things that do not hear or do any good?" His father replied, "How dare you reject the gods of our people? Get out of my sight!" Ibrahim replied, "May God forgive you. No more will I live with you and your idols." After this, Ibrahim left his father's home for good. During festivals people gathered in their temples and placed offerings before their idols. Ur's most prominent temple was the Great Ziggurat, which can be seen today. Ibrahim would ask them, "What are you worshipping? Do these idols hear when you call them? Can they help you or hurt you?" The people would reply, "It is the way of our forefathers." Ibrahim declared "I am sick of your gods! Truly I am their

enemy." After several years, Ibrahim became a young man. He still could not believe that his people were worshipping the statues. He laughed whenever he saw them entering the temple, lowering their heads, silently offering the statues the best of their food, crying and asking forgiveness from them. He started feeling angry towards his people, who could not realize that these are stones that could neither benefit nor harm them.

Searching for the truth

One night, Abraham went up a mountain, he leaned against a rock, while looking up at the sky. He saw a shining star and said to himself, "Could this be my Lord?" But when it set he said: "I don't like things that set." Then he saw the moon rising in all its splendour and said, "Could this be my Lord?" but the moon also set. During daybreak, he saw the sun rising and said, "Could this be my Lord? This is the biggest and brightest!" But when the sun set he said, "O my people! I am free from the partners you associate with Allah, for I have turned my face towards God who created the heavens and the earth. Never shall I associate partners with God. Our Lord is the creator of the heavens and the earth and everything in between them. He has the power to make the stars rise and set." After this declaration, Abraham then heard God calling him, "O Abraham " Abraham trembled and said, "Here I am O my Lord!" God replied, "Submit to Me!" Abraham fell to the ground, crying. He said: "I submit to the Lord of the universe!"

The Fire

A decision to burn Abraham at the stake was affirmed by the temple priests and the king of Babylon, Nimrud. The news spread like fire in the kingdom and people came from all places to watch the execution. A huge pit was dug up and a large quantity of wood was piled up. Then the biggest fire people had ever seen was lit up. Its flames were so high that the birds could not fly over it. Ibrahim's hands and feet were chained, and he was put in a catapult, ready to be thrown in. During this time, Angel Jibril came to him and said: "O Ibrahim! Is there anything I can do for you?" Ibrahim could have asked to be saved from the fire, but Ibrahim replied, "God is sufficient for me, He is the best disposer of my affairs." The catapult was released and Ibrahim was thrown into the fire. God then gave an order to the fire, "O fire! Be cool and safe for Ibrahim." A miracle occurred, the fire obeyed and burned only his chains. Abraham came out from it as if he was coming out of a garden, peaceful, his face illuminated, and not a trace of smoke on his clothes. People watched in shock and exclaimed: "Amazing! Abraham's God has saved him from the fire!"

Confrontation with Nimrud

Nimrud claimed that he was able to give life to the dead. To refute his false assumption, Ibrahim asked him to let the sun rise from the west; hence Nimrud gave up and got perplexed. This incident proves that man, whatever power he possesses, cannot give life to any dead being. Nimrud, Pharaoh or any tyrant may claim that he can kill but he cannot prove his claim if he says

that he can return life to the dead. It is only Allah (the **Almighty**) who has the power to do this easily:

Has you not turned your attention to the one who disputed with Abraham about his Lord?

Abraham said: “My Lord is He who gives life and causes death.”

Nimrud said: “I too can give life and cause death.”

Abraham said: “It is Allah who causes the sun to rise from the east. Can you cause it to rise from the West.”

Thus Nimrud was confounded.

Allah does not guide unjust people. (**Qur'an 2: 285**)

According to Romano-Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, Nimrud was a man who set his will against that of God. Nimrud proclaimed himself as a living god and was worshipped as such by his subjects. Before Abraham was born, a portent in the star's told Nimrud and his astrologer's of the impending birth of Abraham, who would put an end to idolatry. Nimrud, therefore, ordered the killing of all new-born babies. However, Abraham's mother escaped into the fields and gave birth secretly. Flavius Josephus mentions that Abraham confronted Nimrud and told him, face-to-face, to cease his idolatry, whereupon Nimrud ordered he be burnt alive on a stake. Nimrud had his people gather enough wood to burn Abraham in the biggest fire the world had ever seen. Yet when the fire was lit and Abraham was thrown into it, Abraham walks out unscathed. After Abraham survived the fire, his fame grew bigger. Nimrud, who was the King of Babylon felt that his throne was

in danger, and that he was losing power because upon witnessing Ibrahim coming out of the fire unharmed, a large part of his society started believing in God and Abraham as being a prophet of God. Up until this point, Nimrud was pretending that he was a god. Nimrud wanted to debate with him and show his people that he, the king was god, and that Abraham was a liar. Nimrud asked Ibrahim, "What can your God do that I cannot?" Ibrahim replied, "My Lord is He who gives life and death." Nimrud then shouted, "I give life and I can cause death! I can bring a person from the street and have him executed, and I can grant my pardon to a person who was sentenced to death and save his life." Abraham replied, "Well, my lord God makes the sun rise from the East. Can you make it rise from the West?" Nimrud was confounded. Abraham left him speechless and went back to his mission of calling people to worship God.

This event has been noted as particularly important because, in the Muslim perspective, it almost foreshadowed the prophetic careers of future prophets, most significantly the career of Moses. Abraham's quarrel with the king has been interpreted by some to be a precursor to Moses's preaching to Pharaoh. Just as the ruler who argued against Abraham claimed divinity for himself, so did the Pharaoh of the Exodus, who refused to hear the call of Moses and perished in the Red Sea. In this particular incident, scholars have further commented on Abraham's wisdom in employing "rational, wise and target-oriented" speech, as opposed to pointless arguments.

Abraham symbolized the highest moral values essential to any person. The Qur'an details the account of the angels coming to Abraham to tell him of the birth of Ismael. It says that, as soon as Abraham saw the messengers, he

"rushed to entertain them with a roasted calf." This action has been interpreted by scholars as exemplary. This incident has only further heightened the "compassionate" character of Abraham in Muslim theology.

Abraham's Sacrifice

In the mainstream narrative, Abraham's dream of sacrificing his son was a command by God. The verse in reference is in Surah As-Saffat ([Qur'an 37: 104-105](#)) and the interpretation of the meaning in English is "We called out to him: O' Ibrahim you have indeed fulfilled the vision. Thus We do reward those who do good."

Abraham dreamt that God ordered him to sacrifice his son, and so he agreed to follow God's command and perform the sacrifice; however, God intervened and informed him that his sacrifice had already been accepted. While there is no direct mention in the Qur'an of an animal ([ram](#)) replacing the boy, it says that he is replaced with a 'great sacrifice' ([Zibhin azeem](#)). This great sacrifice denotes the importance of the ram that replaced Ibrahim's son.

From that day onwards, every Eid al-Adha Muslims around the world slaughter an animal to commemorate Abraham's sacrifice and to remind themselves of self-sacrifice for the sake of Allah, and they share the meat among friends, family, the poor and the needy. This is called, Qurbani ([sacrifice](#)).

Tabari's two accounts regarding the sacrifice

One - Abraham wished for a righteous son, whereupon an angel appeared to him informing him that he will get a righteous son, but when he was born and reached puberty, he must be sacrificed for God's sake. Later, the angel appeared to Hagar to inform her about the upcoming child. When Ishmael was grown, someone appeared to Abraham in a dream and said to him: "Keep your vow! God bestowed upon you a boy by Hagar so that you may sacrifice him" So he said to Ishmael: "Let us go offer a sacrifice to God!" So he took a knife and some rope. The boy said: "Oh father! Where is your sacrifice?" He replied: "Oh my son, I saw in a dream that I should slaughter you." He said, "Father, do what you have been commanded by our Lord; you will find me, Insha-Allah (if God wills), one of the patient ones". Ishmael then said: "Tighten my bonds, so I will not struggle and pull on your clothes, lest my blood will shed upon them, for them my mum (Hagar) will see it and grieve. Hurry! Pass the knife over my throat so that death will be easy for me." Abraham began to approach him and, while crying, tied him up. Ishmael too was crying. He then drew the knife along his throat but the knife did not cut, for God had placed a sheet of copper on the throat of Ishmael. When he saw that, he turned him on his forehead and nicked him on the back of the head just as God has said (Qur'an 37: 103): When they had both submitted to the affair of God. A voice called out: 'Abraham, you have fulfilled the vision!' He turned around and behold, there was a ram. He took it and released his son and he bent over his son saying: "Oh my son, today you have been given to me". That comes in God's saying (Qur'an 37: 107): 'We ransomed him with a great sacrifice.'

Two - Abraham was about to sacrifice his son Ishmael, Iblis (Satan), who had taken on the form of a man, said: "Where are you going, O Sheikh?" He replied: " I am going to these mountains because I must do something there.' Iblis said: "By God, I have seen that Shaytan has come to you in a dream and ordered you to slaughter this little son of yours. And you intend to do that!" Thereupon, Abraham recognized him and said: "Get away from me, enemy of God! By God, I will most certainly continue to do what my Lord has commanded". Iblis, the enemy of God, gave up on Abraham but then he encountered Ishmael, who was behind Abraham carrying the wood and the large knife. He said to him: "Young man, do you realize where your father is taking you?" He said: "To gather wood for our family from the mountains." He replied: "By God, his actual intention is to sacrifice you!" He said: "Why?!" Iblis replied: "He claims that his Lord has ordered him to do so!" Ishmael replied: "He must do what his Lord commands him!" When the young man had rebuffed him, Iblis went to Hagar, the mother of Ishmael who was still at home. Iblis said to her: "Oh mother of Ishmael! Do you realize where Abraham has gone with Ishmael?" She replied: "They have gone to gather wood." He said: "He has actually gone to sacrifice your son!" She replied: "It cannot be! He is too kind and too loving towards him to do that!" Iblis said: "He claims that God has ordered him to do that!" Hagar said: "If his Lord has ordered him to do that, then he must submit to the command of God!" So the enemy of God returned intensely irritated at not being able to influence the family of Abraham.

Miracles

Abraham encountered several miracles of God during his lifetime. The Qur'an records a few main miracles, although different interpretations have been attributed to the passages. Some of the miracles recorded in the Qur'an are:

- Abraham was shown the kingdom of the Heavens and the Earth.
- Abraham and the miracle of the birds.
- Abraham was thrown into a fire, which became "cool" and "peaceful" for him.

The first passage has been interpreted both literally, allegorically, and otherwise. Although some commentators feel that this passage referred to a physical miracle, where Abraham was physically shown the entire kingdom of Heaven ([Jannah](#)), others felt it refers to the spiritual understanding of Abraham; latter scholars maintain that the Chaldeans were skilled in the observance of the stars, but Abraham, who lived amongst them, saw beyond the physical world and into a higher spiritual realm. The second passage has one mainstream interpretation amongst the Quranic commentators, that Abraham took four birds and cut them up, placing pieces of each on nearby hills; when he called them, each piece joined and four birds flew back to Abraham. This miracle, as told by the Quranic passage, was a demonstration by God to show Abraham how God gave life to the dead. The third passage has also been interpreted both literally and metaphorically, or in some cases both. Commentators state that the 'fire' refers to the main aspects. They maintained that, firstly, the fire referred to the physical flame, from which

Abraham was saved unharmed. The commentators further stated that, secondly, the fire referred to the 'fire of persecution', from which Abraham was saved, as he left his people after that event with his wife Sarah and his nephew Lot.

Migration of Abraham

Ibrahim left his father, people and country, and began his journey with his wife and Lut to a city called Ur, then to a place called Haran, and then to Palestine. Allah told us in Al-Quran:

"Lut believed in him ([Abraham's message of Islamic Monotheism](#)). Abraham said: "I will emigrate for the sake of my Lord. Verily, He is the All Mighty, the All Wise." ([Qur'an 29: 26](#))

After going to Palestine, Ibrahim went to Egypt. During his journey he continuously invited people to worship Allah, and show them the right path, and helped the poor.

Hadith about Abraham

Narrated Abu Huraira: Abraham did not tell a lie except on three occasion. Twice for the sake of Allah when he said, "I am sick," and he said, "I did not destroy your idols, the big idol did it." The third was while Abraham and Sarah ([his wife](#)) were passing the territory of a tyrant. Someone told the tyrant, "That man ([Abraham](#)) is accompanied by a very charming 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 earth except you and I. This man asked me about you and I told him that you are my sister, so don't contradict my statement." The tyrant then called Sarah and when she went to him, he tried to take hold of her with his hand, behold, his hand got stiff and he was confounded. The tyrant asked Sarah. "Pray to Allah for me, and I shall not harm you." So Sarah asked Allah to cure him and he got cured. He tried to take hold of her for a second time, but again his hand got stiffer than before and was more confounded. He again said to Sarah, "Pray to Allah for me, and I will not harm you." Sarah asked Allah again, and he became alright. Then he called the guard who had brought her to him, the tyrant said, "You have not brought me a human being, rather you brought me a devil." The tyrant then gave Hajar (**Abraham's second wife**) as a servant to Sarah. Sarah came back to Abraham. Abraham, gesturing with his hand, asked, "What happened?" She replied, "Allah spoiled the tyrants evil plot, and behold, he gave me this servant (**Hajar**) for my personal service."

Abu Huraira then addressed his listeners saying, "Hajar is your mother, O Bani Ma-is-Sama (**i.e. the Arabs, descendants of Ishmael, Hajar's son**). (**Bukhari: 3358**)

Following meaning to Abraham's lie's according to other scholars:

1. Ibrahim told his father he was sick in order to avoid going to the temple/festival and indulging in the polygamous practices.

2. After breaking all the idols, Ibrahim placed the axe in the hands of the largest idol. When the people returned and saw their idols smashed they accused Abraham of being the perpetrator. Abraham said that the biggest idol broke their small statues. Abraham did this to prove the point that these statues were man-made and not capable of human actions.

3. The tyrant/king wanted Sarah for his own evil intentions and Ibrahim knew that Allah would protect her. Therefore, when the tyrant/king asked who she was, instead of responding that she was his wife, Ibrahim said that she was his sister in Islam, which she technically was.

Slave girl named Hajar and birth of Ismail

Sarah knew that her husband, Ibrahim was longing for a child. Allah has mentioned Ibrahim's Dua in the Qur'an: "O my Lord! Grant me a righteous son!" (Qur'an 37: 100)

She knew that she was getting old and may not be able to provide Ibrahim with a child. She suggested to Ibrahim that he should marry her servant Hajar and maybe Allah would bless them with a child. Ibrahim accepted the advice of his beloved wife Sarah and married Hajar. It wasn't long before Ibrahim and Hajar were blessed with a baby boy whom they named Ismael/Ismail. Ibrahim was overjoyed with happiness at the birth of his first son. They all celebrated and thanked Allah for such a great and beautiful blessing. Some scholars say that Ibrahim was 86 years old at the time of Ismail's birth.

Abraham asks Allah about the resurrection

Ibrahim lived on the earth worshipping Allah, sanctifying Him and calling people to worship Allah and Allah alone. But he knew that his days on earth were limited and that these days would be followed by death and finally resurrection. Knowledge of life after death filled Abraham with peace, love and certitude. One day Ibrahim asked Allah how dead people will be resurrected. Allah told him to take four birds, tear them and placed each part on the top of four hills. Allah then asked Ibrahim to call back the birds by Allah's name. Immediately, the birds reassembled into their original form and came flying to him. Allah revealed this: "Remember when Abraham said: 'My Lord Show me how You give life to the dead.'" Allah said: "Do you not believe?" Abraham said: "Yes I believe, but to be stronger in faith." He said: "Take four birds, slaughter them, then scatter them upon hill tops and call them, they will come to you in rush, and know that Allah is Almighty, All Wise." (Qur'an 2: 260)

Ibrahim is the only person that the Qur'an commands our prophet to look up to as a role model. Allah says: "We inspire you O Muhammad, so follow the religion of Ibrahim - worship none but Allah." (Qur'an 16: 123)

Burial place of Abraham

Abraham is buried in a village called Hebron, (Al Khaleel), Palestine, along with his son Ishaq, his grandson Yaqoob and Yusuf. The graves of all these prophets are located under Masjid-e-Khaleel, also called Masjid-e-Ibrahim.

Abraham acquires great respect and honour in the hearts of mankind. He is When we Muslim's offer prayers, we mention Abraham's name along with the name of our Prophet, and the most comprehensive Darood (salutation, sending peace and blessings on prophet Muhammad is 'Darood-e-Ibrahim.')

This shows the honour Allah has bestowed on Abraham. Allah has ordered believers to send peace and blessings upon Abraham, and this will continue till the day of judgement.