

Comparison Religions



God's Prophets

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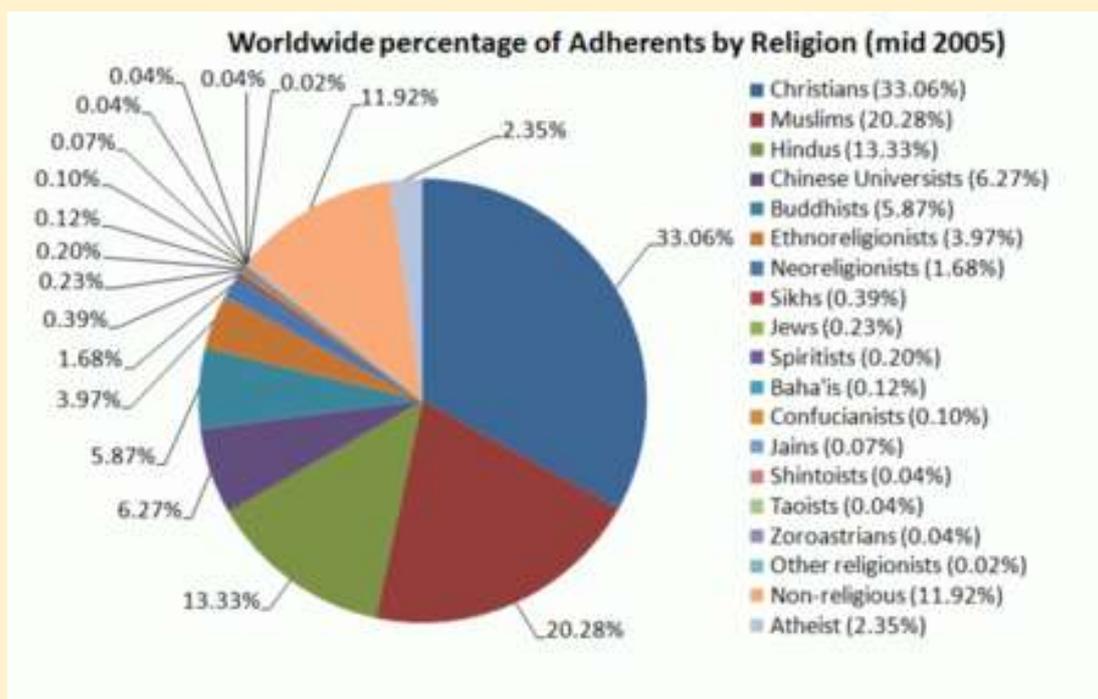
The **Abrahamic religions**, also referred to collectively as Abrahams group of Semitic originated religious sects which claim descent from the practices of the ancient Israelites and the worship of the "**God of Abraham**". The term derives from a figure from the Bible known as Abrahamic. Although Judaism began as a local tribal cult in the Levant, the Abrahams's were able to spread globally through Christianity being adopted by the Roman Empire in the 4th century and the military campaigns of the Arabs who spread Islam from the 7th century onward. As a consequence, today the Abrahamic religions are one of the major divisions in comparative religion and Islam is the largest Abrahamic religion in terms of numbers of adherents.

Major Abrahamic religions in chronological order of founding are:

- Judaism - Seventh Century BCE
- Christianity - First Century CE
- Islam - Seventh Century CE

Abrahamic religions with fewer adherents include the faiths descended from Yazdanism, Samaritanism (branch of Judaism) and the Druze faith (branch of Ismaili Isla, Babiism, the Bahia faith and Rastafarian. As of 2005, estimates classified 54% (3.6 billion people) of the world's population as adherents of an Abrahamic religion, about 32% as adherents of other religions and 16% as adherents of no organized religion. Christianity claims 33% of the world's population, Islam has 21%, Judaism has 0.2% and the Baha'i Faith represents around 0.1%.

Etymology



All claim a direct Lineage to Abraham

- Abraham is recorded in the Torah as the ancestor of the Israelites through his son Isaac, born to Sarah through a promise made in Genesis.
- The sacred text of Christianity is the Christian Bible, the first part of which, the Old Testament, is derived from the Jewish Bible, leading to similar ancestry claims as above, although most Christians are Gentiles who consider themselves as grafted into the family tree under the New Covenant.
- It is the Islamic tradition that Muhammad, as an Arab, is descended from Abraham's son Ishmael. Jewish tradition also equates the descendants of Ishmael, Ishmaelite's, with Arabs, as the descendants of Isaac by Jacob, who was also later known as Israel, are the Israelites.
- The Bab, regarded by Baha'i's as a predecessor to Bahauallah, was a Sayyid or a direct descendant of Muhammad and thus traces his ancestry to Abraham's son Ishmael. Tradition also holds that Baha'u'llah is a descendant of Abraham through his third wife, Keturah.

Origins and History

Judaism - regards itself as the religion of the descendants of Jacob, a grandson of Abraham. It has a strictly unitary view of God and the central holy book for almost all branches is the Masoretic Text as elucidated in the Oral Torah (Torah has two parts). In the 19th and 20th centuries Judaism developed a small number of branches, of which the most significant are Orthodox, Conservative and Reform.

Christianity - began as a sect of Judaism in the Mediterranean Basin of the first century CE and evolved into a separate religion "Christianity" with distinctive beliefs and practices. Jesus is the central figure of Christianity, considered by almost all denominations to be "Son of God", and one person of the Trinity. The Christian biblical canons are usually held to be the ultimate authority, alongside sacred tradition in some denominations such as the Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church. Over many centuries, Christianity divided into three main branches Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant, dozens of significant denominations and hundreds of smaller ones.

Islam - arose in the Arabian Peninsula in the 7th century CE with a strictly unitary view of God. Muslims hold the Qur'an to be the ultimate authority, as revealed and elucidated through the teaching and practices of a central but not divine prophet, Muhammad. The Islamic faith consider all prophets and messengers from Adam, through the final messenger (Muhammad) to carry the same Islamic monotheistic principles. Soon after its founding Islam split into two main branches Sunni and Shia, each of which now have a number of denominations.

Baha'i Faith began within the context of Shia Islam in 19th-century Persia, after a merchant named Siyyid Ali Muhammad Shirazi claimed divine revelation and took on the title of the Báb or "the Gate". The Bab's ministry proclaimed the imminent advent of "He whom God shall make manifest", who Baha'i's accept as Bahauallah. Baha'i's respect the Torah, Gospel and the Qur'an, and the writings of the Báb, Bahauallah, and Abdul-Baha are considered the central texts of the faith. A vast majority of adherents are unified under a single denomination. Lesser-known Abrahamic religions, originally offshoots of Shia Islam, include Babiism and Druze faith.

Common Aspects

The unifying characteristic of Abrahamic religions is that all accept the tradition that God revealed himself to the patriarch Abraham. All are monotheistic and conceive God to be a Superior creator and the source of moral law. Their religious texts feature many of the same figures, histories and places, although they often present them with different roles, perspectives and meanings. Believers who agree on these similarities and the common Abrahamic origin tend to also be more positive towards other Abrahamic groups. In these four Abrahamic religions God and the universe are separate from each other. The Abrahamic religions believe in a judging, paternal, fully external god to which the individual and nature are subordinate. One seeks salvation or transcendence not by contemplating the natural world or speculation, but by seeking to please God (obedience to God's wishes and law) and see divine revelation as outside itself, nature, and custom. Christianity differs somewhat in that, it includes the key tenet of "salvation by grace" and not through seeking to please God or by good deeds. Obedience for the Christian is expected as a natural response to having received salvation. This tenet is based on the Abrahamic principle of righteousness imputed by faith and only through the provision of payment for sin, by Jesus sacrificial death as the promised Messiah.

Monotheism

All Abrahamic religions claim to be monotheistic, worshiping an exclusive God, although one known by different names. Each of these religions preaches that God creates, is one, rules, reveals, loves, judges, punishes and forgives. However, although Christianity does not profess to believe in three gods, but rather in three persons, united in one essence the Trinitarian doctrine, fundamental of faith for the vast majority of Christian denominations¹, conflicts with Jewish, Muslim, and Baha'i concepts of monotheism. Since the conception of a divine Trinity is not amenable to Tawhid (oneness of God), the Islamic doctrine of monotheism, Islam regards Christianity as variously polytheistic.

Christianity, Islam, and the Baha'i Faith each respect Jesus: Muslims and Arab Christians respectively have vastly differing conceptions:

- Christians view Jesus as the savior (and most Christians also regard him as God incarnate).
- Muslims see Isa as a Prophet of Islam and a Messiah.
- Baha'i's rank Jesus as the Messiah and as a Manifestation of God (not as God incarnate, but as the presence of God).

However, the worship of Jesus or ascribing partners to God (known as shirk in Islam and as shituf in Judaism), is typically viewed as blasphemy of idolatry by Islam and Judaism and as misguided by the Baha'i. Judaism, Islam, and the Baha'i Faith also see the incarnation of God into human form as a blasphemy.

Theological Continuity

All the Abrahamic religions affirm one eternal God who created the universe, who rules history, who sends prophetic and angelic messengers and who reveals the divine will through inspired revelations. They also affirm that obedience to the creator is to be lived out historically, and that one day God will unilaterally intervene in human history at the Last Judgment.

Scriptures

- Judaism - The Torah
- Christianity - The Gospel
- Islam - The Qur'an

All Abrahamic religions believe that God guides humanity through revelations to prophets, and each religion recognizes that God revealed teachings up to and including those in their own scripture.

Ethical Orientation

All these religions speak of a choice between good and evil, which is associated with obedience or disobedience to a single God and to Divine Law.

Eschatological World View

An Eschatological world view of history and destiny, beginning with the creation of the world and the concept that God works through history, and ending with a resurrection of the dead and final judgment and world to come.

Importance of Jerusalem

Jerusalem is considered Judaism's holiest city. Its origins can be dated to 1004 BCE when according to Biblical tradition David established it as the capital of the United Kingdom of Israel and his son Solomon built the First Temple on Mount Moriah. Since the Hebrew Bible relates that Isaac's sacrifice took place there, Mount Moriah's importance for Jews predates even these prominent events. Jews thrice daily pray in its direction, they plea in their prayers for the restoration and the rebuilding of the Holy Temple (third temple) on mount Moriah. Jerusalem has served as the only capital for five out of six Jewish states that have existed in Israel since 1400 BCE (the united kingdom of Israel, the kingdom of Judah, Yehud Medinata, the Hasmonean kingdom and modern Israel with the exception of the Khazar state. It has been majority Jewish since about 1852 and continues through today. Jerusalem was an early center of Christianity. There has been a continuous Christian presence there since. From the 4th century to the Islamic conquest in the middle of the 7th century, the Roman province of Palestine was a Christian nation with Jerusalem its principal city. According to the New Testament, Jerusalem was the city Jesus was brought to as a child to be presented at the temple and for the feast of the Passover. He preached and healed in Jerusalem, unceremoniously he drove the money exchangers in disarray from the temple, he also held the Last Supper on the night before he is said to have died on the cross and he was arrested in Gethsemane. The six parts to Jesus' trial—three stages in a religious court and three stages before a Roman court, were all held in Jerusalem. His crucifixion at Golgotha, his burial

nearby, and his resurrection and ascension and prophecy to return all are said to have occurred or will occur there.

Jerusalem became holy to Muslims, third after Mecca and Medina (even though not mentioned by name in the Qur'an). The Al-Aqsa mosque, which translates to "farthest mosque" in Surah Al-Isra in the Qur'an and its surroundings are addressed in the Qur'an as "the holy land". Muslim tradition as recorded in the Hadith identifies al-Aqsa with a mosque in Jerusalem. The first Muslims did not pray towards the Kaabah (Al-Haram Mosque), but towards Jerusalem (this was the Qibla for 13 years): the Qibla was switched to the Kaaba later on to fulfill the order of Allah of praying in the direction of the Kaaba (Quran, Al-Baqarah). Another reason for its significance is its connection with the Miraj, where, according to traditional Muslim, Muhammad ascended through the Seven Heavens on a winged mule named Buraq, guided by the Archangel Gabriel, beginning from the Foundation Stone on the Temple Mount, in modern times under the Dome of the Rock.

Significance of Abraham and Covenant of Abraham

An interpretation of the borders of the Promised Land, based on God's promise to Abraham. Even though members of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam do not all claim Abraham as an ancestor, some members of these religions have tried to claim him as exclusively theirs.

For Jews - Abraham with his wife, Sarah is the founding patriarch of the children of Israel. God promised Abraham: "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you with Abraham, God entered into an everlasting covenant throughout the ages to be God to you and to your offspring to come. It is this covenant that makes Abraham and his descendant's children of the covenant. Similarly, converts, who join the covenant, are all identified as sons and daughters of Abraham and Sarah. Abraham is primarily a respected ancestor, Abraham our father, to whom God made several promises: chiefly, that he would have many descendants, who would receive the land of Canaan (Promise Land). According to Jewish tradition, Abraham was the first post-flood prophet to reject idolatry through rational analysis, although Shem (eldest son of Noah) and Eber (ancestor of the Israelites) carried on the tradition from Noah.

For Christians - They viewed Abraham as an important model of faith, and a spiritual as well as physical, ancestor of Jesus. For Christians, Abraham is a spiritual forebear as well as/rather than a direct ancestor depending on the individual's interpretation of Paul the Apostle with the Abrahamic covenant reinterpreted so it would be defined by faith in Christ rather than biological descent or both by faith as well as a direct ancestor; in any case, the emphasis is

placed on faith being the only requirement for the Abrahamic Covenant to apply. In Christian belief, Abraham is a role model of faith, and his obedience to God by offering Isaac is seen as foreshadowing God's offering of his son Jesus. Christian commentators have a tendency to interpret God's promises to Abraham as applying to Christianity and a replacement being applied to Judaism, whose followers rejected Jesus. They argue this on the basis that just as Abraham as a Gentile (not Jewish) before he was circumcised believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. "Those who have faith are children of Abraham". This is mostly developed in Paul's theology where all who believe in God are spiritual descendants of Abraham. However, with regards to Rom and Gal, in both cases he refers to these spiritual descendants as the "sons of God" rather than "children of Abraham".

For Muslims - Abraham is a prophet the "Messenger of God" who stands in the line from Adam to Muhammad, to whom God gave revelations, who raised the foundations of the House (the Kaaba, in Mecca) with his first son, Ismail, a symbol of which is every mosque. Abraham is the first in the genealogy for Muhammad. Islam considers Abraham to be one of the first Muslims, the first monotheist in a world where monotheism was lost, and the community of those faithful to God, thus being referred to as "Our Father Abraham", as well as "Abraham the Monotheist". Also, the same as Judaism, Islam believes that Abraham rejected idolatry through logical reasoning. Abraham is also recalled in certain details of the annual Hajj pilgrimage.

Religions

Judaism - One of Judaism's primary texts is the Tanakh (One five books of Moses), an account of the Israelites relationship with God from their earliest history until the building of the second Temple (535 BCE). Abraham is hailed as the first Hebrew and father of the Jewish people. One of his great-grandsons was Judah (fourth son of Prophet Ya'qub, Jacob), from whom the religion ultimately gets its name. The Israelites were initially a number of tribes who lived in the Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah. After being conquered and exiled, some members of the Kingdom of Judah eventually returned to Israel. They later formed an independent state under the Hasmonean dynasty in the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE, before becoming a client kingdom of the Roman Empire which also conquered the state and dispersed its inhabitants. From the 2nd to the 6th centuries Jews wrote the Talmud, a lengthy work of legal rulings and Biblical exegesis which, along with the Tanakh, is a key text of Judaism.

Christianity - Christianity began in the 1st century as a sect within Judaism initially led by Jesus. His followers viewed him as the Messiah, as in the confession of Peter after his crucifixion and death, they came to view him as God incarnate, who was resurrected and will return at the end of time to judge the living and the dead and create an eternal Kingdom of God. Within a few decades the new movement split from Judaism. After several periods of alternating persecution and peace, Christianity became the state church of the Roman Empire in 380, but split into various churches from its beginning. An attempt was made by the Byzantine Empire to unify Christianity, but this formally failed with the East, West division of 1054. In the 16th century the birth and growth of Protestantism further split Christianity into many denominations.

Islam - Islam is based on the teachings of the Qur'an. Although it considers Muhammad to be the Seal of Prophets, Islam teaches that every Prophet preached Islam, providing a historical back-story for the religion by independently recognizing Jewish and Christian prophets and adding others. The teachings of the Qur'an are presented as the direct revelation and words of Allah. Islam, meaning "Submission to God", like Judaism, it has a strictly unitary conception of God, called Tawhid or Monotheism. Early disputes over who would lead Muslims following the death of Muhammad led to a split between Sunni and Shia, they are Islam's two main denominations.

God

The Abrahamic God is conceived of as Eternal, Omnipotent, Omniscient and the Creator of the Universe. God is further held to have the properties of Holiness, Justice, Omni benevolence and Omnipresence. Proponents of Abrahamic faiths believe that God is also Transcendent but at the same time Personal and Involved, listening to Prayer and reacting to the actions of his creatures.



God in Judaism

The Star of David or Magen David, is a generally recognized symbol of modern Jewish identity and Judaism. In Jewish theology, God is strictly monotheistic. God is an absolute one, indivisible and incomparable being who is the ultimate cause of all existence. Jewish tradition teaches that the true aspect of God is incomprehensible and unknowable, and that it is only God's revealed aspect that brought the universe into existence, and interacts with mankind and the world. In Judaism, the one God of Israel is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,

who is the guide of the world, delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt and gave them 613 commandments at Mount Sinai as described in the Torah. The nation God of the Israelites has a proper name, Jehovah and Tiberian in the Hebrew Bible. The name YHWH (Iron Age kingdoms of Israel).



God in Christianity

The Christian cross or crux is the best-known religious symbol of Christianity; this version is known as a Latin cross. In Christian theology, God is the eternal being who created and preserved the world. Christians believe God to be both transcendent and immanent (involved in the world). Early Christian views of God were expressed in the Pauline Epistles and the early creeds, which proclaimed one God and the Divinity of Jesus. Around the year 200, Tertullian formulated a version of the doctrine of the trinity which clearly affirmed the divinity of Jesus and came close to the later definitive form produced by the Ecumenical council of 381. Trinitarians, who form the large majority of Christians, hold it as a core tenet of their faith. Nontrinitarian denominations define the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in a number of different ways the theology of the attributes and nature of God has been discussed since the earliest days of Christianity, with Irenaeus writing in the 2nd century: "His greatness lacks nothing, but contains all things". In the 8th century, John of Damascus listed eighteen attributes which remain widely accepted. As time passed, theologians developed systematic lists of these attributes, some based on statements in the Bible and others based on theological reasoning.



God in Islam

In Islamic theology, God in Arabic is Allah, the all-powerful and all-knowing creator, sustainer and ordainer and judge of everything in existence. Islam emphasizes that God is strictly singular (Tawhid) unique and inherently one, all-merciful and omnipotent. According to Islamic teachings, God exists without place and according to the Qur'an, "No vision can grasp him, but His grasp is over all vision: He is above all comprehension, yet is acquainted with all things." God, as referenced in the Qur'an, is the only God. Islamic tradition also describes the 99 names of God. These 99 names describe attributes of God, including Most Merciful, The Just, The Peace and Blessing, and the Guardian. Islamic belief in God is distinct from Christianity, that God has no progeny. This belief is summed up in chapter 112 of the Qur'an

titled Al-Ikhlās, which states "Say, he is Allah (who is) one, Allah is Eternal, the Absolute. He does not beget nor was he begotten. Nor is there to Him any equivalent".

Religious Scriptures

All these religions rely on a body of scriptures, some of which are considered to be the word of God, hence sacred and unquestionable and some the work of religious men, revered mainly by tradition and to the extent that they are considered to have been divinely inspired, if not dictated, by the divine being.

Judaism - The sacred scriptures of Judaism are the Tanakh, a Hebrew acronym standing for the Torah (law or teachings), Prophets and writings. These are complemented by and supplemented with various traditions: Midrash (2nd century scriptures), Mishnah (old Torah), the Talmud and collected rabbinical writings. The Tanakh or Hebrew Bible was composed between 1,400 BCE, and 400 BCE by Jewish prophets, kings and priests. The Hebrew text of the Tanakh, and the Torah in particular, is considered holy, down to the last letter: transcribing is done with painstaking care. An error in a single letter, ornamentation or symbol of the 300,000+ stylized letters that make up the Hebrew Torah text renders a Torah scroll unfit for use; hence the skills of a Torah scribe are specialist skills and a scroll takes considerable time to write and check.

Christianity - The Bible was transcribed in Belgium in 1407 for reading aloud in a monastery. The sacred scriptures of most Christian groups are the Old Testament and the New Testament. Latin Bibles originally contained 73 books; however, 7 books, collectively called the Apocrypha or Deuterocanonical depending on one's opinion of them, were removed by Martin Luther due to a lack of original Hebrew sources, and now vary on their inclusion between denominations. Greek Bibles contain additional materials. The New Testament comprises four accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus. The vast majority of Christian faiths recognize that the Gospels were passed on by oral tradition and were not set to paper until decades after the resurrection of Jesus, and that the extant versions are copies of those originals. The version of the Bible considered to be most valid has varied considerably: the Greek Septuagint, the Syriac Peshitta, the Latin Vulgate, the English King James version and the Russian Synodic Bible have been authoritative to different communities at different times. The sacred scriptures of the Christian Bible are complemented by a large body of writings by individual Christians and councils of Christian leaders. Some Christian churches and denominations consider certain additional writings to be binding; other Christian groups consider only the Bible to be binding.

Islam - Islam's holiest book is the Qur'an comprising of 114 chapters. However, Muslims also believe in the religious texts of Judaism and Christianity in their original forms, not the current versions. According to the Qur'an, the verses of the Qur'an were revealed by God through the Archangel Gabriel to Muhammad on several occasions. These revelations were written down and also memorized by hundreds of companions of Muhammad. These multiple sources were collected into one official copy. After the death of Mohammed, the Qur'an was copied on several copies and Caliph Uthman provided these copies to different cities within the Islamic Empire. The Qur'an mentions and reveres several of the Israelite prophets, including Moses and Jesus, among others. The stories of these prophets are very similar to those in the Bible. However, the detailed precepts of the Tanakh and the New Testament are not adopted outright; they are replaced by new commandments accepted as revealed directly by God through Gabriel to Muhammad and arranged in the Qur'an. Like the Jews with the Torah, Muslims consider the original Arabic text of the Qur'an as uncorrupted and holy to the last letter, and any translations are considered to be interpretations of the meaning of the Qur'an, as only the original Arabic text is considered to be the divine scripture. Like the Rabbinic oral Law to the Hebrew Bible, the Qur'an is complemented by the hadith, a set of books by later authors recording the sayings of Prophet Muhammad. The hadith interpret and elaborate Qur'anic precepts. Islamic scholars have categorized each Hadith at one of the following levels of authenticity: genuine (sahîh), fair (Hasan) or weak (da'îf). By the 9th century, six major hadith collections were accepted as reliable.

- Sahîh al-Bukhari
- Sahih Muslim
- Sunan ibn Majah
- Sunan Abu Dawud
- Jami al-Tirmidhi
- Sunan an-Nasa'ii

Shia Muslims, however, refer to other authenticated hadiths instead. They are known collectively as "The Four Books". The Hadith and the life story of Muhammad form the Sunnah, an authoritative supplement to the Qur'an. The legal opinions of Islamic experts provide another source for the daily practice and interpretation of Islamic tradition. The Qur'an contains repeated references to the "religion of Abraham". In the Qur'an, this expression refers specifically to Islam; sometimes in contrast to Christianity and Judaism, as in Surah 2:135, for example: 'they say: "Become Jews or Christians if you want to be guided to salvation." Say O

Muslims: "No! I would rather be of the religion of Abraham, the True, for he joined not gods with God." In the Qur'an, Abraham is declared to have been a Muslim, a primordial monotheist, not a Jew or a Christian.

End Times and Afterlife - Eschatology

In the major Abrahamic religions, there exists the expectation of an individual who will herald the end time or bring about the Kingdom of God on Earth; in other words, the Messianic prophecy. Judaism awaits the coming of a Jewish Messiah; the Jewish concept of Messiah differs from the Christian concept in several significant ways, despite the same term being applied to both. The Jewish Messiah is not seen as a "god", but as a mortal man who by his holiness is worthy of that description. His appearance is not the end of history, rather it signals the coming of the world to come. Christianity awaits the second coming of Christ, though preterism (past is fulfilled) believe this has already happened. Islam awaits both the second coming of Jesus to complete his life and die) and the coming of Mahdi, Sunnis believe in his first incarnation whilst the Shia's believe the return of Muhammad al-Mahdi.

Most Abrahamic religions agree that a human being comprises of a body, which dies, and the soul, which is capable of remaining alive beyond human death and carries the persons essence, and that God will judge each person's life accordingly after death. The focus as well as the precise criteria and end result, differ between religions.¹

Judaism - Judaism's views on the afterlife are quite diverse. This can be attributed to the fact that although there clearly are traditions in the Hebrew Bible of an afterlife, Judaism focuses on this life and how to lead a holy life to please God, rather than a future reward.

Christianity - Christians have more diverse and definite teachings on the end times and what constitutes afterlife. Most Christian approaches either include different abodes for the dead Heaven, Hell, Limbo, Purgatory or universal reconciliation because all souls are made in the image of God. A small minority teach annihilations, the doctrine that those persons who are not reconciled to God simply cease to exist.

Islam - In Islam, God is said to be "Most Compassionate and Most Merciful". However, God is also "Most Just"; Islam prescribes a literal Hell for those who disobey God and commit gross sins. Those who obey God and submit to God will be rewarded with their own place in Paradise. While sinners are punished with fire, there are also many other forms of punishment described, depending on the sin committed; Hell is divided into numerous levels. Those who worship and remember God are promised eternal abode in a physical and spiritual Paradise.

Heaven is divided into eight levels, with the highest level of Paradise being the reward of those who have been most virtuous, the prophets and those killed while fighting for Allah (martyrs). Upon repentance to God, many sins can be forgiven, on the condition they are not repeated, as God is supremely merciful. Additionally, those who believe in God, but have led sinful lives, may be punished for a time, and then eventually released into Paradise. If anyone dies in a state of shirk (i.e. associating God in any way, such as claiming that He is equal with anything or denying Him), this is not pardonable and he or she will stay in Hell forever. Once a person is admitted to Paradise, this person will abide there for eternity.

Worship and Religious Rites

Worship, ceremonies and religion-related customs differ substantially among the Abrahamic religions. Among the few similarities are a seven-day cycle in which one day is nominally reserved for worship, prayer or other religious activities, i.e. Shabbat, Sabbath and Jumu'ah: this custom is related to the biblical story of Genesis, where God created the universe in six days and rested on the seventh.

Judaism - Orthodox Judaism practice is guided by the interpretation of the Torah and the Talmud. Before the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, Jewish priests offered sacrifices there two times a day; since then, the practice has been replaced, until the Temple is rebuilt by Jewish men who are required to pray three times daily, including the chanting of the Torah, and facing in the direction of Jerusalem's Temple Mount. Other practices include circumcision, dietary laws, Shabbat, Passover, Torah study, Tefillin, purity and other. Conservative Judaism Reform Judaism and Reconstructionist movement all move away in different degrees, from the strict tradition of the law. Jewish women's prayer obligations vary by denomination; in contemporary orthodox practice, women do not read from the Torah and are only required to say certain parts of these daily services. All versions of Judaism share a common, specialized calendar, containing many festivals. The calendar is lunisolar, with lunar months and a solar year (an extra month is added every second or third year to allow the shorter lunar year to "catch up" to the solar year). All streams observe the same festivals, but some emphasize them differently. As is usual with its extensive law system, the Orthodox have the most complex manner of observing the festivals, while the Reform pay more attention to the simple symbolism of each one.

Christianity - Christian worship varies from denomination to denomination, Individual prayer is usually not ritualized, while group prayer may be ritual or non-ritual according to the occasion. During church services some form of worship is frequently followed. Rituals are performed

during sacraments, which also vary from denomination to denomination and usually include Baptism and Communion, and may also include Confirmation, Confession, Last Rites and Holy Orders. Catholic worship practice is governed by the Roman Missal and other documents. Individuals, churches and denominations place different emphasis on ritual, some denominations consider most ritual activity optional.

Islam - The followers of Islam (Muslims) are to observe the Five Pillars of Islam. The first pillar is belief in the oneness of Allah, and in Muhammad as his final and most perfect prophet. The second is to pray five times daily (salat) towards the direction (Qibla) of the Kaaba in Mecca. The third pillar is alms giving (Zakat), a portion of one's wealth given to the poor or to other specified causes, which means the giving of a specific share of one's wealth and savings to persons or causes, as is commanded in the Qur'an and elucidated as to specific percentages for different kinds of income and wealth in the hadith. The normal share to be paid is two and a half percent of one's earnings: this increases if labor was not required and increases further if only capital or possessions alone were required, and increases to 50% on "unearned wealth" such as treasure-finding, and to 100% on wealth that is considered haram, as part of attempting to make atonement for the sin, such as that gained through financial interest (Riba).

Ramadan is the fourth pillar of Islam, which all Muslims after the age of puberty and in good health and are not menstruating are bound to observe, missed days of the fast for any reason must be made up, unless there be a permanent illness, such as diabetes, that prevents a person from ever fasting. In such a case, restitution must be made by feeding one poor person for each day missed. Finally, Muslims are also required, if physically able, to undertake a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in one's life: it is strongly recommended to do it as often as possible, preferably once a year. Only individuals whose financial position and health are severely insufficient are exempt from making Hajj. During this pilgrimage, the Muslims spend three to seven days in worship, performing several strictly defined rituals, the most notably being the Tawaf, circumambulating the Kaaba among millions of other Muslims and the stoning of the devil at Mina. At the end of the Hajj, some men shave their heads and some cut their hair short, then sheep and other halal animals are slaughtered as a ritual sacrifice by bleeding out at the neck according to a strictly prescribed ritual slaughter method similar to the Jewish kashrut, to commemorate the moment when, according to Islamic tradition, Allah replaced Abraham's son Ishmael (contrasted with the Judeo-Christian tradition that Isaac was the intended sacrifice) with a sheep, thereby preventing human sacrifice. The meat of these animals are then distributed locally to the needy and relatives. Finally the hajj removes the Ihram and the hajj is complete.

Circumcision

Judaism practices circumcision for males as a matter of religious obligation at the age of 8 days old, as does Islam as part of the Sunnah. Western Christianity replaced that custom with the baptism ceremony varying according to the denomination, but generally including immersion, aspersion or anointment with water. The early church decided that circumcision is not required for Gentile Christians. The council of Florence in the 15th century prohibited it. By the 21st century, the Catholic Church had adopted a neutral position on the practice, as long as it is not practiced as an initiation ritual. Catholic scholars make various arguments in support of the idea that this policy is not in contradiction with the previous edicts. Many countries with majorities of Christian adherents have low circumcision rates, while both religious and non-religious circumcision is common in many predominantly Christian countries. Male circumcision is among the rites of Islam and is part of the fitrah or the innate disposition and natural character and instinct of the human creation.

Food Restrictions, Kashrut (Judaism), Halal (Islamic), Ital (Rastafarian)

Judaism and Islam have strict dietary laws, with permitted food known as Kosher in Judaism, and Halal in Islam. These two religions prohibit the consumption of pork; Islam prohibits the consumption of alcoholic beverages of any kind. Halal restrictions can be seen as a modification of the Kashrut dietary laws, so many kosher foods are considered halal; especially in the case of meat, which Islam prescribes must be slaughtered in the name of God. Hence, in many places Muslims used to consume kosher food. However, some foods not considered kosher are considered halal in Islam. With rare exceptions, Christians do not consider the Old Testament's strict food laws as relevant for today's church; Most Protestants have no set food laws, but there are minority exceptions. The Roman Catholic Church believes in observing abstinence and penance. For example, all Fridays through the year and the time of Lent are penitential days. The law of abstinence requires a Catholic from 14 years of age until death to abstain from eating meat on Fridays in honor of the Passion of Jesus on Good Friday. Eastern Rite Catholics have their own penitential practices as specified by the Code of Canons for the Eastern Churches. The seventh day Adventist Church (SDA) embraces numerous Old Testament rules and regulations such as tithing (charity percentage donation). Sabbath observance and Jewish food laws require them not to eat pork, shellfish or other foods considered unclean under the Old Covenant. The "Fundamental Beliefs" of the SDA state that their members "are to adopt the most healthful diet possible and abstain from the unclean foods identified in the Scriptures. In the Christina Bible, the consumption of strangled

animals and of blood was forbidden by Apostolic Decree and are still forbidden in the Greek Orthodox Church. Jehovah's Witnesses abstain from eating blood and from blood transfusions. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints prohibits the consumption of alcohol, coffee and non-herbal tea. While there is not a set of prohibited food, the Church encourages members to refrain from eating excessive amounts of red meat.

Sabbath Observance

Sabbath in the Bible is a weekly day of rest and time of worship. It is observed differently in Judaism and Christianity and informs a similar occasion in several other Abrahamic faiths. Though many viewpoints and definitions have arisen over the millennia, most originate in the same textual tradition. Though not a day of rest (creation does not make God tired and therefore He did not rest on the 7th day in Muslim belief), Islam holds Friday as a day of special prayer.

God Fearers

Judaism - Judaism accepts converts, but has had no explicit missionaries since the end of the second Temple era. Judaism states that non-Jews can achieve righteousness by following Noah Laws, a set of moral imperatives that, according to the Talmud, were given by God as a binding set of laws for the "children of Noah", that is, all of humanity. The Rambam (Rabbi Moses Maimonides, one of the major Jewish teachers) commented: "Quoting from our sages, the righteous people from other nations have a place in the world to come, if they have acquired what they should learn about the Creator". Because the commandments applicable to the Jews are much more detailed and onerous than Noah Laws, Jewish scholars have traditionally maintained that it is better to be a good non-Jew than a bad Jew, thus discouraging conversion.

Christianity - Christianity encourages evangelism (spreading Christianity through the gospel). Many Christian organizations, especially Protestant churches, send missionaries to non-Christian communities throughout the world. Forced conversions to Catholicism have been alleged at various points throughout history. The most prominently cited allegations are the conversions of the pagans after Constantine; of Muslims, Jews and Eastern Orthodox during the Crusades; of Jews and Muslims during the time of the Spanish inquisition, they were offered the choice of exile, conversion or death; and of the Aztecs by Hernan Cortes, who forced conversions to Protestantism may have occurred as well, notably during the reformation, especially in England and Ireland. Forced conversions are condemned as sinful

by major denominations such as the Roman Catholic Church, which officially states that forced conversions pollute the Christian religion and offend human dignity, so that past or present offenses are regarded as a scandal (a cause of unbelief). According to Pope Paul VI, "It is one of the major tenets of Catholic doctrine that man's response to God in faith must be free: no one therefore is to be forced to embrace the Christian faith against his own will". The Roman Catholic Church has declared that Catholics should fight anti-Semitism.

Islam - Da'wah is an important Islamic concept which denotes the preaching of Islam. Some pursue Islamic studies specifically to perform Da'wah. Mosques and other Islamic centers sometimes spread Da'wah activities similar to evangelical churches. Others consider being open to the public and answering questions to be Da'wah. Recalling Muslims to faith and expanding their knowledge can also be considered Da'wah. In Islamic theology, the purpose of Da'wah is to invite people, both Muslims and non-Muslims, to understand the commandments of God as expressed in the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet, as well as to inform them about Muhammad. Da'wah produces converts to Islam, which in turn grows the size of the Muslim Ummah.

Triologue

Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Dialogue puts the importance of interfaith dialogue starkly: "We human beings today face a stark choice: dialogue or death!" Four reasons why the three Abrahamic religions should engage in dialogue:

- They are the same Hebraic roots and claim Abraham as their originating ancestor.
- All three traditions are religions of ethical monotheism.
- They are all historical religions.
- All three are religions of revelation.

Divisive matters should be addressed. In 2012, a thesis Dialogue between Christians, Jews and Muslims argues that the paramount need is for barriers against non-defensive dialogue conversations between Christians, Jews and Muslims to be dismantled to facilitate development of common understandings on matters that are deeply divisive. The thesis say, this has not been done.

Violent Conflicts between Abrahamic Religions

In most of their common history, the three Abrahamic religions have been ignorant about each other, especially in the case of Christians and Muslims. The coexistence in the 14th and 15th

centuries, Muslims, Christians and Jews co-existed in relative peace, but, otherwise, there has been very little genuine dialogue between believers in these Abrahamic religions. They have kept their distance from one another. There has been very little genuine dialogue.

Examples of violent conflicts:

- Christians were killed by Jews during the Bar Kochba revolt.
- The Yemeni Jewish Himyar tribe, led by King Dhu Nuwas, massacred 20,000 Christians in 524.
- The Sasanian conquest and occupation of Jerusalem involved the massacre of Christians by Jews.
- The wars between the emerging Islamic Caliphates and the Christian Byzantine or Eastern Roman Empire between the 7th and the 11th centuries were a series of military, political and religious conflicts which led to the Islamization of large territories in the near East such as Egypt and Syria.
- The Crusades (end of 11th – end of 13th century) were a series of military expeditions from Western Europe to the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean: a rather unsuccessful attempt by Western (Catholic) Christians to conquer what was perceived by all Christians as the Holy Land from its Muslim inhabitants. In passing, Crusades were also marked with conflicts between Western and Eastern Christians and unilateral damage inflicted by Western Christians to Jews.
- The conquest and the following Reconquista of Spain, and founding of Portugal (beginning of 8th – end of 15th century) were a series of wars between Muslims and Christians in the Iberian Peninsula resulting in the founding of several Muslim and Christian Medieval states and the final victory of the Catholic crown of Castile and Aragon against the Muslim Emirate of Granada.
- The Ottoman conquest of the Balkan Peninsula (mid-14th – end of 15th century) followed by a series of wars between the Islamic Ottoman Empire and various Christian powers and alliances (end of 14th – beginning of 20th century) was an important political, military and cultural process for South-Eastern Europe resulting in the fall of the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire and its successor states and finally leading to the emerging of several modern nations in that region.
- The Spanish inquisition was an attempt by the Christian Catholic church in Spain in the wake of the centuries long Reconquista to suppress or expel Jews and Muslims and to prosecute Christian heretics. Openly Jewish and Muslim people were expelled rather than killed, but many submitted to forced conversion to Catholicism to avoid expulsion. The inquisitors often did not trust the converts and persecuted them cruelly

for being secret adherents of their original religions which was often true but sometimes fabricated. Jewish forced converts were known as "anusim," or sometimes by the pejorative "morrano (pig)."

- At various points in history massacre against Jews were common in Christian Europe, and in many Islamic areas.
- Persecution of Baha'is and Political accusations against the Baha'is faith review the substantive efforts in parts of the world against the Baha'is and their religion.

Between branches of the same Abrahamic religion

- The fourth crusade and subsequent wars between Catholic Europeans and the Orthodox Byzantine Greeks following the great split.
- The Christian reformation of the 16th century was an attempt towards a religious reform in the Catholic Christian Church which resulted in a series of religious wars between Catholic and emerging Reformist/Protestant Christian forces during the 16th and 17th centuries throughout Western Europe.
- The Anglo-Spanish war (1585-1604) was due to religious conflict between Catholic and Protestant Christians and economic causes.
- There have been many violent conflicts between the Sunni and Shi'a branches of Islam.
- After the 2003 invasion of Iraq by western coalition there was armed conflict between branches of Islam, with fighting and bombings, even of mosques.

Between Abrahamic religions and non-adherents

- Religious hostility fueled the Jewish-Roman wars.
- Many Roman emperors persecuted Christians.
- In the initial expansion of both Christianity and Islam, a number of pagan communities were converted by force.
- Wars between the Hindu Majapahit Empire (modern-day, Indonesia) and Islamic states led to the fall of Hinduism in South East Asia.
- The Catholic inquisition also targeted non-believers in the orthodox doctrines of Roman Catholicism and many lost their livelihoods or their lives.
- Christian evangelism was a partial motivation for the colonization of the Americas.
- Communist dictatorships practice a policy of religious oppression in favor of personality cults revering the leader or the state.
- Up to 1 million atheists, Buddhists and Javanists were massacred by Muslims and Hindus in 1960s Indonesia.

Other Abrahamic Religions

Historically, the Abrahamic religions have been considered to be Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Some of this is due to the age and larger size of these three. The other, similar religions were seen as either too new to judge as being truly in the same class or too small to be of significance to the category. However, some of the restriction of Abrahamic to these three is due only to tradition in historical classification. Therefore, restricting the category to these three religions has come under criticism. The religions listed below claim Abrahamic classification, either by the religions themselves, or by scholars who study them.

Baha'i Faith

The Baha'i Faith, dates only to the late 19th century, though smaller and younger than the well-known Abrahamic religions. The religion is almost entirely contained in a single, organized community with international, national, regional, and local administration, without sects or subdivisions and is recognized as the second-most geographically widespread religion after Christianity. The association of Religion data archives estimated some 7.3 million Baha'is in 2005 and the only religion to consistently surpass population growth in each major region of the planet over the last century, often growing at twice the rate of the population. Baha'u'llah (1817-1892), the founder, affirms the highest religious station for Abraham and generally for prophets mentioned among the other Abrahamic religions and has claimed a lineage of descent from Abraham through Keturah and Sarah. Additionally Baha'u'llah actually did lose a son, Mirza Mihdi. Baha'u'llah, then in prison, praised his son and connected the subsequent easing of restrictions to his son's dying prayer and compared it to the intended sacrifice of Abraham's son. The religion also shares many of the same commonalities of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The religion emphasizes monotheism and believes in one eternal transcendent God, the station of the founders of the major religions as Manifestations of God come with revelation as a series of interventions by God in human history that has been progressive and each preparing the way for the next. There is no definitive list of Manifestations of God, but Baha'u'llah and Abdul Baha referred to several personages as Manifestations; they include individuals generally not recognized by other Abrahamic religions, Krishna, Zoroaster and Buddha and general statements go further to other cultures.

Arab Christians

They descended from ancient Arab Christian clans that did not convert to Islam, such as the Kahlani Qahtani tribes of ancient Yemen who settled in Transjordan and Syria as well as

Arabized Christians, such as Melkites and Antiochian Greek Christians. Forming Greek Orthodox and Latin Christian communities, are estimated to be 520,000 - 703,000 in Syria, 221,000 in Jordan, 127,000 in Israel and around 50,000 in Palestine. There is also a sizable Arab Christian Orthodox community in Lebanon and marginal communities in Iraq, Turkey and Egypt. Emigrants from Arab Christian communities make up a significant proportion of the Middle Eastern diaspora, with sizable population concentrations across the Americas, most notably in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, and the US. The first Arab tribes to adopt Christianity were likely Nabataeans and Ghassanids. During the fifth and sixth centuries, the Ghassanids, who adopted Monophysitism, formed one of the most powerful confederations allied to Christian Byzantium, being a buffer against the pagan tribes of Arabia. The last king of the Lakhmids, Al-Nu'man Mundhir, a client of the Sasanian Empire in the late sixth century, also converted to Christianity. Arab Christians played important roles in al-Nahda movement in modern times, and because Arab Christians formed the educated upper class and the bourgeoisie, they have had a significant impact in politics, business and culture of the Arab World. Christians are relatively wealthy, well educated, and politically moderate. Arab Christians are not the only Christian group in the Middle East with significant non-Arab indigenous Christian communities of Chaldeans, Arameans, Armenians and others. Although sometimes classified as "Arab Christians", the largest Middle Eastern Christian groups of Maronites and Copts often claim non-Arab ethnicity: a significant proportion of Maronites claim descent from the ancient Phoenicians while Copts also eschew an Arab identity, preferring an Ancient Egyptian one.

History

Arab Christians are indigenous people of Western Asia with a presence there predating the seventh-century early Muslim conquests in the fertile crescent, There were many Arab tribes which adhered to Christianity beginning with the 1st century, including the Nabateans and the Ghassanids. Nabateans were possibly among the first Arab tribes to arrive to the southern Levant in the very late first millennium. The Nabataeans initially adopted pagan beliefs, but they became Christians by the time of the Byzantine period around the 4th century. The new Arab invaders, who soon pressed forward into their seats found the remnants of the Nabataeans transformed into peasants. Their lands were divided between the new Qahtanite Arab tribal kingdoms of the Byzantine vassals, the Ghassanids and the Himyaritic Kingdom, the Kindah in the North Arabia. The tribes of Tayy, Banu Abdul Qays and Taghlib are also known to have included many Christians in the pre-Islamic period. The southern Arabian city of Najran was a center of Arabian Christianity, made famous by the persecution by one of the kings of Yemen, Dhu Nawas, who was himself an enthusiastic convert to Judaism. The leader

of the Arabs of Najran during the period of persecution, al-Harith, was sainted by the Catholic Church. By the fourth century, a significant number of Christians occupied the Sinai Peninsula, Mesopotamia and the Arabian Peninsula. The New Testament has a biblical account of Arab conversion to Christianity recorded in the book of Acts. When Saint Peter preaches to the people of Jerusalem, they ask, "And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians, we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." Arab Christians are thus one of the oldest Christian communities. The first mention of Christianity in Arabia occurs in the New Testament as the Apostle Paul refers to his journey in Arabia. Christians existed in Arab lands from at least the 3rd century onward. Also, there were Christian influences coming from Ethiopia in particular in pre-Islamic times, and some Hejazi's, including a cousin of Muhammad's wife Khadija, according to some sources, adopted this faith, while some Ethiopian Christians may have lived in Mecca.

After Islamic Conquest

Following the fall of large portions of former Byzantine and Sasanian provinces to the Arab armies, a large indigenous Christian population of varying ethnicities came under Arab Muslim dominance. Historically, a number of minority Christian sects were persecuted under Byzantine rule. As Muslim army commanders expanded their empire and attacked countries in Asia, North Africa and southern Europe, they would offer three conditions to their enemies: convert to Islam, pay jizyah (tax) every year or face war to death. Those who refused war and refused to convert were deemed to have agreed to pay jizyah. It is a common agreement that after the rapid expansion of Islam from the 7th century onward, many Christians chose not to convert to Islam. Many scholars and intellectuals believed Christians in the Arab world have made significant contributions to the Arab civilization since the 7th century and still do. Some of the top poets at certain times were Arab Christians and many Arab and non-Arab Christians were physicians, writers, government officials and people of literature. Under Arab Muslim rule, Christians were protected and began to enjoy more religious freedom under initial Arab Muslim occupation than they had under Byzantine rule, but they were also often a target of persecution. As People of the Book, Christians in the region were given certain rights under Islamic Law to practice their religion, including having Christian law used for rulings, settlements or sentences in court. In contrast to Muslims, who paid the Zakat tax, they paid the Jizyah, an obligatory tax. The jizyah was not levied on slaves, women, children, monks, the old, the sick or the poor. In return, non-Muslim citizens were permitted to practice their faith, to enjoy a measure of communal autonomy, to be entitled to Muslim state's protection from outside aggression, to be exempted from military service and Zakat.

Post-Ottoman era

Some of the most influential Arab nationalists were Arab Christians, like Syrian intellectual Constantin Zureiq. Several Arab Christians edited the leading newspapers in Mandatory Palestine including Falastin, edited by the Isa brothers (Issa El-Issa), and Al-Karmil, which was edited by Najib Nassar. Khalil al-Sakakini, a prominent Jerusalemite, was also an Arab Orthodox, as was George Antonius, author of *Awakening*. During the 1948 Arab–Israeli War, a number of Arab Greek Orthodox communities were affected. In addition around 20,000 Christians fled Haifa, 20,000 fled West Jerusalem, 700 fled Acre and 10,000 fled Jaffa. However prominent members remained such as Tawfik Toubi, Emile Touma and Emile Habibi and they went on to be leaders of the Communist party in Israel. George Habash, founder of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine was Arab Christian. The suicide bomber Jules Jammal, a Syrian military officer, who blew himself up while ramming a French ship, was also an Arab Christian. Many Palestinian Christians were also active in the formation and governing of the Palestinian National Authority since 1994. With the events of the Arab Winter, the Syrian Arab Christian community was heavily hit in line with other Christian communities of Syria, victimized by war and Jihadist forces. Many Christians, including Arab Christians, were displaced and/or fled Syria on the course of the Syrian Civil War.

Ancient Period

Palestine in 1020 was among the earliest in the world to see human habitation and agricultural communities. During the Bronze Age, independent Canaanite city-states were established and were influenced by the surrounding civilizations of ancient Egypt, Crete, and Syria. Between 1550 and 1400, the Canaanite cities became vassals to the Egyptian New Kingdom who held power until the 1178 during the wider Bronze Age collapse. The Israelites emerged from a dramatic social transformation that took place in the people of the central hill country of Canaan around 1200 with no signs of violent invasion or even of peaceful infiltration of a clearly defined ethnic group from elsewhere. The region became part of the Neo-Assyrian Empire from 740, which was itself replaced by the Neo-Babylonian Empire in 527. According to the Bible, a war with Egypt culminated in 586 when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonian king and local leaders of the region of Judea were deported to Babylonia. In 539, the Babylonian empire was replaced by the Achaemenid Empire. According to the Bible and implications from the Cyrus Cylinder, the exiled population of Judea was allowed to return to Jerusalem. Southern Palestine became a province of the Achaemenid Empire, called Idumea and the evidence from ostraca suggests that a Nabataean type society, since the Idumeans appear to be connected to the Nabataeans, took shape in southern Palestine in the 4th century

and that the Qedarite Arab Kingdom penetrated throughout this area through the period of Persian and Hellenistic dominion.

Classical Antiquity

Herod's Temple in Jerusalem functioned as the spiritual center of the various sects of second Temple Judaism until it was destroyed in 70 CE. In 330 BCE, Macedonian ruler Alexander the Great conquered the region, which changed hands several times during the wars of the Diadochi and later Syrian Wars. It ultimately fell to the Seleucid Empire between 219–200 BCE. In 116 BCE, a Seleucid civil war resulted in the independence of certain regions including the Hasmonean principality in the Judean Mountains. From 110 BCE the Hasmoneans extended their authority over much of Palestine, creating a Judean Samaritan Galilean alliance. The Judeans control over the wider region resulted in it also becoming known as Judaea, a term that had previously only referred to the smaller region of the Judean Mountains. Between 73–63 BCE, the Roman Republic extended its influence into the region in the Third War, conquering Judea in 63 BCE and splitting the former Hasmonean Kingdom into five districts. The three-year Ministry of Jesus, culminating in his crucifixion, is estimated to have occurred from 28–30 CE, although the historicity of Jesus is disputed by a minority of scholars. In 70 CE, Titus sacked Jerusalem, resulting in the dispersal of the city's Jews and Christians to Yavne and Pella. In 132 CE, Hadrian joined the province of Judaea with Galilee and the Paralia to form new province of Syria, Palestine and Jerusalem. Between 259 and 272 the region fell under the rule of Odaenathus as King of the Palmyrene Empire. Following the victory of Christian emperor Constantine in the Civil wars of the Tetrarchy, the Christianization of the Roman Empire began, and in 326, Constantine's mother Saint Helena visited Jerusalem and began the construction of churches and shrines. Palestine became a center of Christianity, attracting numerous monks and religious scholars. The Samaritan Revolts during this period caused their near extinction. In 614 CE, Palestine was annexed by another Persian dynasty; the Sassanid's, until returning to Byzantine control in 628 CE.

Middle Ages



The Dome of the Rock, the world's first great work of Islamic architecture, constructed in 691



Minaret of the White Mosque in Ramla, constructed in 1318

Arab Architecture

Palestine was conquered by the Islamic Caliphate, in the beginning of 634 CE. In 636, the Battle of Yarmouk during the Muslim conquest of the Levant marked the start of Muslim hegemony over the region, which became known as Jund Filastin within the province of Greater Syria. In 661, with the assassination of Ali, Muaawiyah became the Caliph of the Islamic world after being crowned in Jerusalem. The Dome of the Rock was completed in 691, it was the world's first great work of Islamic architecture. Majority of the population was Christian and was to remain so until the conquest of Saladin in 1187. The Muslim conquest apparently had little impact on social and administrative continuities for several decades. The word 'Arab' at the time referred predominantly to Bedouin nomads, though Arab settlement is attested in the Judean highlands and near Jerusalem by the 5th century, and some tribes had converted to Christianity. The local population engaged in farming, which was considered demeaning, and were called Nabaṭ, referring to Aramaic-speaking villagers. A hadith, brought in the name of a Muslim freedman who settled in Palestine, ordered the Muslim Arabs not to settle in the villages, "for he who abides in villages it is as if he abides in graves". The Umayyad, who had spurred a strong economic resurgence in the area, were replaced by the Abbasids in 750. Ramia became the administrative center for the following centuries, while Tiberius became a thriving center of Muslim scholarship. From 878, Palestine was ruled from Egypt by semi self-governing rulers for almost a century, beginning with the Turkish freeman Ahmad ibn Tulun, for whom both Jews and Christians prayed when he lay dying and ending with the Ikhshidid (ruled Egypt from 935-969) rulers. Deep respect for Jerusalem increased during this period, with many Egyptian rulers choosing to be buried there. However, the later period became characterized by persecution of Christians as the threat from Byzantium grew. The Fatimid's (Ismaili Shia Islamic Caliphate), with a predominantly Berber (indigenous ethnic

group of North Africa) army, conquered the region in 970, a date that marks the beginning of a period of unceasing warfare between numerous enemies, which destroyed Palestine and devastated its Jewish population. Between 1071 & 73, Palestine was captured by the Great Seljuq Empire, only to be recaptured by the Fatimid's in 1098, who then lost the region to the Crusaders in 1099. Their control of Jerusalem and most of Palestine lasted almost a century until their defeat by Saladin's forces in 1187, after which most of Palestine was controlled by the Ayyubids (Kurdish rule in the 12th and 13th century). A rump crusader state in the northern coastal cities survived for another century, but, despite seven further crusades, the Crusaders were no longer a significant power in the region. The fourth Crusade, which did not reach Palestine, led directly to the decline of the Byzantine Empire, dramatically reducing Christian influence throughout the region.



The Crusader fortress in Acre, also known as the Hospitalet (Charitable religious order) Fortress was built during the 12th century. The Mamluk Sultanate (Medieval realm) was indirectly created in Egypt as a result of the seventh crusade. The Mongol Empire reached Palestine for the first time in 1260, beginning with the Mongol raids into Palestine under Nestorian Christian general Kitbqa, and reaching an apex at the pivotal Battle of Ain Jalut, where they were routed by the Mamluks (Muslim slave soldiers).

Ottoman era

In 1486, hostilities broke out between the Mamluks and the Ottoman Empire in a battle for control over western Asia, the Ottomans conquered Palestine in 1516. Between the mid-16th and 17th centuries, a close-knit alliance of three local dynasties, the Ridwans of Gaza, the Turabays of Al Lajjun and the Farrukhs of Nablus, governed Palestine on behalf of the Porte (imperial Ottoman government). In the 18th century, the Zaydani clan under the leadership of Zahir al Umar ruled large parts of Palestine autonomously until the Ottomans were able to defeat them in their Galilee strongholds in 1775-76. Zahir had turned the port city of Acre into a major regional power, partly fueled by his monopolization of the cotton and olive oil trade from Palestine to Europe. Acre's regional dominance was further elevated under Zahir's

successor Ahmad Jassar at the expense of Damascus. In 1830, on the eve of Muhammad Ali's invasion, the Porte transferred control of the sanjaks of Jerusalem and Nablus to Abdullah Pasha, the governor of Acre. According to Silverberg, in regional and cultural terms this move was important for creating an Arab Palestine detached from greater Syria. It was an attempt to reinforce the Syrian front in face of Muhammad Ali's invasion. Two years later, Palestine was conquered by Muhammad Ali's Egypt, but Egyptian rule was challenged in 1834 by a countrywide popular uprising against conscription (compulsory enlistment for state service) and other measures considered intrusive by the population. Its suppression devastated many Palestine's villages and major towns. In 1840, Britain intervened and returned control of the Levant to the Ottomans in return for further capitulations. The death of Aqil Agha marked the last local challenge to Ottoman centralization in Palestine, and beginning in the 1860s, Palestine underwent an acceleration in its socio-economic development, due to its incorporation into the global, and particularly European, economic pattern of growth. The beneficiaries of this process were Arabic-speaking Muslims and Christians who emerged as a new layer within the Arab elite. The end of the 19th century saw the beginning of Zionist immigration and the revival of the Hebrew language and culture. The movement was publicly supported by Britain during the European World War and with the Balfour Declaration of 1917.

British Mandate and Partition

The new era in Palestine. The arrival of Herbert Samuel as the first High Commissioner for Palestine in 1920. Samuel promoted Zionism within the British Cabinet, beginning with his 1915 memorandum entitled "The Future of Palestine".

History of Zionism and Israel

Palestine passport and Palestine coin. The mandatory authorities agreed a compromise position regarding the Hebrew name: in English and Arabic the name was simply "Palestine" but the Hebrew version also included the acronym "Land of Israel". The British began their Sinai and Palestine campaign in 1915. The war reached southern Palestine in 1917, progressing to Gaza and around Jerusalem by the end of the year. The British secured Jerusalem in December 1917. They moved into the Jordan valley in 1918 and a campaign by the Entente into northern Palestine led to victory at Megiddo in September. The British were formally awarded the mandate to govern the region in 1922. The non-Jewish Palestinians revolted in 1920, 1929 and 1936. In 1947, following European World War II and the holocaust, the British Government announced its desire to terminate the Mandate, and United Nations general assembly adopted in November 1947 a resolution 181 recommending partition into

an Arab state, a Jewish state and the Special International Regime for the City of Jerusalem. The Jewish leadership accepted the proposal, but the Arab Higher Committee rejected it; a civil war began immediately after the Resolution's adoption. The state of Israel was declared in 1948.

Post 1948

In the 1948 Arab–Israeli War, Israel captured and incorporated a further 26% of the Mandate territory, Jordan captured the region of Judea and Samaria, renaming it the "West Bank", while the Gaza Strip was captured by Egypt. Following the 1948 Palestinian exodus, also known as al-Nakba, the 700,000 Palestinians who fled or were driven out from their homes were not allowed to return following the Lausanne Conference of 1949. In the course of the Six-Day War in June 1967, Israel captured the rest of Palestine from Jordan and Egypt, and began a policy of establishing Jewish settlements in those territories. From 1987 to 1993, the First Palestinian Intifada against Israel took place, which included the Declaration of the State of Palestine in 1988 and ended with the 1993 Oslo Peace Accords and the creation of the Palestinian National Authority. In 2000, the Second Intifada (also called al-Aqsa Intifada) began, and Israel built a separation barrier. In the 2005 Israeli disengagement from Gaza, Israel withdrew all settlers and military presence from the Gaza Strip, but maintained military control of numerous aspects of the territory including its borders, air space and coast. Israel's ongoing military occupation of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem continues to be the world's longest military occupation in modern times. In November 2012, the status of Palestinian delegation in the United Nations was upgraded to non-member observer state as the State of Palestine.

Boundaries - Ancient and Medieval

The boundaries of Palestine have varied throughout history. The Jordan Rift Valley (comprising Wadi Arabah, the Dead Sea and River Jordan) has at times formed a political and administrative frontier, even within empires that have controlled both territories. At other times, such as during certain periods during the Hasmonean and Crusader states for example, as well as during the biblical period, territories on both sides of the river formed part of the same administrative unit. During the Arab Caliphate period, parts of southern Lebanon and the northern highland areas of Palestine and Jordan were administered as Jund al-Urdun (military district of Jordan), while the southern parts of the latter two formed part of Jund Dimashq (sub-province, Syria division), which during the 9th century was attached to the administrative unit of Jund Filastin. The boundaries of the area and the ethnic nature of the people referred to by

Herodotus in the 5th century BCE as Palaestina vary according to context. Sometimes, he uses it to refer to the coast north of Mount Carmel. Elsewhere, distinguishing the Syrians in Palestine from the Phoenicians (11th century civilization), he refers to their land as extending down all the coast from Phoenicia to Egypt. Latin in the 1st century CE, describes a region of Syria that was "formerly called Palaestina" among the areas of the Eastern Mediterranean. Since the Byzantine Period, the Byzantine borders of Palaestina have served as a name for the geographic area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. Under Arab rule, Filastin was used administratively to refer to what was under the Byzantines Palaestina Secunda (comprising Judaea and Samaria), while Palaestina Prima, comprising the Galilee region was renamed Urdunn, "Jordan" or Jund al-Urdunn.

Modern Period

Nineteenth-century sources refer to Palestine as extending from the sea to the caravan route, presumably the Hejaz-Damascus route east of the Jordan River valley. Others refer to it as extending from the sea to the desert. Prior to the Allied Powers victory in European World War I and the Partitioning of the Ottoman Empire, which created the British mandate in the Levant, most of the northern area of what is Jordan today formed part of the Ottoman Vilayet (district with its own governor) of Damascus (Syria), while the southern part of Jordan was part of the Vilayet of Hejaz. What later became Mandatory Palestine was in late Ottoman times divided between the Vilayet of Beirut (Lebanon) and the Sanjak of Jerusalem. The Zionist Organization provided its definition of the boundaries of Palestine in a statement to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. The British administered Mandatory Palestine after the European World War I, having promised to establish a homeland for Jewish people. The modern definition of the region follows the boundaries of that entity, which were fixed in the North and East in 1920-23 by the British Mandate for Palestine, including the Transjordan memorandum and the Paulet–Newcombe Agreement, and on the South by following the 1906 Turco-Egyptian boundary agreement.

Modern Evolution of Palestine

1916-1922 proposals: Three proposals for the post World War I administration of Palestine. The red line is the "International Administration" proposed in the 1916 Sykes–Picot Agreement, the dashed blue line is the 1919 Zionist Organization proposal at the Paris Peace Conference, and the thin blue line refers to the final borders of the 1923-48 Mandatory Palestine.

1937 proposal: The first official proposal for partition, published in 1937 by the Peel Commission. An ongoing British Mandate was proposed to keep "the sanctity of Jerusalem and Bethlehem", in the form of an enclave from Jerusalem to Jaffa, including Lydda and Ramle.

1947 proposal: Proposal per the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine (UN General Assembly Resolution 181 (II), 1947), prior to the 1948 Arab–Israeli War. The proposal included a Corpus Separatum for Jerusalem, extraterritorial crossroads between the non-contiguous areas, and Jaffa as an Arab exclave.



1947 (actual): Mandatory Palestine, showing Jewish-owned regions in Palestine as of 1947 in blue, constituting 6% of the total land area, of which more than half was held by the JNF and PICA. The Jewish population had increased from 83,790 in 1922 to 608,000 in 1946.



1948–1967 (actual): The Jordanian-annexed West Bank (light green) and Egyptian-occupied Gaza Strip (dark green), after the 1948 Arab–Israeli War, showing 1949 armistice lines.



1967–1994: During the Six-Day War, Israel captured the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights, together with the Sinai Peninsula (later traded for peace after the Yom Kippur War). In 1980–81 Israel annexed East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. Neither Israel's annexation nor Palestine's claim over East Jerusalem has been internationally recognized.



1994–2006: Under the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian National Authority was created to provide civil government in certain urban areas of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.



2006–present: After the Israeli disengagement from Gaza and clashes between the two main Palestinian parties following the Hamas electoral victory, two separate executive governments took control in Gaza and the West Bank.

Current Usage

The region of Palestine is the name for the Palestinian people and the culture of Palestine, both of which are defined as relating to the whole historical region, usually defined as the localities within the border of Mandatory Palestine. The 1968 Palestinian National Covenant described Palestine as the "homeland of the Arab Palestinian people", with the boundaries it had during the British Mandate. However, since the 1988 Palestinian Declaration of Independence, the term State of Palestine refers only to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This discrepancy was described by the Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas as a negotiated concession in a September 2011 speech to the United Nations: "we agreed to establish the State of Palestine on only 22% of the territory of historical Palestine - on all the Palestinian Territory occupied by Israel in 1967.

Demographic History of Palestine

Year	Jews	Christians	Muslims
1 st half of the 1 st Century	Majority	-	-
5 th Century	Minority	Majority	-
End of 12 th Century	Minority	Minority	Majority
14 th Century, before black death	Minority	Minority	Majority
14 th Century, after black death	Minority	Minority	Majority

Estimating the population of Palestine in antiquity relies on two methods – censuses and writings made at the times, and the scientific method based on excavations and statistical methods that consider the number of settlements at a particular age, area of each settlement, density factor for each settlement. According to Israeli archaeologists, the population of ancient Palestine did not exceed one million. By 300AD, Christianity had spread so significantly that Jews comprised only a quarter of the population.

Late Ottoman and British Mandate Periods

In the middle of the 1st century of the Ottoman rule, i.e. 1550 AD, Bernard Lewis in a study of Ottoman registers of the early Ottoman Rule of Palestine reports: From the mass of detail in the registers, it is possible to extract something like a general picture of the economic life of the country in that period. Out of a total population of about 300,000 souls, between a fifth and a quarter lived in the six towns of Jerusalem, Gaza, Safed, Nablus, Ramle and Hebron. The remainder consisted mainly of peasants, living in villages of varying size and engaged in agriculture. Their main food-crops were wheat and barley, supplemented by leguminous pulses, olives, fruit and vegetables. In and around most of the towns there was a considerable number of vineyards, orchards and vegetable gardens.

Year	Jews	Christians	Muslims
1533 - 1539	5000	6000	145,000
1690 - 1691	2000	11,000	219,000
1800	7000	22,000	246,000
1890	43,000	57,000	432,000
1914	94,000	70,000	525,000
1922	84,000	71,000	589,000
1931	175,000	89,000	760,000
1947	630,000	143,000	1,181,000

The population of Palestine in 1850 was about 350,000 inhabitants, 30% of whom lived in 13 towns; roughly 85% were Muslims, 11% were Christians and 4% Jews. According to Ottoman statistics, the population of Palestine in the early 19th century was 350,000, in 1860 it was 411,000 and in 1900 about 600,000 of whom 94% were Arabs. In 1914 Palestine had a population of 657,000 Muslim Arabs, 81,000 Christian Arabs and 59,000 Jews. In 1920, the League of Nations Interim Report on the Civil Administration of Palestine described the 700,000 people living in Palestine as follows: Of these, 235,000 live in the larger towns, 465,000 in the smaller towns and villages. Four-fifths of the whole population are Muslims. A small proportion of these are Bedouin Arabs; the remainder, although they speak Arabic and are termed Arabs, are largely of mixed race. Some 77,000 of the population are Christians, in large majority belonging to the Orthodox Church, and speaking Arabic. The minority are members of the Latin or Uniate Greek Catholic Church, and a small number are Protestants. The Jewish element of the population numbers 76,000. Almost all have entered Palestine during the last 40 years. Prior to 1850, there were in the country only a handful of Jews. In the following 30 years, a few hundred came to Palestine. Most of them were animated by religious motives; they came to pray and to die in the Holy Land, and to be buried in its soil. After the persecutions in Russia forty years ago, the movement of the Jews to Palestine assumed larger proportions.

Current Demographics

According to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, as of 2015, the total population of Israel was 8.5 million people, of which 75% were Jews, 21% Arabs and 4% others. Of the Jewish group, 76% were born in Israel; the rest were immigrants and 16% from Europe, the former Soviet republics, the Americas and 8% from Asia and Africa, including Arab countries. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics evaluations, in 2015 the Palestinian population of the West Bank was approximately 2.9 million and that of the Gaza Strip was 1.8 million. Gaza's population is expected to increase to 2.1 million people in 2020, leading to a density of more than 5,800 people per square kilometer. Both Israeli and Palestinian statistics include Arab residents of East Jerusalem in their reports. According to these estimates the total population in the region of Palestine, as defined as Israel and the Palestinian territories, stands approximately 12.8 million.

Islam

Islam is an Abrahamic monotheistic religion which professes that there is only one and incomparable God (Allah) and Muhammad is the last messenger of God. It is the world's second-largest religion and the fastest-growing major religion in the world, with over 1.7 billion followers or 23% of the global population, known as Muslims. Islam teaches that God is merciful, all-powerful, unique and He has guided mankind through revealed scriptures, signs and a line of prophets sealed by Muhammad. The primary scripture of Islam is the Qur'an, viewed by Muslims as the word of God. The hadith are accounts composed of Muhammad, called Sunnah's of Muhammad (c. 570–8 June 632 CE). The cities of Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem are home to three holiest sites in Islam. Muslims believe that Islam is the original, complete and universal version of a prehistoric faith that was revealed many times before through prophets including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. As for the Qur'an, Muslims consider it to be the unaltered and final revelation of God. Religious concepts and practices include the five pillars of Islam, which are obligatory acts of worship, and following Islamic law, which touches on virtually every aspect of life and society, from banking and welfare to women and the environment. Like other Abrahamic religions, Islam also teaches resurrection of the dead, a final tribulation and eternal division of the righteous and wicked. Islamic apocalyptic literature describing Armageddon is often known as Fitna or Malhama. The righteous are rewarded with the pleasures of Paradise, while the unrighteous are punished in Hell. The Mahdi (prophesied redeemer) will be sent and with the help of Jesus, will battle the Antichrist. They will triumph, liberating Islam from cruelty, and this will be followed by a time of serenity with people living true to religious value. In year 610, Muhammad

began receiving what Muslims consider to be divine revelations. Muhammad's message won over a handful of followers and was met with increasing opposition from notables of Mecca. In 618, after he lost protection with the death of his influential uncle Abu Talib, Muhammad took flight to the city of Yathrib (Medina). With Muhammad's death in 632, disagreement broke out over who would succeed him as leader of the Muslim community which eventually led to the First Fitna. The dispute intensified greatly after the Battle of Karbala, in which Hussein ibn Ali was killed by the ruling Umayyad Caliph Yazid I, and the outcry for revenge divided the early Islamic community. By the 8th century, the Islamic empire extended from Iberia in the west to the Indus River in the east. The Delhi Sultanate took over northern parts of the Indian subcontinent. Under the Ottoman Empire, Islam spread to Southeast Europe. By the 19th century the British Empire had formally ended the Mughal Empire in India. The Ottoman Empire disintegrated after European World War I and the Caliphate was abolished in 1924. Most Muslims are of one of the two denominations: Sunni (75–90%) or Shia (10–20%). Islam is the dominant religion in the Middle East, North Africa, the Sahel, Central Asia, Indonesia and some other parts of Asia. About 13% of Muslims live in Indonesia, the largest Muslim majority country, 31% in South Asia, the largest population of Muslims in the world, 23% in the Middle East-North Africa and 15% in Sub-Saharan Africa. Sizable Muslim communities are also found in Horn of Africa, Swahili coast, Europe, China, Russia, Mainland Southeast Asia, Philippines, Caucasus and the Americas. Converts and immigrant communities are found in almost every part of the world.

Etymology and Meaning



The Kaaba in Mecca is the direction of prayer and destination of pilgrimage for Muslims. Islam relates to concepts of wholeness, submission, safeness and peace. In a religious context it means "voluntary submission to God". In some verses, there is stress on the quality of Islam as an internal state: "Whomsoever God desires to guide, He opens his heart to Islam. Other verses connect Islam and religion: "Today, I have perfected your religion for you; I have

completed my blessing upon you; I have approved Islam as your religion. Still others describe Islam as an action of returning to God, more than just a verbal affirmation of faith. In the Hadith of Gabriel, Islam is presented as one part of a triad that includes imam (faith) and Ahsan (excellence). Islam was historically called Muhammadanism in Anglophone societies. This term has fallen out of use and is sometimes said to be offensive because it suggests that a human being rather than God is central to Muslim religion, parallel to Jesus Christ in Christianity. Some authors, however, continue to use the term Muhammadanism as a technical term for the religious system as opposed to the theological concept of Islam that exists within that system.

Concept of God

Islam is often seen as having the simplest doctrines of the major religions. Its most fundamental concept is a rigorous monotheism, called, Tawhid. God is described in chapter 112 of the Quran as: "Say, He is God, the One and Only; God, the Eternal, Absolute; He begets not nor is He begotten; and there is none like Him". Muslims reject polytheism and idolatry, called Shirk, and reject the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and divinity of Jesus. In Islam, God is beyond all comprehension, Muslims are not expected to visualize God. God is described and referred to by certain names or attributes, the most common being Al-Rahman, meaning "The Compassionate" and Al-Rahim, meaning "The Merciful" (See Names of God in Islam). Muslims believe that the creation of everything in the universe was brought into being by God's sheer command, "Be' and so it is", and that the purpose of existence is to worship God. He is viewed as a personal god who responds whenever a person in need or distress calls him. There are no intermediaries, such as clergy, to contact God who states, "I am nearer to him than his jugular vein". God consciousness is referred to as Taqwa. Allah is the term with no plural or gender used by Muslims.

Angels

Belief in angels is fundamental to the faith of Islam. The Arabic word for angel is "Malak" and means "Messenger", like its counterparts in Hebrew (mal'ákh) and Greek (Angelo's). According to the Qur'an, angels do not possess free will and therefore worship and obey God in total obedience. Angel's duties include communicating revelations from God, glorifying God, recording every person's actions, and taking a person's soul at the time of death. Muslims believe that angels are made of light. They are described as "messengers with wings, two, or three, or four (pairs): He [God] adds to Creation as He pleases" Some scholars have emphasized a metaphorical reinterpretation of the concept of angels. Pictorial depictions of

angels are generally avoided in Islamic Art, as the idea of giving form to anything immaterial is not accepted. Muslims do not share the perceptions of angelic pictorial depictions, such as those found in Western Art. Additionally, another kind of being that is sapient in Islam is called Jinn, who are created with smokeless fire and are invisible to humans, including the Satan's.

Revelations

The Qur'an is viewed by Muslims as the final revelation and literal word of God and is widely regarded as the finest literary work in the Arabic language. Muslims believe that the verses of the Qur'an were revealed to Muhammad by God through the archangel Gabriel (Jibril) over a 23 year period, between 610 CE until his death on June 8, 632. While Muhammad was alive, all revelations were written down by his companions, although the prime method of transmission was orally through memorization. The Qur'an is divided into 114 chapters, which combined, contain 6,236 verses. The chronologically earlier verses, revealed in Mecca, are primarily concerned with ethical and spiritual topics. The later Medina verses mostly discuss social and moral issues relevant to the Muslim community. The Qur'an is more concerned with moral guidance than legal instruction, and is considered the "sourcebook of Islamic principles and values". Muslim experts consult the hadith of Prophet Muhammad's life to both supplement the Qur'an and assist with its interpretation. Science of Qur'anic commentary and interpretation is known as Tafsir. Set of rules governing proper pronunciation is called Tajweed. Muslims usually view "the Qur'an" as the original scripture as revealed in Arabic and that any translations are necessarily deficient, which are regarded only as commentaries on the Quran. The first chapter of the Qur'an, Al-Fatiha, consists of seven verses. .The Islamic holy books are records which most Muslims believe were dictated by God to various prophets. Muslims believe that previously revealed scriptures, the Taurat (Torah) and the Injeel (Gospels), have been distorted.

Prophets and Sunnah

Muslims identify the prophets of Islam as those humans chosen by God to be his messengers. According to the Qur'an, the prophets were instructed by God to bring the "will of God" to people of nations. Muslims believe that prophets are human and not divine, though some are able to perform miracles to prove their claim. Islamic theology say that all of God's messengers preached the same message of Islam, submission to the will of God. The Qur'an mentions the names of numerous figures considered Prophets of Islam, including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus, among others. Muslims believe that God sent Muhammad as the last law

bearing prophet, Seal of the Prophets to convey the divine message to the whole world. In Islam, the "normative" example of Muhammad's life is called the Sunnah. Muslims are encouraged to emulate Muhammad's actions in their daily lives and the Sunnah is seen as crucial to guiding interpretation of the Qur'an. This example is preserved in traditions known as hadith, which recount his words, his actions and his personal characteristics. Over 300,000 hadiths have been collected, but only 2,602 distinct hadiths passed the tests that codified them as authentic. They are considered to be the most authentic source after the Qur'an.

Resurrection and Judgment

Belief in the "Day of Resurrection", Yawmal-Qiyamah, is also crucial for Muslims. They believe the time of Qi amah is preordained by God but unknown to man. The trials and tribulations preceding and during the Qi amah are described in the Qur'an and the hadith, and also in the commentaries of scholars. The Qur'an emphasizes bodily resurrection, a break from the pre-Islamic Arabian understanding of death. On Yawmal-Qiyamah, Muslims believe all mankind will be judged on their good and bad deeds and consigned to paradise or hell. The Qur'an in Surat al-Zalzalah describes this as, "So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it." The Qur'an lists several sins that can condemn a person to hell, such as disbelief in God (Kufr), and dishonesty; however, the Qur'an makes it clear God will forgive the sins of those who repent if he so wills. Good deeds, such as charity, prayer and compassion towards animals will be rewarded with entry to heaven. Muslims view heaven as a place of joy and bliss, with Qur'anic references describing its features and the physical pleasures to come. Mystical traditions in Islam place these heavenly delights in the context of an ecstatic awareness of God.

Divine Will - Qadar

The concept of divine will is referred to as Al-Qada, which literally derives from a root that means to measure. Everything, good and bad, is believed to have been decreed. Pre-destination.

Acts of Worship

There are five basic religious acts in Islam, collectively known as 'The Pillars of Islam' which are considered obligatory for all believers. The Qur'an presents them as framework for worship and a sign of commitment to faith. They are as follows:

(1) The creed (Shahadah)

(2) Daily prayers (salat)

(3) Almsgiving (zakat)

(4) Fasting during Ramadan

(5) The pilgrimage to Mecca (hajj) at least once in a lifetime

Both Shia and Sunni sects agree on the essential details for the performance of these acts. Apart from these, Muslims also perform other religious acts. Notable among them are charity (Sadaqah) and recitation of the Qur'an.

Testimony



Silver coin of the Mughal Emperor Akbar with inscriptions of the Islamic declaration of faith

The Shahadah, which is the basic creed of Islam that must be recited under oath with the specific statement: "Ashhadu 'al-laa ilaha illallahu wa 'Ashhadu 'anna muhamadan rasuulullah", or "I testify that there is no god but God and Muhammad is the messenger of God." This testament is the foundation for all other beliefs and practices in Islam. Muslims must repeat the Shahadah in prayer, and non-Muslims wishing to convert to Islam are required to recite the creed.

Prayer

Ritual prayers are called Salah or Salat. Salat is intended to focus the mind on God, and is seen as a personal communication with him that expresses gratitude and worship. Performing prayers five times a day is compulsory but flexibility in the specifics is allowed depending on circumstances. Prayers are recited in the Arabic language, and consist of verses from the Qur'an. The prayers are done facing the Kaabah though in the early days of Islam, they were done in the direction of Jerusalem. The act of supplicating is referred to as Dua. A mosque is

a place of worship for Muslims. Although the primary purpose of the mosque is to serve as a place of prayer, it is also important to the Muslim community as a place to meet and study. In Medina, Al-Masjid al-Nabawi, or the Prophet's Mosque, was also a place of refuge for the poor. Modern mosques have evolved greatly from the early designs of the 7th century, and contain a variety of architectural elements such as minarets.

Charity

Zakat is giving a fixed portion of accumulated wealth by those who can afford it to help the poor or needy and for those employed to collect Zakat; also, for bringing hearts together, freeing captives, for those in debt and for the stranded traveler. It is considered a religious obligation that the well-off owe to the needy because their wealth is seen as a trust from God's bounty. Conservative estimates of annual zakat is estimated to be 15 times global humanitarian aid contributions. The amount of zakat to be paid on capital assets, i.e. money is 2.5% (1/40) per year, for people who are not poor. Sadaqah means optional charity which is practiced as religious duty and out of generosity. Both the Qur'an and the hadith have put much emphasis on spending money for the welfare of needy people, and have urged Muslims to give more as an act of optional charity. The Qur'an says: Spend something in charity out of the sustenance which we have bestowed on you, before Death should come to any of you. One of the early teachings of Muhammad was God expects men to be generous with their wealth and not to be greedy. Accumulating wealth without spending it to address the needs of the poor is generally prohibited and admonished. Another kind of charity in Islam is Waqf which means perpetual religious endowment.

Fasting

Fasting from food and drink, among other things, must be performed from dawn to dusk during the month of Ramadan. The fast is to encourage a feeling of nearness to God, and during it Muslims should express their gratitude for and dependence on him, atone for their past sins, and think of the needy. Sawm is not obligatory for several groups for whom it would constitute an undue burden. For others, flexibility is allowed depending on circumstances, but missed fasts usually must be made up.

Pilgrimage

The obligatory Islamic pilgrimage, called the Hajj has to be performed during the Islamic month of Dhu al-Hijjah in the city of Mecca. Every able-bodied Muslim who can afford it must make

the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in his or her lifetime. Rituals of the Hajj include: spending a day and a night in the tents in the desert plain of Mina, then a day in the desert plain of Arafat praying and worshipping God, following the footsteps of Abraham; then spending a night out in the open, sleeping on the desert sand in the desert plain of Muzdalifa; then moving to Jamarat, symbolically stoning the Devil recounting Abraham's actions: then going to Mecca and walking seven times around the Kaaba which Muslims believe was built as a place of worship by Abraham; then walking seven times between Mount Safa and Mount Marwah recounting the steps of Abraham's wife, while she was looking for water for her son Ismael in the desert before Mecca developed into a settlement. Another form of pilgrimage, Umrah, can be undertaken at any time of the year.

Recitation and Memorization of the Qur'an

Muslims recite and memorize the whole or part of the Qur'an as acts of virtue. Reciting the Qur'an in the correct manner has been described as an excellent act of worship. Pious Muslims recite the whole Qur'an at the month of Ramadan. In Islamic societies, any social program generally begins with the recitation of the Qur'an. One who has memorized the whole Quran is called a hafiz who, it is said, will be able to intercede for ten people on the Last Judgment Day. Apart from this, almost every Muslim memorizes some portion of the Qur'an because they need to recite it during their prayers.

Family Life

For Muslim communities, family is the basic component of society, and is responsible for the wellbeing of its members. In a Muslim family, the birth of a child is attended with some religious ceremonies. Immediately after the birth, the words of Adhan is pronounced in the right ear of the child. On the seventh day, the Aqiqah ceremony is performed in which an animal is sacrificed and its meat is distributed among the poor. The head of the child is also shaved, and an amount of money equaling the weight of the child's hair is donated to the poor. Apart from fulfilling the basic needs of food, shelter and education, the parents or the elderly members of family also undertake the task of teaching moral qualities, religious knowledge, and religious practices to the children. Marriage serves as the foundation of a Muslim family, it is a civil contract which consists of an offer and acceptance between two qualified parties in the presence of two witnesses. The groom is required to pay a bridal gift (Mahr) to the bride, as stipulated in the contract. Most families in the Islamic world are monogamous. Polyandry, a form of Polygamy, where a woman takes on two or more husbands is prohibited in Islam. With Muslims coming from diverse backgrounds including 49 Muslim-majority countries, plus

a strong presence as large minorities throughout the world there are many variations on Muslim Weddings. Generally in a Muslim family, a woman's sphere of operation is the home and a man's corresponding sphere is the outside world. However, in practice, this separation is not as rigid as it appears. Certain religious rites are performed during and after the death of a Muslim. Those near a dying man encourage him to pronounce the Shahadah as Muslims want their last word to be their profession of faith. After death, the body is bathed properly by members of the same gender and then enshrouded in a threefold white garment called kafan. Placing the body on a bier, it is first taken to a mosque where funeral prayer is offered and then to the graveyard for burial.

Etiquette and Diet

Many practices fall in the category of Islamic etiquette. This includes greeting others with "as-salamu `alaikum" ("peace be unto you"), saying Bismillah (in the name of God) before meals, and using only the right hand for eating and drinking. Islamic hygienic practices fall in the category of personal cleanliness and health. Circumcision of male offspring is also practiced in Islam. Islamic burial rituals include saying the Funeral Prayer over the bathed and enshrouded dead body, and the burying. Muslims are restricted in their diet. Prohibited foods include pork products, blood, carrion (decaying) and alcohol. All meat must come from an animal who feeds on plants and is slaughtered in the name of God by a Muslim, Jew or Christian, with the exception of game that one has hunted or fished for oneself. Food permissible for Muslims is known as halal food.

Islam and Humanity

In a Muslim society, various social service activities are performed by members of the community. As these activities are instructed by Islamic canonical texts, a Muslim's religious life is seen incomplete if not attended by service to humanity. In fact, In Islamic tradition, the idea of social welfare has been presented as one of its principal values. Duties to parents, neighbors, relatives, sick people, the old, and the minority have been defined in Islam. Respecting and obeying one's parents, and taking care of them especially in their old age have been made a religious obligation. A two-fold approach is generally prescribed to duties to relatives: keeping good relations and offering financial help if necessary. Severing ties with them has been admonished. Regardless of a neighbor's religious identity, Islam tells Muslims to treat their neighboring people in the best possible manner and not to cause any difficulty to them. The Quran forbids harsh and oppressive treatment to orphans while urging kindness and justice towards them. It also rebukes those who do not honor and feed orphaned children.

Moral Behavior

The Qur'an and the Sunnah of Muhammad prescribe a comprehensive body of moral guidelines for Muslims to be followed in their personal, social, political and religious life. Proper moral conduct, good deeds, righteousness and good character come within the sphere of the moral guidelines. In Islam, the observance of moral virtues is always associated with religious significance because it elevates the religious status of a believer and is often seen as a supererogatory act of worship. One typical Islamic teaching on morality is that imposing a penalty on an offender in proportion to their offense is permissible and just; but forgiving the offender is better. To go one step further by offering a favor to the offender is regarded the highest excellence. The Qur'an says: Repel evil with what is best. Thus, a Muslim is expected to act only in good manners as bad manners and deeds earn vices. The fundamental moral qualities in Islam are justice, forgiveness, righteousness, kindness, honesty and piety. Other mostly insisted moral virtues include charitable activities, tolerance, fulfillment of promise, modesty and humility, decency in speech, trustworthiness, patience, truthfulness, anger management and sincerity of intention. As a religion, Islam emphasizes the idea of having a good character as Muhammad said: 'The best among you are those who have the best manners and character. In Islam, justice is not only a moral virtue but also an obligation to be fulfilled under all circumstances. The Qur'an and hadith describe God as being kind and merciful to His creatures, and tell people to be kind likewise. As a virtue, forgiveness is much celebrated in Islam, and is regarded as an important Muslim practice. About modesty, Muhammad is reported as saying: 'Every religion has its characteristic, the characteristic of Islam is modesty.

Government

Sharia is Islamic law, it constitutes a system of duties that are incumbent upon a Muslim by virtue of his or her religious belief. The study of Islamic law is called, Islamic jurisprudence. Much of it has evolved with the objective to prevent innovation or alteration in the original religion. The Qur'an set the rights, the responsibilities and the rules for people and for societies to adhere to. Many of the Sharia laws that differ are devised through Ijtihad where there is no such ruling in the Qur'an or Hadiths. Islamic law covers all aspects of life, from matters of state, like governance and foreign relations, to issues of daily living. The Qur'an defines hudud (punishments fixed by God) as the punishments for five specific crimes: unlawful intercourse, false accusation of unlawful intercourse, consumption of alcohol, theft, and highway robbery. The Qur'an and Sunnah also contain laws of inheritance, marriage and restitution for injuries and murder, as well as rules for fasting, charity and prayer. For example, the division of

inheritance is specified in the Qur'an, which states that most of it is to pass to immediate family, while a portion is set aside for payment of debts and the making of bequests. The woman's share of inheritance is generally half of that of a man with the same rights of succession.

Scholars

Islam, like Judaism, has no clergy, such as priests who mediate between God and people. However, there are many terms in Islam to refer to religiously sanctioned positions of Islam. In the broadest sense, the term ulema is used to describe the body of Muslim scholars who have completed several years of training and study of Islamic sciences. A jurist who interprets Islamic law is called a mufti and often issues judicial opinions, called fatwas.

Legal System

The four major Sunni schools are the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi, Hanbali and sometimes Zahiri while the two major Shia schools are Jafari and Zaidi. Each differ in their methodology. The following of decisions by a religious expert without necessarily examining the decision's reasoning is called taqlid. The term ghair muqallid literally refers to those who do not use taqlid and by extension do not school of thought. The practice of an individual interpreting law with independent reasoning is called ijihad.

Economics

To reduce the gap between rich and poor, Islamic economic legal system encourages trade, discourages the hoarding of wealth and outlaws interest-bearing loans (usury; Riba) Therefore, wealth is taxed through Zakat, but trade is not taxed. Usury, which allows the rich to get richer without sharing the risk, is forbidden in Islam. Profit sharing and venture capital where the lender is also exposed to risk is acceptable. Hoarding of food for speculation is also discouraged. Grabbing other people's land is also prohibited. The prohibition of usury has resulted in the development of Islamic banking. During the time of Muhammad, any money that went to the state, was immediately used to help the poor. Then in 634, Umar formally established the welfare state. The welfare state was for the Muslim and Non-Muslim poor, needy, elderly, orphans, widows and disabled. The welfare state ran for hundreds of years under the Rashidun Caliphate in the 7th century and continued through the Umayyad period and well into the Abbasid era. Umar also introduced Child Benefit and Pensions for the children and the elderly.

Jihad

Jihad means to struggle in the cause of God. Different categories of jihad are defined as Jihad, when used without any qualifier, it is understood in its military aspect. Jihad also refers to one's striving to attain religious and moral perfection. Some Muslim authorities, especially among the Shi'a and Sufis, distinguish between the "greater jihad", which pertains to spiritual self-perfection, and the "lesser jihad", defined as warfare. Within the Islamic legal system, jihad is usually taken to mean military exertion against non-believers. The ultimate purpose of military jihad is debated, within the Islamic community. Jihad is the only form of warfare permissible in Islamic law and may be declared against illegal works, terrorists, criminal groups, rebels, apostates, and leaders or states who oppress Muslims. Most Muslims today interpret Jihad as only a defensive form of warfare. Jihad only becomes an individual duty for those vested with authority. For the rest of the populace, this happens only in the case of a general mobilization.

Muhammad (610–632)



A panoramic view of Prophet Muhammad's Mosque in Medina

Muslim tradition views Muhammad (c. 570 – June 8, 632) as the seal of the prophets. During the last 22 years of his life, beginning at the age of 40 in 610 CE, according to the earliest surviving biographies, Muhammad reported revelations that he believed to be from God, conveyed to him through the archangel Gabriel (Jibril). Muhammad's companions memorized and recorded the content of these revelations, known as the Qur'an. During this time, Muhammad in Mecca preached to the people, imploring them to abandon polytheism and to worship one God. Although some converted to Islam, the leading Meccan authorities persecuted Muhammad and his followers. This resulted in the Migration to Abyssinia of some Muslims to the Aksumite Empire. Many early converts to Islam were the poor and former slaves like Bilal ibn Rabah al-Habashi. The Meccan elite felt that Muhammad was destabilizing their social order by preaching about one God and about racial equality, and in the process he gave ideas to the poor and to slaves. 12 years after the persecution of Muslims by the

Meccans and the Meccan boycott of the Hashemite's, Muhammad's relatives, Muhammad and the Muslims performed Hijra (emigration) to the city of Medina (formerly known as Yathrib) in 622. There, with the Median converts (Ansar) and the Meccan migrants (Muhajirun), Muhammad in Medina established his political and religious authority. A state was established in accordance with Islamic economic law. The Constitution of Medina was formulated, instituting a number of rights and responsibilities for the Muslim, Jewish, Christian and pagan communities of Medina, bringing them within the fold of one community, the Ummah.

The Constitution established:

- the security of the community
- religious freedoms
- the role of Medina as a sacred place (barring all violence and weapons)
- the security of women
- stable tribal relations within Medina
- a tax system for supporting the community in time of conflict
- parameters for exogenous political alliances
- a system for granting protection of individuals
- a judicial system for resolving disputes where non-Muslims could also use their own laws and have their own judges

All the tribes signed the agreement to defend Medina from all external threats and to live in harmony amongst themselves. Within a few years, two battles took place against the Meccan forces: first, the Battle of Badr in 624, a Muslim victory, then a year later, when the Meccans returned to Medina, the Battle of Uhud, which ended inconclusively. The Arab tribes in the rest of Arabia then formed a confederation and during the Battle of the Trench (March–April 627) besieged Medina with intent on finishing off Islam. In 628, the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah was signed between Mecca and the Muslims and was broken by Mecca two years later. After the signing of the Treaty many more people converted to Islam. At the same time, Meccan trade routes were cut off as Muhammad brought surrounding desert tribes under his control. By 629 Muhammad was victorious in the bloodless conquest of Mecca, and by the time of his death in 632 at the age of 62 he had united the tribes of Arabia into a single religious polity. The earliest three generations of Muslims are known as the Salaf and the companions of Muhammad being known as the Sahaba. Many of them, such as the largest narrator of hadith Abu Huraira, recorded and compiled what would constitute as the Sunnah.

Caliphate and Civil Strife (632–750)



Dome of the Rock built by Abd Marwan; completed at the end of the Second Fitna

With Muhammad's death in 632, disagreement broke out over who would succeed him as leader of the Muslim community. Abu Bakr, a companion and close friend of Muhammad, was made the first caliph. Under Abu Bakr, Muslims put down a rebellion by Arab tribes in an episode known as the Wars of Apostasy. The Qur'an was compiled into a single volume at this time. Abu Bakr's death in 634 resulted in the succession of Umar Khattab as caliph, followed by Uthman Affan, Ali Talib and Hasan Ali. The first four caliphs are known in Sunni Islam as Rightly Guided Caliphs. Under them, the territory under Muslim rule expanded deeply into parts of Persian and Byzantine territories. When Umar was assassinated by Persians in 644, the election of Uthman as successor was met with increasing opposition. The standard copies of the Qur'an were distributed throughout the Islamic State. In 656, Uthman was also killed and Ali assumed the position of caliph. This led to the first civil war (First Fitna) over who should be caliph. Ali was assassinated by Kharajites in 661. To avoid further fighting, the new caliph Hasan Ali signed a peace treaty, abdicating to Mu'awiyah, beginning the Umayyad dynasty, in return that he not name his own successor. These disputes over religious and political leadership would give rise to schism in the Muslim community. The majority accepted the legitimacy of the first four leaders, and became known as Sunnis. A minority disagreed, and believed that only Ali and some of his descendants should rule; they became known as Shia. Mu'awiyah appointed his son, Yazid I, as successor and after Mu'awiyah's death in 680, the Second Fitna broke out, where Hasan Ali was killed in the Battle of Karbala, a significant event in Shia Islam. The Umayyad dynasty conquered the Maghreb, the Iberian Peninsula, Gaul and Sindh. Local populations of Jews and indigenous Christians were persecuted as religious minorities and taxed heavily to finance the Byzantine-Sassanid Wars, often aided Muslims to take over their lands from the Byzantines and Persians, resulting in exceptionally

speedy conquests. The generation after the death of Muhammad are known as the Tabi'un. Malik Anas wrote one of the earliest books on Islamic law, the Muwatta, as a consensus of the opinion of those jurists. The descendants of Muhammad's uncle Abbas ibn Muttalib rallied discontented non-Arab converts, poor Arabs and some Shi'a against the Umayyad's and overthrew them, inaugurating the Abbasid dynasty in 750.

Classical era (750–1258)

During this time, the Delhi Sultanate took over northern parts of the Indian subcontinent. Religious missions converted Volga Bulgaria to Islam. Many Muslims also went to China to trade, virtually dominating the import and export industry of the Song Dynasty.



The eye, from a manuscript dated 1200

This era is called the Islamic Golden Age. Public hospitals established during this time are considered the first hospitals in the modern sense of the word and issued the first medical diplomas to license doctors. The Guinness World Records recognizes the University of Al Karaouine, founded in 859, as the world's oldest degree-granting university. The doctorate is argued to date back to the licenses to teach in Muslim law schools. Standards of experimental and quantification techniques, as well as the tradition of citation were introduced. An important pioneer in this, Ibn Haytham is regarded as the father of modern scientific method and often referred to as the world's first true scientist. The government paid scientists the equivalent salary of professional athletes today. It is argued that the data used by Mathematician, Copernicus for his heliocentric (center of the sun) conclusions was gathered and that Al-Jahiz proposed a theory of natural selection. Rumi wrote some of the finest Persian poetry and is still one of the bestselling poets in America. Legal institutions introduced, include the trust and charitable trust (Waqf). Caliphs such as Mamun Rashid and Al-Mu'tasim made the mutazilite philosophy (school of Islamic theology) an official creed and imposed it upon Muslims to follow.

Mu'tazila was a Greek influenced school of speculative theology called kalam, which refers to dialectic. Many orthodox Muslims rejected mutazilite doctrines and condemned their idea of the creation of the Qur'an. In inquisitions, Imam Hanbal refused to conform and was tortured and sent to a Baghdad prison cell for nearly thirty months. The other branch of kalam was the Ash'ari school founded by Al-Ash'ari. Some Muslims began to question the piety of indulgence in a worldly life and emphasized poverty, humility and avoidance of sin based on renunciation of bodily desires. Ascetics such as Hasan al-Basri would inspire a movement that would evolve into Sufism. Beginning in the 13th century, Sufism underwent a transformation, largely because of efforts to legitimize and reorganize the movement by Al-Ghazali, who developed the model of the Sufi order, a community of spiritual teachers and students. The first Muslims states independent of a unified Muslim state emerged from the Berber Revolt (739/740-743). In 930, the Ismaili group known as the Qarmatians unsuccessfully rebelled against the Abbasid's, sacked Mecca and stole the Black Stone, which was eventually retrieved. The Mongol Empire put an end to the Abbasids dynasty in 1258.

Pre-Modern era (1258–20th century)

Islam spread with Muslim trade networks and Sufi orders activity that extended into Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia and the Malay Archipelago. Under the Ottoman Empire, Islam spread to Southeast Europe. The Muslims in China who descended from earlier immigration began to adopt Chinese names and culture while Nanjing became an important center of Islamic study. The Muslim world was generally in political decline starting in the 1800s, especially relative to the non-Muslim European powers. This decline was evident culturally; while Taqi al-Din founded an observatory in Istanbul and the Jai Singh Observatory was built in the 18th century, there was not a single Muslim country with a major observatory by the twentieth century. The Reconquista, launched against Muslim principalities in Iberia, succeeded in 1492. By the 19th century the British Empire had formally ended the Mughal dynasty in India. The Ottoman Empire disintegrated after the European World War I and the Caliphate was abolished in 1924. The majority and oldest group among Shia at that time, the Zaydis, named after the great grandson of Ali, the scholar Zayd ibn Ali, used the Hanafi law, as did most Sunnis. The Shia Safavid dynasty rose to power in 1501 and later conquered all of Iran. The ensuing mandatory conversion of Iran to Twelver Shia Islam for the largely Sunni population also ensured the final dominance of the Twelver sect within Shiism over the Zaidi and Ismaili sects. Nader Shah, who overthrew the Safavid, attempted to improve relations with Sunnis by propagating the integration of Shiism by calling it the Jafari Madhhab. A revival movement during this period was an 18th-century Salafi movement led by Ibn Abd al-Wahhaab in today's Saudi Arabia. Referred to as Wahhabi, their self-designation is

Muwahiddun (stressing the Sunnah). Building upon earlier efforts such as those by Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-Qayyim, the movement allegedly seeks to uphold monotheism and purify Islam of what they see as later innovations. Their zeal against idolatrous shrines led to the desecration of shrines around the world, including that of Muhammad and his companions in Mecca and Medina. In the 19th century, the Deobandi and Barelwi movements were initiated.

Modern Times (20th century–present)

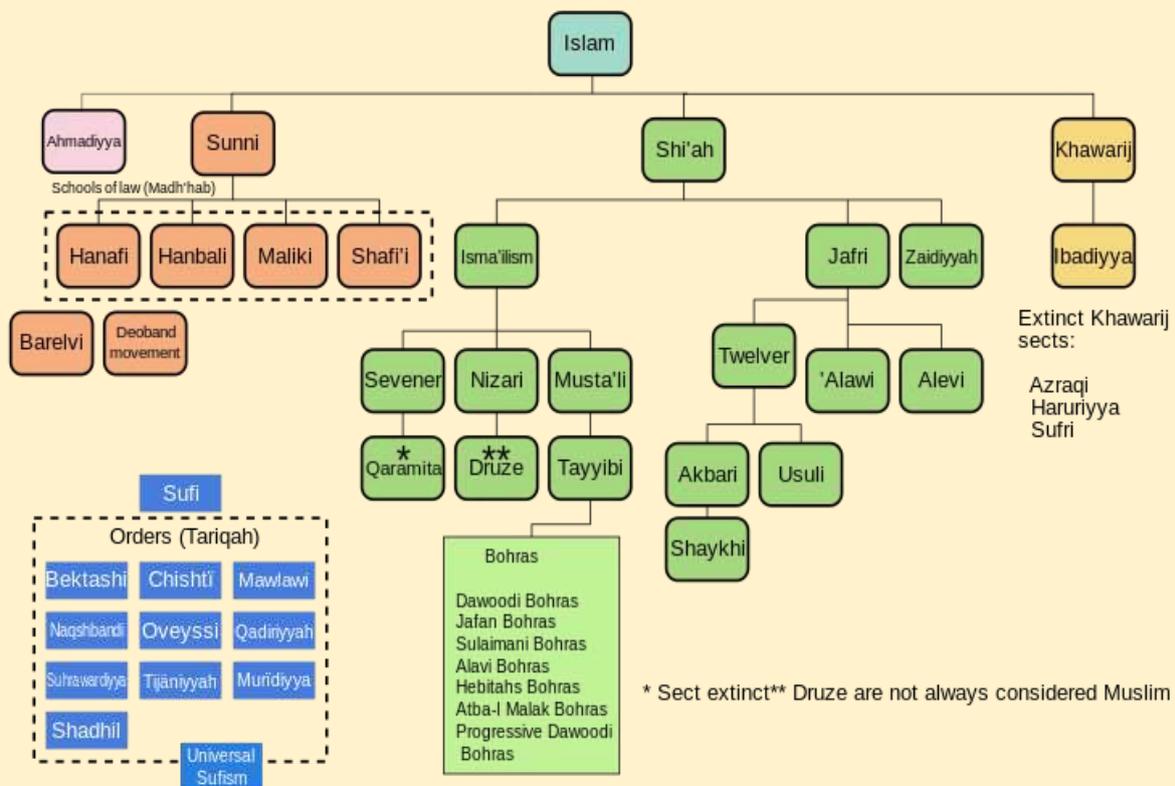


The flag of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation

Contact with industrialized nations brought Muslim populations to new areas through economic migration. Many Muslims migrated as indentured servants, from mostly India and Indonesia, to the Caribbean, forming the largest Muslim populations by percentage in the Americas. The resulting urbanization and increase in trade in sub-Saharan Africa brought Muslims to settle in new areas and spread their faith, likely doubling its Muslim population between 1869 and 1914. Muslim immigrants began arriving, many as guest workers and largely from former colonies, in several Western European nations since the 1960s. There are more and more new Muslim intellectuals who increasingly separate Islamic beliefs from out of date cultural traditions. Liberal Islam is a movement that attempts to reconcile religious tradition with modern norms of secular governance and human rights. Its supporters say that there are multiple ways to read Islam's sacred texts, and they stress the need to leave room for independent thought on religious matters. Women's issues receive significant weight in the modern discourse on Islam. Secular powers such as the Chinese Red Guards closed many mosques and destroyed Qur'ans, and Communist Albania became the first country to ban the practice of every religion. About half a million Muslims were killed in Cambodia by communists who, it is argued, viewed them as their primary enemy and wished to exterminate them since they stood out and worshipped their own god. In Turkey, the military carried out coups to oust Islamist governments, headscarves were banned in official buildings, as also happened in Tunisia. Jamal-al-Din al-Afghani (political activist), has been credited as forerunner of Islamic

revival. Abul A'la Maududi helped influence modern political Islam. Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood advocate Islam as a comprehensive political solution, often in spite of being banned. In Iran, revolution replaced a secular regime with an Islamic state. In Turkey, the Islamist AK Party has democratically been in power for about a decade, while Islamist parties did well in elections following the Arab Spring. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), consisting of Muslim countries, was established in 1969 after the burning of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. Piety appears to be deepening worldwide. In many places, the prevalence of the hijab is growing increasingly common and the percentage of Muslims favoring Sharia law has increased with religious guidance increasingly available electronically, Muslims are able to access views that are strict enough for them rather than rely on state clerics who are often seen as stooges. It is estimated that, by 2050, the number of Muslims will nearly equal the number of Christians around the world, driven primarily by differences in fertility rates and the size of youth populations among the world's major religions, as well as by people switching faiths. Perhaps as a sign of these changes, most experts agree that Islam is growing faster than any other faith in the East and West Africa.

Denominations



An overview of the major schools and branches of Islam

Sunni

The largest denomination in Islam is Sunni Islam, which makes up 75%–90% of all Muslims and is arguably the world's largest religious denomination. Sunni Muslims also go by the name Ahl as-Sunnah which means people of the tradition of Muhammad. Sunnis believe that the first four caliphs were the rightful successors to Muhammad; since God did not specify any particular leaders to succeed him. Sunnis believe that anyone who is righteous and just could be a caliph but they have to act according to the Qur'an and the Hadith, the example of Muhammad and give people their rights. Sunnis follow the Qur'an, then the Hadith. Then for legal matters not found in the Qur'an or Hadith, they follow four madhhabs (schools of thought): Hanafi, Hanbali, Maliki and Shafi, established around the teachings of Abu Hanifa, Ahmad bin Hanbal, Malik ibn Anas and al-Shafi respectively. All four accept the validity of the others and a Muslim may choose any one that he or she finds agreeable. Ahl al-Hadith is a movement that deemphasized sources of law outside the Qur'an and Sunnah, such as informed opinion. The Salafi movement claim to take the first three generations of Muslims, known as the Salaf, as exemplary models. In the 18th century, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhaab led a salafi movement, referred by outsiders as Wahhabism, in modern-day Saudi Arabia. The Barelwi movement, a revivalist movement of Sunni Islam with over 200 million followers, emerged as part of debate of how to redeem India from the British. The movement emphasizes primacy of Islamic law in all matters with adherence to Sufi practices and personal devotion to Muhammad and has addressed leading issues for Muslims since the partition. The Deobandi movement is an Indo-Pakistani reformist movement that is much influenced by the Wahhabi movement. The Barelwi and Deobandi movements of Sunni Islam accept the validity of all four Sunni.

Shia



The Imran Hussein Shrine in Karbala, Iraq is a holy site for Shia Muslims

The Shia constitute 10–20% of Islam and are its second-largest branch while the Sunnis believe that a Caliph should be elected by the community, Shia's believe that Muhammad

appointed his son-in-law, Ali ibn Abi Talib, as his successor and only certain descendants of Ali could be Imams. As a result, they believe that Ali Talib was the first Imam (leader), rejecting the legitimacy of the previous Muslim caliphs Abu Bakr, Uthman Affan and Umar Khattab. Another point of contention is the cursing of figures revered by Sunnis. However, Jafar Sadiq himself disapproved of people who disapproved of his great grandfather Abu Bakr and Zayd ibn Ali revered Abu Bakr and Umar. More recently, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani condemned the practice. Shia Islam has several branches, the most prominent being the Twelver's (the largest branch), Zaidi's and Ismaili's. Different branches accept different descendants of Ali as Imams. After the death of Imam Jafar al-Sadiq who is considered the sixth Imam by the Twelver's and the Ismaili's, the Ismaili's recognized his son Isma'il ibn Jafar as his successor whereas the Twelver Shia's (Ithna Asheri) followed his other son Musa al-Kadhim as the seventh Imam. The Zaydis consider Zayd ibn Ali, the uncle of Imam Jafar al-Sadiq, as their fifth Imam, and follow a different line of succession after him. Also, the Bahia Faith stems from Twelver Shia passed through Siyyid Ali Muhammad i-Shirazi al-Bab to one of His followers Mirza Hussayn Ali Nuri Baha'u'llah. Moreover, although Bahia is an independent religion, in an official statement One Common Faith, 2005, the Universal House of Justice related the term, "Islam" (submission to God) designates religion itself. Other smaller groups include the Bohra as well as the Alawites and Alevi. Some Shia branches label other Shia branches that do not agree with their doctrine as Ghulat.

Sufism



Mawlana Rumi's tomb, Konya, Turkey

Sufism is a mystical-ascetic approach to Islam that seeks to find a direct personal experience of God. It is not a sect of Islam and its followers belong to various Muslim denominations. Classical Sufi scholars have focused on the reparation of the heart and turning it away from all else but God by making use of intuitive and emotional faculties that one must be trained to

use. Hasan al-Basri was inspired by the ideas of piety and condemnation of worldliness preached by Muhammad and these ideas were later further developed by Al-Ghazali. Traditional Sufis is based upon the principles of Islam and the teachings of Muhammad. Sufism enjoyed a strong revival in central Asia and South Asia. Central Asia is considered to be the center of Sufism. Sufism has played a significant role in fighting against Tsars of Russia and Soviet colonization. Here, Sufis and their different orders are the main religious sources. Sufism is also strong in African countries such as Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Senegal, Chad and Niger. Sufi practices such as veneration of saints have faced stiff opposition from followers of Salafism and Wahhabism, who have sometimes physically attacked Sufi places of worship, leading to deterioration in Sufi–Salafi relations.

Other Denominations

- **Ahmadiyya** is an Islamic reform movement founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad that began in India in 1889 and is practiced by 10 to 20 million Muslims around the world. Ahmad claimed to have fulfilled the prophecies concerning the arrival of the Imam Mahdi and the Promised Messiah.
- **Ibadi** is a sect that dates back to the early days of Islam and is a branch of Kharajites and is practiced by 1.45 million Muslims around the world. Unlike most Kharajites groups, Ibadism does not regard sinful Muslims as unbelievers.
- **Mahdavia** is an Islamic sect that believes in a 15th-century Mahdi, Muhammad Jaunpuri.
- **Quranists** are Muslims who generally reject Hadiths.
- **Yazdanism** is seen as a blend of local Kurdish beliefs and Islamic Sufi doctrine introduced in the 12th century.
- There are also Black Muslim movements such as Nation of Islam (NOI), Five Percent Nation and Moorish Scientists. Non-denominational Muslims

Non-Denominational Muslim

Non-denominational Muslims is an umbrella term that has been used for and by Muslims who do not belong to or do not self-identify with a specific Islamic denomination. Prominent figures who refused to identify with a particular Islamic denomination have included Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad Iqbal and Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Recent surveys report that large proportions of Muslims in some parts of the world self-identify as "just Muslim", although there is little published analysis available regarding the motivations underlying this response. The Pew Research Center reports that respondents self-identifying as "just Muslim" make up a

majority of Muslims in seven countries, with the highest proportion in Kazakhstan at 74%. At least one in five Muslims in at least 22 countries self-identify in this way.

Demographics

A comprehensive 2009 demographic study of 232 countries and territories reported that 23% of the global population or 1.57 billion people are Muslims. Of those, it is estimated that over 75–90% are Sunni and 10–20% are Shia with a small minority belonging to other sects. Approximately 57 countries are Muslim majority and Arabs account for around 20% of all Muslims worldwide. The number of Muslims worldwide increased from 200 million in 1900 to 551 million in 1970 and tripled to 1.6 billion by 2010. The majority of Muslims live in Asia and Africa. Approximately 62% of the world's Muslims live in Asia with over 683 million followers in Indonesia, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh. In the Middle East, non-Arab countries such as Turkey and Iran are the largest Muslim-majority countries; in Africa, Egypt and Nigeria have the most populous Muslim communities. Most estimates indicate that the People's Republic of China has approximately 20 to 30 million Muslims (1.5% to 2% of the population). However, data provided by the San Diego State University's International Population Center to U.S. News & World Report suggests that China has 65.3 million Muslims. Islam is the second largest religion after Christianity in many European countries and is slowly catching up to that status in the Americas, with between 2,454,000, according to Pew Forum, and approximately 7 million Muslims, according to the Council on American-Islamic Relations in the United States. According to the Pew Research Center, Islam is set to equal Christianity in number of followers by the year 2050. Islam is set to grow faster than any other major world religion, reaching a total number of 2.76 billion (an increase of 73%). High fertility rates play a factor, with Islam having a rate of 3.1 compared to the world average of 2.5, and the minimum replacement level for a population at 2.1. Age also plays a role in these numbers due to the fact that Islam has the highest number of followers under the age of 15 (34% of the total religion) of any major religion (Christianity's is 27%). Sixty percent of Muslims are between the ages of 16 and 59, while only 7% are aged 60+ (the smallest percentage of any major religion). Countries such as Nigeria and the Republic of Macedonia are expected to have Muslim majorities by 2050. In India, the Muslim population will be larger than any other country. Europe's domestic population is set to shrink as opposed to their Islamic population which is set to grow to 10% of Europe's total.

Culture

The term Islamic Culture could be used to mean aspects of culture that pertain to the religion, such as festivals and dress code. It is also controversially used to denote the cultural aspects of tradition Muslim people. Finally, "Islamic civilization" may also refer to the aspects of the synthesized culture of the early Caliphates, including that of non-Muslims. Sometimes referred to as Islamic.

Architecture

Perhaps the most important expression of Islamic architecture is that of a mosque. Varying cultures have an effect on mosque architecture. For example, North African and Spanish Islamic architecture such as the Great Mosque of Kairouan contain marble and porphyry columns from Roman and Byzantine buildings, while mosques in Indonesia often have multi-tiered roofs from local Javen styles.



Djenné, in the West African country of Mali



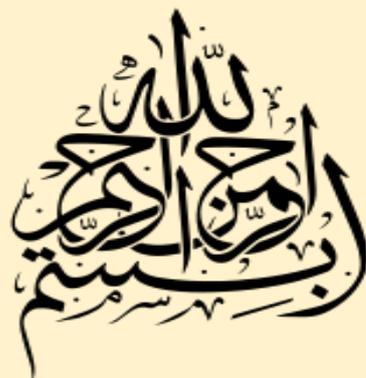
Great Mosque of Xi'an in Xi'an, China



Dome in Po-i-Kalyan, Bukhara, Uzbekistan

Art

Islamic art encompasses the visual arts produced from the 7th century onwards by people not necessarily Muslims who lived within the territory that was inhabited by Muslim populations. It includes fields varied as architecture, calligraphy, painting and ceramics, among others. While not condemned in the Qur'an, making images of human beings and animals is frowned on in many Islamic cultures and connected with laws against idolatry common to all Abrahamic religions. Prophet Muhammad said, "Those who will be most severely punished by Allah on the Day of Resurrection will be the image-makers". However this rule has been interpreted in different ways by different scholars and in different historical periods, there are examples of paintings of both animals and humans in Mughal, Persian and Turkish art. The existence of this aversion to creating images of animate beings has been used to explain the prevalence of calligraphy, tessellation and pattern as key aspects of Islamic artistic culture.



The phrase Bismillah in 18th-century Ottoman calligraphy in the Thuluth style



Geometric arabesque tiling on the underside of the dome of Hafiz Shiraz's tomb in Shiraz

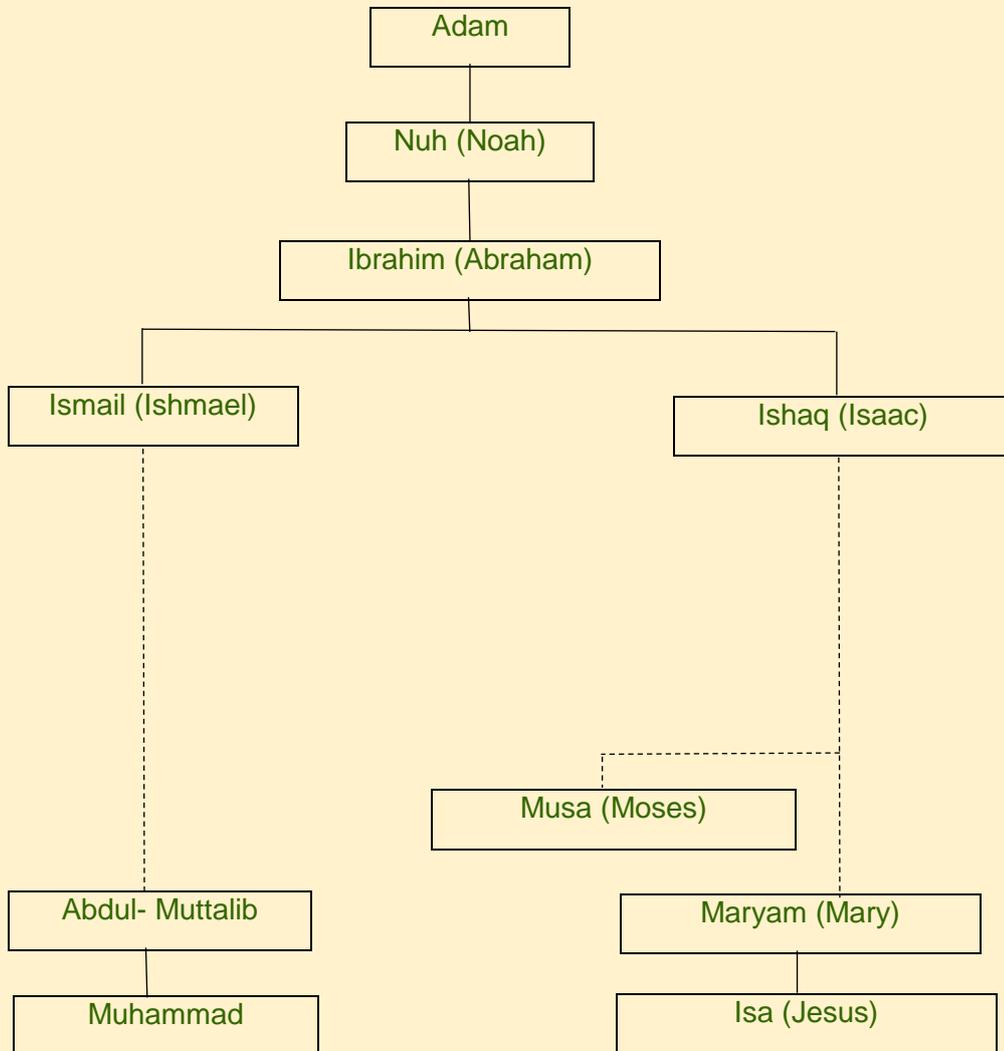
Calendar

The phases of the Moon form the basis for the Islamic calendar. The formal beginning of the Muslim era was chosen, reportedly by Caliph Umar, to be the Hijra in 622 CE, which was an important turning point in Muhammad's fortunes. It is a lunar calendar with days lasting from sunset to sunset. Islamic holy days fall on fixed dates of the lunar calendar, which means that they occur in different seasons in different years in the Gregorian calendar. The most important Islamic festivals are Eid al-Fitr on the 1st of Shawwal, marking the end of the fasting month Ramadan and Eid al-Adha on the 10th of Dhu al-Hijjah, coinciding with the end of the Hajj pilgrimage.

Prophets of Allah

Adam as (Adam)	Shu'aib as (Jethro)
Idris as (Enoch)	Musa as (Moses)
Noah as (Nuh)	Harun as (Aaron)
HUD as (HUD)	Dhul-Kifl as (Ezekiel)
Shaleh as (Saleh)	Dawud as (David)
Ibrahim as (Abraham)	Suleiman as (Solomon)
Lut as (Lot)	Ilyas as (Elijah)
Ismail as (Ishmael)	Alyasa as (Elisha)
Ishaq as (Isaac)	Yunus as (Jonah)
Ya'qub as (Jacob)	Zakariya as (Zachariah)
Yusuf as (Joseph)	Yahya as (John)
Ayyub as (Job)	Isa as (Jesus)
	Muhammad saw

Lineage of Six Prominent Prophets



Prophet Adam

Islam provides us with the astonishing details of the creation of Adam. Both Christian and Jewish traditions are remarkably similar yet importantly different to the Qur'an. The Book of Genesis describes Adam as being made from dust of the earth, and in the Talmud, Adam is described as being formed from mud. God said to the angels: "Verily, I am going to place mankind, generations after generations on earth. They said: 'Will you place therein those who will make mischief therein and shed blood, while we glorify you with praises and thanks and sanctify you. God said: "I know that which you do not know". So begins the story of Adam, the first man, the first human being. God created Adam from a handful of soil containing portions from all its varieties on Earth. Angels were sent to earth to collect the soil that was to become Adam. It was red, white, brown and black; it was soft and malleable, hard and gritty; it came from mountains and valleys; from infertile deserts and lush fertile plains and all the natural varieties in between. The descendants of Adam were destined to be as diverse as the handful of soil from which their ancestor was created; all have different appearances, attributes and qualities. Throughout the Quran, the soil used to create Adam is referred to by many names, and from this we are able to understand some of the methodology of his creation. Each name for soil is used at a different stage of Adam's creation. Soil, taken from the earth, is referred to as soil; God also refers to it as clay. When it is mixed with water it becomes mud, when it is left to stand the water content reduces and it becomes sticky clay (or mud). If it is again left for some time it begins to smell, and the colour becomes darker, black, smooth clay. It was from this substance that God moulded the form of Adam. His soulless body was left to dry, and it became what is known in the Qur'an as sounding clay. Adam was moulded from something akin to potter's clay. When it is rapped it produces a ringing sound.

The First Man is Honoured – God said, to the Angels: "And (remember) when your Lord said to the angels: 'I am going to create a human (Adam) from sounding clay of altered black smooth mud. So when I have fashioned him and breathed into him, his soul created by me, fall down and prostrate to him.'" God honoured the first human, Adam, in countless ways. Allah blew his soul into him, He fashioned him with His own hands. While worship is reserved for God Alone this prostration by the Angels to Adam was a sign of respect and honour. It is said that, as Adam's body trembled into life, he sneezed and immediately said 'All praise and thanks is due to God;' so God responded by bestowing His Mercy upon Adam. Although this account is not mentioned in either the Qur'an or the authentic narrations of Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, it is mentioned in some commentaries of the Qur'an. Thus, in his first seconds of life, the first man is recognized as an honoured creature, covered with the infinite Mercy of God. It was also said by Prophet

Muhammad that God created Adam in His image. This does not mean that Adam was created to look similar to God, as God is unique in all aspects, we are unable to comprehend or form an image of Him. It does mean, however, that Adam was given some qualities which also God has, although incomparable. He was given qualities of mercy, love, free will and others.

The First Greeting – Adam was instructed to approach a group of Angels sitting near to him and greet them with the words Assalamu alaikum (May God's peace be upon you), they answered 'and upon you be God's peace, mercy and blessings'. From that day forward these words became the greeting of those who submit to God. From the moment of Adam's creation, we, his descendants were instructed to spread peace.

Adam, the Caretaker – God told mankind: "I created Mankind for the sole purpose to worship me, alone". Everything in this world was created for Adam and his descendants, in order to aid us in our ability to worship and know God. Due to God's infinite Wisdom, Adam and his descendants were to be the caretakers on earth, so God taught Adam what he needed to know to perform this duty. God gave Adam the ability to identify and designate names to everything; He taught him language, speech and the ability to communicate. God inspired Adam with the desire to love knowledge. After Adam had learned the names and uses for all things God said to the Angels: "tell me the names of these if you are truthful". They answered 'Glory be to you, we have no knowledge except what you have taught us. Verily, you are the All Knower, the All Wise." God turned to Adam and said: "O Adam! Inform them of their names,' and when he informed them of their names, He said: Did I not tell you that I know the unseen in the heavens and the earth, and I know what you reveal and what you conceal?" Adam tried to speak with the Angels, but they were occupied worshipping God. The Angels were given no specific knowledge or freedom of will, their sole purpose being to worship and praise God. Adam, on the other hand, was given the ability to reason, make choices and identify objects and their purpose. This helped to prepare Adam for his coming role on earth. Adam knew the names of everything, but he was alone in Heaven.

One morning Adam awoke to find a woman gazing at him. Adam was surprised and asked the woman why she had been created. She revealed that she was to ease his loneliness and bring tranquility to him. The Angels questioned Adam. They knew Adam possessed knowledge about and the knowledge mankind would need to occupy the earth. They said 'who is this?' Adam replied 'this is Eve', Hawwa in Arabic; Adam informed the Angels that Eve was named because she was made from a part of him and he, Adam, was a living being. Both Jewish and Christian traditions also maintain that Eve was created from Adam's rib. God said: 'O Mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person (Adam) and from Him (Adam) He created his wife (Eve), and from them both He created many men and women."

The traditions of Prophet Muhammad relate that Eve was created while Adam was sleeping from his shortest left rib and that, after sometime, she was clothed with flesh. He (Prophet Muhammad) used the story of Eve's creation from Adam's rib as a basis for imploring people to be gentle and kind to women. "O Muslims! I advise you to be gentle with women, for they are created from a rib, the most crooked portion of the rib is its upper part. If you try to straighten it, it will break, if you leave it, it will remain crooked; so I urge you to take care of women."

Dwelling in Paradise – Adam and Eve lived in tranquility in Paradise. This, too, is agreed upon by Islamic, Christian and Jewish traditions. Islam tells us that all of Paradise was theirs to enjoy and God said to Adam, "both of you eat freely with pleasure and delight of the things therein, whenever you want" The Quran does not reveal the exact location of this Paradise; God continued his instructions to Adam and Eve by warning them, "do not go near this tree otherwise you both will be of the wrongdoers." However, Satan was waiting to exploit the weakness of mankind.

Who is Satan – Satan is a creature from the world of the Jinns. The Jinn race are a creation of God, made from smokeless fire. They are separate and different from both the Angels and mankind; however, like mankind, they possess the power of reason and can choose between good and evil. Jinns existed before the creation of Adam and Satan was the most righteous amongst them, so much so that he was elevated to a high position amongst the Angels. The Angels prostrated themselves all of them together. Except Satan, he refused to be among the prostrators. God said: 'O Satan! What is your reason for not being among the prostrators?' Satan said: 'I am not the one to prostrate myself to a human being, whom you created from sounding clay of altered black smooth mud.' God said: 'Then get out from Here for verily you are an outcast, cursed one. Verily the curse shall be upon you till the Day of Resurrection.'" Satan was there in the Paradise of Adam and Eve and his vow was to misguide and deceive them and their descendants. Satan said: "surely I will sit in wait against human beings on Your Straight Path. Then I will come to them from before them and behind them, from their right and from their left". Satan is arrogant and considered himself better than Adam, and thus mankind. He is crafty and cunning, but ultimately understands the weakness of human beings; he recognizes their loves and desires. Satan did not say to Adam and Eve "go eat from that tree" nor did he outright tell them to disobey God. He whispered into their hearts and planted disquieting thoughts and desires. Satan said to Adam and Eve, "Your Lord forbade this tree as you might become Angels or Immortals." Their minds became filled with thoughts of the tree, then one day they decided to eat from it. Adam and Eve behaved as all human beings do; they became preoccupied with their own thoughts and the whispers of

Satan and they forgot the warning from God. It is at this point the Jewish and Christian traditions differ greatly from Islam. At no point do the words of God, the Quran or Prophet Muhammad, indicate that Satan came to Adam and Eve in the form of a snake or serpent. Also, Islam does not indicate that Eve was weaker than Adam or that she tempted Adam to disobey God. They both made a mistake in eating the trees fruit. They bear equal responsibility. It was not the original sin spoken about in Christian traditions. The descendants of Adam are not being punished for the sins of their original parents. It was a mistake and God, in His infinite Wisdom and Mercy, forgave both of them.

Islam rejects the Christian concept of original sin and the notion that all humans are born sinners due to the actions of Adam. God says in the Quran: "And no bearer of burdens shall bear another's burden." Every human being is responsible for his or her actions and is born pure and free from sin. Adam and Eve committed a mistake, they repented sincerely and God in His infinite wisdom forgave them. Mankind has a long history of committing mistakes and forgetting. Even so, how was it possible for Adam to have committed such a mistake? The reality was that Adam did not have any experience with the whisperings and ploys of Satan. Adam had seen the arrogance of Satan when he refused to follow the commands of God; he knew that Satan was his enemy but had no familiarity with how to resist Satan's tricks and schemes. Prophet Muhammad told us: "Knowing something is not the same as seeing it." God said: "So he (Satan) misled them with deception." God tested Adam so that he could learn and gain experience. In this way God prepared Adam for his role on earth as a caretaker and a Prophet of God. From this experience, Adam learned a great lesson that Satan is cunning, ungrateful and the avowed enemy of mankind. Adam, Eve and their descendants learned that Satan caused their expulsion from heaven. Obedience to God and enmity towards Satan is the only path back to Heaven. God said to Adam: "Get you down (upon the earth), all of you together, from Paradise, some of you are an enemy to some others. Then, if there comes to you guidance from me, whoever follows My Guidance shall neither go astray nor fall into distress and misery."

The Qur'an tells us that Adam subsequently received from his Lord some words; a supplication to pray, which invoked God's forgiveness. This supplication is very beautiful and can be used when asking for God's pardon of your sins. "Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If you do not forgive and bestow on us Your Mercy, we shall certainly be of the losers." Mankind continues to commit mistakes and wrong doing and through them we only harm ourselves. Our sins and mistakes have not harmed nor will harm God. If God does not forgive us and have mercy on us, it is we who will surely be among the losers. We need God! God said, "earth will be a dwelling place for you and an enjoyment, for a while. 'Therein you shall live

and therein you shall die, and from it you shall be brought out (resurrected).” Adam and Eve left heaven and descended upon earth. Their descent was not one of degradation; rather it was dignified. We, descendants of Adam, do not belong to this earth; we are here temporarily, we belong to the hereafter and are destined to take our place in either Heaven or Hell.

Freedom to Choose – This experience was an essential lesson and demonstrated free will. If Adam and Eve were to live on earth, they needed to be aware of the tricks and schemes of Satan, they also needed to understand the dire consequences of sin, and the infinite Mercy and Forgiveness of God. God knew that Adam and Eve would eat from the tree. He knew Satan would strip away their innocence. It is important to understand that, although God knows the outcome of events before they happen and allows them, he does not force things to happen. Adam had free will and bore the consequences of his deeds. Mankind has free will and thus is free to disobey God; but there are consequences. God praises those who obey his commands and promises them a great reward, He condemns those who disobey him and warns them against doing so. We do know where on earth Adam and Eve descended to earth, but we know it was on Friday. Adam and Eve left Paradise and began their life on earth. God prepared them in many ways. He gave them the experience of struggling against the whisperings and schemes of Satan. He taught Adam the names of everything and instructed him in its properties and usefulness. Adam took up his position as caretaker of the earth and Prophet of God.

Adam, the first Prophet of God was responsible for teaching his wife and offspring how to worship God and seek His forgiveness. Adam established the laws of God and set about trying to support his family and learning to subdue and care for the earth. His task was to perpetuate, cultivate, construct and populate; he was to raise children who would live according to God’s instructions and care for and improve the earth. Adam and Eve’s first children, Cain and his sister, were twins, Abel and his sister, another set of twins, soon followed. Adam and his family lived in peace and harmony. Cain ploughed the earth while Abel raised livestock. Time passed and the occasion came for the sons of Adam to marry. A group of the companions of Prophet Muhammad including Ibn Abbas and Ibn Masud related that inter-marriage of the male of one pregnancy with the female of another had been the practice among Adam’s children. Therefore we know that God’s plan to fill the earth included each of Adam’s sons marrying the twin sister of the other. It seems that beauty has played a part in the attraction of men and women since the beginning. Cain was not pleased with the partner chosen for him. Cain began to envy his brother and refused to obey the command of his father and, in doing so, he disobeyed God. God created man with both good and bad tendencies, and the struggle to overcome our base instincts is part of His test for us. God commanded each son to offer a

sacrifice. His judgement would favor the son whose offer was the most acceptable. Cain offered his worst grain, but Abel offered his best livestock. God accepted Abel's sacrifice, so Cain became enraged, threatening to kill his brother.

“O Muhammad recite to the Jews the story of the two sons of Adam (Abel and Cain) in truth; when each offered a sacrifice to God, it was accepted from one but not the other. The latter said to the former; ‘I will surely kill you.’”

Abel advised his brother that God would accept good deeds from those who fear and serve Him, but reject good deeds of those who are arrogant, selfish and disobedient towards God.

‘Verily God accepts only from those who are pious. If you do stretch your hand against me to kill me I shall never stretch my hand against you to kill you, for I fear God; the Lord of mankind, jinn and all that exists.’”

The First Murder – “So the self (base desires) of the other (latter one) encouraged him and made fair seeming to him the murder of his brother; he murdered him and became one of the losers.” Prophet Muhammad informed us that Cain became angry and hit his brother over the head with a piece of iron. “God sent a crow who scratched the ground to show him how to hide the dead body of his brother. He (the murderer) said: ‘Woe to me! I am not even able to be like this crow and hide the dead body of my brother?’ Then he became one of those who regretted.” Adam was devastated; he had lost both his first and second born sons. One had been murdered; the other was won over by mankind's greatest enemy, Satan. Patiently, Adam prayed for his son and continued to care for the earth. He taught his many children and grandchildren about God. He told them of his own encounter with Satan and advised them to be aware of Satan's tricks and schemes. Years and years passed, Adam grew old and his children spread out across the earth.

Adam's Death – All of mankind are the children of Adam. Prophet Muhammad informed us that God showed Adam his descendants. Adam saw a beautiful light in Prophet David's eyes and loved him, he turned to God and said: “Oh God. Give David forty years from my life.” God granted Adam his request, it was written down and sealed. Adam's life span was supposed to be 1000 years but after 960 years the Angel of death came to Adam. Adam was surprised and said, “But I still have 40 years to live”. The angel of death reminded him of his gift of 40 years to his beloved descendant Prophet David, but Adam denied it. Many, many years later, the last Prophet Muhammad said: “Adam denied so the children of Adam deny, Adam forgot and his children forget; Adam made mistakes and his children make mistakes.” This is part of human nature, mankind forgets and when we forget we deny and reject. Adam forgot and God forgave him. Adam then submitted to the will of God and died. The Angels descended

and washed the body of Prophet Adam an odd number of times; they dug the grave and buried the body of the father of mankind, Adam. Before his death Adam reminded his children that God would never leave them alone or without guidance. He told them God would send other Prophets with unique names, traits and miracles, but they would all call to the same thing, the worship of the One True God. Adam appointed his son "Seth" as his successor.

Prophet Idris as (Enoch)

Idris ibn Yard ibn Mahla'il is an ancient prophet mentioned in the Qur'an. He is considered to be the second prophet in Islam after Adam. He is described in the Qur'an as trustworthy and patient, and the Qur'an also says that he was exalted to a high station because of this and other parallels, traditionally Idris has been identified with the Biblical Enoch and therefore Islamic tradition usually places Idris in the early generations of Adam and considers him one of the oldest prophets mentioned in the Qur'an, placing him sometime between Adam and Noah. According to the hadith, narrated by Malik Anas, it is said that on Muhammad's Night Journey (Miraj) he encountered Idris in the fourth Heaven. Idris's father was Yarid and his mother was Barkanah. Idris's wife was a woman named Aadanah. Idris also had a son whose name was Methuselah; who would eventually be the grandfather of Prophet Nuh (Noah). This means that Idris was the great-grandfather of Noah. Idris is mentioned twice in the Qur'an, where he is described as, a wise man and, He was a man of truth and sincerity and a prophet: And We raised him to a lofty station. Idris was born in Babylon, a city in present-day Iraq. Before he received the Revelation, he followed the rules revealed to Prophet Seth, the son of Adam. When Idris grew older, Allah bestowed Prophethood on him. During his lifetime all people were Muslim; no one associated partners with Allah. Afterwards, Idris left his hometown of Babylon because a great number of his people committed many sins even after he told them not to do so. Some of the Muslims left with Idris. It was hard for them to leave their home. They said to Prophet Idris: "If we leave Babylon, where will we find a place like it?" Prophet Idris said: "If we immigrate for the sake of Allah, He will provide for us." So the people went with Prophet Idris and they reached the land of Egypt. They saw the Nile River. Idris stood at its bank and mentioned Allah, the Exalted, by saying: "Subhanallah."

Islamic literature narrates that Idris was made prophet around the age of 40, which parallels the age when Muhammad began to prophesy, he lived during a time when people had begun worshiping fire. Idris divided his time into two. For three days he preached and four days he devoted solely to the worship of God. Idris was among the first men to use the pen as well as being one of the first men to observe movement of stars and set out scientific weights and measures. These attributes remain consistent with the identification of Enoch, Idris. Allah revealed to Idris: 'every day I will raise the same amount of deeds as for all Adam's children. Idris wanted to increase his deeds and devotion. A friend of his from the angels visited him and Idris said to him: 'please speak to the angel of death, so I could increase my deeds.' The angel carried him on his wings and went up into the heavens. When they reached the fourth heaven, they met the angel of death, who was descending down towards earth. The angel spoke to him, about what Idris had said. The angel of death said: 'But where is Idris?' He

replied, 'He is on my back.' The angel of death said: 'How astonishing! I was sent and told to seize his soul in the fourth heaven. I kept thinking how I could seize it in the fourth heaven when he is on earth?' Then he took his soul out of his body, and that is what is meant by the verse: 'And we raised him to a high station.'

Early accounts of Idris' life attributed thirty portions of revealed scripture to him. Therefore, Idris was understood by many early commentators to be both a prophet as well as a messenger. Several modern commentators have linked this sentiment with Biblical Apocrypha such as the Book of Enoch and the second Book of Enoch. Idris is generally accepted to be the same as Enoch. Many of the early Qur'anic commentators said: "Idris was of the posterity of Seth and a forefather of Noah, and his name was Enoch. Idris is mentioned twice in the Quran where he is mentioned as among those who patiently persevered. From authentic books, it is narrated from Wahab that Idris was a well-built man with a broad chest. He had less hair on his body and more on his head. His one ear was bigger than the other. He had scanty hair on his chest and spoke in a low voice. While walking his feet used to come close to one another. He is known as Idris because he used to teach about the generosity of Allah and the excellence of Islam. He pondered about the majesty, awe-inspiring and glory of Allah, and that the sky, the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, clouds and all other creations have a creator who by His power has created them, formed and arranged them. Guilty is the one who does not worship Him who has the right to be worshipped. With this in mind, he formed a private conference among his nation and advised, them to remember Allah. He also warned them about His punishment. He invited them towards His worship. Due to this propagation, people started to join him. At first, they numbered seven, then reached seventy, then seven hundred, then one thousand became his followers. Then Idris said to them, "Let us select a hundred pious people." So from the one thousand, seventy were selected, then from the seventy, ten were selected and from the ten, seven people were finally chosen. Then he said, "Come, let the seven of us pray and all the others shall say 'Amen'. Perhaps our Creator may guide us due to our prayers." They placed their hands on the earth and prayed, but nothing happened. They raised their hands towards the sky and prayed. Allah revealed upon Idris and selected him as His Messenger. Allah guided him and his companions towards His Worship. So they were involved in the worship of Allah and did not associate with anyone so much so that Allah raised Idris to heaven. Except for a few, most of those who had believed in Idris deviated and there were disputes and differences among them. Nuh was appointed over them. According to a hadith from Abu-Dharr, it is narrated that thirty books were revealed on Idris and other traditions state that he was the first person who had initiated writing with a pen. He also used to stitch clothes and wear them. Before this, the people used to cover their private parts with leaves. Idris used to stitch clothes and worship and praise Allah. From reliable

traditions it is narrated from Imam Jafar Sadiq that Masjid as-Sahlah was the residence of Idris where he used to stitch clothes and worship Allah. Allah fulfills the desire of one who supplicates at that place and will elevate his status on the Day of Judgment as it was the place of Idris.

It is narrated from Imam Jafar Sadiq that at the early part of the Prophethood of Idris there lived a tyrant king. Once when he went out for a stroll and passed through a land rich in greenery, which belonged to a pious believer. This believer had abandoned all false religions and was disgusted with transgressors. He kept his distance from them. The king liked the piece of land for himself, so he inquired from his vizier regarding its owner. The vizier replied that it belonged to a certain believer from their kingdom. The king called the believer and said that he wanted his piece of land. The believer replied that his family needed the plot of land more than the king. The king asked him to sell it to him but the believer refused, the king became angry and returned to his kingdom. The king had a wife from Iraq (Barak) whom he loved very much and whom he consulted frequently. On reaching his kingdom, he called her. She saw that he was in a very angry mood and inquired as to what had aroused his temper. He narrated the incident of the believer's land. She replied that only he gets angry who does not have the power to take revenge. "If you don't want to execute or behead him without any excuse then I will show you a way to kill him by which the land will be yours and even his family members will not blame you for his death." The king asked her what plan she had in mind. She replied that one of her group (from Azarak) will be sent to arrest him and he would testify that the person has turned away from the king's religion. "In this way you can kill him and seize his land." The king agreed to her suggestion. So groups from Iraq, who followed the queen's religion and who considered lawful the slaughtering of a believer were called. They testified before the king that the man had turned away from the state religion. On hearing this, the king ordered his execution and captured his land. Allah was angry at the believer's murder and He revealed to Idris to go and tell the tyrant ruler, "Was he not content with killing the believer that he also seized his land? I swear by my majesty and power that I will avenge his murder on the day of Resurrection in this world, I will abolish your ruler-ship. I will change your honor and status into humiliation and disgrace. And dogs will devour the flesh of your wife. Has My tolerance and endurance, which was supposed to test you, made you arrogant?" Idris addressed the king, "O tyrant ruler! I am the messenger of Allah!" and then narrated the divine message. The king ordered Idris to leave his court and warned him that he would not be able to save himself. The king told his wife about his discussion with Idris. She said, "Do not to fear the Messenger-ship of Idris's God. I will send someone to kill Idris so that the messenger-ship of his God is nullified." The king agreed to her suggestion and gave his consent.

Among the friends of Idris there were some who used to attend the royal court. Idris informed them of the revelation. They became fearful that Idris would be killed. The queen sent forty Iraqi men to kill Idris. They reached the place where Idris used to sit with his companions but did not find him there, so they returned. When his friends saw that they had come to kill Idris they dispersed and then met Idris. They informed him that forty men had come to kill him, so he should be cautious. Idris prayed to Allah, "O my Sustainer! You sent me to that tyrant to deliver your message. He threatened me and is after my blood. Allah revealed to Idris to keep his distance from the king. "I swear by my honor that I will enforce my law on him and prove your word and my messenger-ship to be true." Idris said, "O my Nourisher, I have a wish." Allah said, "Ask me and I shall fulfill it." Idris said, "Till such time as I allow, there should be no rain." Allah said, "The country will be ruined and people will starve to death." Idris said, "Whatever may happen, this is my wish." Allah replied, "All right. I accept it, and until the time you pray I will not send rain. I am the most truthful to my promise." Hearing this Idris briefed his companions about his discussion with Allah and said, "O my friends leave this country, go somewhere else." There were twenty of them and they spread out in different directions. The people came to know about the prayers of Idris. Idris himself sought refuge on a hill. Allah appointed an Angel who used to bring food to him every evening. Idris fasted during the day and broke his fast in the evening. Allah destroyed the kingdom of the tyrant king. The king was killed, his kingdom destroyed and the flesh of his wife was eaten by dogs due to their transgression against a believer.

Another unjust tyrant oppressor occupied the throne. Twenty years passed without a drop of rain. The people were in severe hardship and difficulties and their condition deteriorated. They used to bring food supplies from far off countries. When their condition turned from bad to worse they discussed among themselves that this calamity was due to the prayer of Idris who had asked Allah that until the time he allowed, there should be no rain. "We are not aware of his whereabouts because he has concealed himself from us." They decided that Allah is more Merciful than Idris, let's pray to Him. So they wore coarse clothes and applied mud on their head, they cried and repented to Allah. Allah felt pity on them and revealed upon Idris, "Your people are repenting, wailing and weeping and I am God the Beneficent and Merciful and the one who accepts repentance and forgives sins. I have mercy on them and wish to fulfill their desire for rain. You requested me not to send rain until you pray for it. Therefore, O Idris pray to me so I may send rain for them." Idris said, "O my Nourisher, I will not pray for rain." Allah once again revealed on Idris to pray for rain. Idris again refused. So Allah recalled the Angel who was appointed to bring food for Idris. When it was evening and food did not arrive Idris became restless but waited patiently. The second day when again food did not arrive his restlessness increased. On the third day he lost patience and appealed to Allah, "O my

Nourisher before taking my soul, you have discontinued my sustenance?" Allah revealed, "O Idris! You are complaining in three days but you are not concerned about your nation that has suffered for twenty years? I informed you that they were suffering, I want to be merciful and I want you to pray for rain so that I can send rain. But you abstained from it, so I wanted you to know what hunger is and you lost your patience and complained. Now come out of the cave and search for your sustenance. I am leaving you on your own." Hearing this Idris came down from the hill to procure food. When he came near the town he saw smoke coming out from a house. An old lady had made two chapattis and was roasting them on the fire. He requested her to give him something to eat, as he was very weak and restless due to hunger. She said due to the curse of Idris, Allah has not given left them anything and swore that except for the two chapattis there was nothing in the house. She told him to leave the city and go somewhere else for food. Idris said, at least give me one chapatti so that I can save my life and can start walking. She said I have only two chapattis, one for me and the other for my son. If I give you my chapatti, I will die and if I give you my child's he would die. I don't have anything else to give you." Idris said, "Your son is young, half a chapatti will suffice him and half will help me to live." The woman ate her share and distributed the other one between Idris and her son. When the child saw Idris eating from his share of the chapatti, he started crying and was so disturbed that he died. The woman shouted out, "Stranger! You have killed my child." Idris said, "Do not fear, by the order of Allah I will make him alive." Saying this he kept his hands on the shoulder of the boy and said, "O soul who has left the body of this child, by the order of Allah return to his body again. I am Idris a Messenger of Allah." The boy came back to life. The woman saw this and said, "I witness that you are Prophet Idris." She ran out shouting, "O people! Congratulations to you and glad tidings that we will be relieved of our troubles and sufferings as Idris has returned to our city." Idris came out and reached the palace of the first tyrant king, which was on a hill. A group of people came and complained, "O Idris! These last twenty years, you did not have any mercy on us. We were in such difficulties and miseries and many of us starved to death. We request you now pray to Allah for rain." Idris replied, "I will not pray until this tyrant king and the people of your city come to me walking, barefooted and request me." When the king heard this, he sent forty people to kill Idris. When they reached Idris, he cursed them and they all died. When the king heard this, he sent 500 people to arrest him. They came to Idris and said, "We have come to take you to the king." Idris replied, "Look at these forty men; see how they are lying dead. If you all do not go back you too will meet the same fate." They said, "O Idris, you have involved us in hunger for twenty years and now you are cursing us. Is there no mercy in your heart?" Idris replied, "I will not go to that tyrant nor will I pray for rain until that tyrant and all the people come to me walking barefooted." Hearing this, the people returned to the king and repeated the statement of Idris. So the King together with the people came to Idris and all stood helplessly before him and requested him to pray

for rain. Idris prayed. That very moment clouds gathered in the sky, there was thunder and lightning and it started raining. It rained so much that they feared they would drown. Finally, they all returned home.

Jafar Sadiq narrated that an angel was under the wrath of Allah, his hair and wings were cut off, he was lying on an island for a long time. When Allah appointed Idris, that angel came to Idris and requested him to pray for him so that Allah may be pleased with him and return his hair and wings. Prophet Idris prayed for him and Allah restored his hair and wings. The angel asked Idris, "Do you wish anything from me?" Idris said, "Yes, I wish that you take me up to the heavens so that I can see the Angel of Death. The angel took the Prophet to the 4th heaven on his wings. There he saw the Angel of Death sitting, moving his head in a peculiar way. Idris saluted him and asked him the cause for turning his head in that manner. The Angel of Death replied, "Allah has ordered me to take your soul between the 4th and 5th heaven." Idris pleaded, "O Allah! How is it possible when the distance up to the 4th heaven is 500 years of travel and the distance between the 4th and 5th heaven is another 500 years of travel? "This is the distance between one heaven and another." Saying this, the Angel of Death took away his soul. These are the words of Allah, which means "And we raised him high in heaven".

Idris – Enoch (Biblical Name) – As a result of the efforts of the Prophet Sheth (pbuh) some people began to believe in The Almighty. As the time passed by, they shifted their attention towards the worshipping the statue of their prophet. They became polytheists and faithless. They adopted indecent ways of life. Under such circumstances, The Almighty sent the Prophet Idris (pbuh) for the reformation and guidance of those who had gone astray. The Holy Qur'an mentions him in the following verse: "Commemorate Idris in the Book, verily he was a man of truth and a Prophet and we raised him to a lofty station

Preaching and Opposition – Prophet Idris (pbuh) preached monotheism. He directed his people to abandon idol-worship. He emphasized them not to be captivated by the love for wealth and property. He advised them to abstain from drinking wine and other intoxicants. Only a few men paid attention to his teachings but majority of the people opposed him bitterly. Prophet Idris (pbuh) did not lose heart and continued preaching with unshakable constancy. He is appreciated for his firm faith and forbearance in the following verses of the Holy Qur'an: "All (Isma'il, Zhul-Kill and Idris) were men of constancy and patience. We admitted them into Our Mercy, for they were of the righteous ones.

Migration to Egypt – Inspire of the untiring efforts the Prophet Idris (pbuh) could not attain considerable success and felt disgusted with the indifferent attitude of the public. He was directed to migrate to Egypt and settle on the banks of the river Nile. He preached the religion

of The Almighty among the various tribes and reminded them to be good and civilized. Consequently, he brought a remarkable change in the moral and social life of the people.

Some sayings of the Prophet Idris (pbuh):

1. Do not feel jealous of the prosperity of others.
2. He who has unlimited desires is deprived of the wealth of contentment.
3. One should be sincere in acts of devotion.
4. It is an act of grave sin to take false oaths.
5. Patience is key to victory.
6. He who controls his passions is fortunate. Only a good act will be a living intercessor before The Almighty on the Day of Judgment.
7. One who is desirous of attaining perfection in knowledge; should have no concern with immoral acts.

The Learned Prophet – Prophet Idris was born 100 years after the death of the Prophet Adam (pbuh). He was the first man who learnt to write. It is said that thirty portions of The Almighty's Sacred Scriptures were revealed to him. He was the inventor of the science of the Astronomy and the Arithmetic.

Death Event – Prophet Idris passed away at the age of 365 years. Mutwaslah was one of his distinguished sons who made his mark.

Prophet Noah

Nuh ibn Lamech ibn Methuselah, known as Noah in the Old Testament, is recognized in Islam as a Prophet and Apostle of God. He is a highly important figure in Islamic tradition, as he is counted amongst the earliest prophets sent by God to mankind. According to Islam, Noah's mission was to save a wicked world, plunged in depravity and sin. God put Noah in charge with the duty of preaching to his people to make them abandon idolatry and to worship only the One Creator and to live good and pure lives. Although he preached the Message of God with immense zeal, his people refused to mend their ways, leading to his building the Ark under the watch eye of God and the famous event of the Great Flood in which all the evil people of his time perished. Noah's preaching and prophet-hood spanned 950 years according to the Qur'an. Noah's mission had a double character: he had to warn his people, asking them to call for repentance and at the same time, he had to preach about God's mercy and forgiveness, promising them the glad tidings God would provide if they led righteous lives. References to Noah are scattered throughout the Qur'an, there is even an entire Surah carrying his name. Little is known of Noah's personal history before his alleged call to prophecy. However, the Qur'an records him to have been the son of Lamech and grandson of Methuselah, one of the patriarchs from the generations of Adam. Noah was neither the leader of the tribe nor a very rich man but, even before being called to prophecy, he worshiped God faithfully and was in the words of the Qur'an, "a devotee most grateful". According to Islam, He conveyed the message for over 950 years. For Muslims, Noah was married to a woman whose name is not mentioned in the Qur'an. Most Muslims simply call her by her biblical name Naamah. Islamic scholars agree that Noah had four sons whose names were Ham, Shem, Yam and Japheth. According to the Qur'an, one of Noah's sons was a disbeliever who refused to come aboard the Ark, instead preferring to climb a mountain, where he drowned. It is agreed among most Islamic scholars that Yam was the one who drowned; the other three remained believers. The Qur'an states that Noah's wife was not a believer, she did not join him; the sons of Noah are not expressly mentioned in the Qur'an. The Qur'an indicates a great calamity, enough to have destroyed Noah's people, but to have saved him and his generations to come.

Historical narrative in Islam - Islamic literature recounts that in the Generations of Adam, many men and women continued to follow Adam's original teachings, worshiping Allah (God) alone and remaining righteous. Among Adam's descendants there were many brave and pious men, greatly loved and revered by their respective communities. Upon the death of these elders, people felt enormous grief and some felt prompted to make statues of these people in remembrance of them. Then, gradually, through the generations many forgot what such

statues were for and began to worship them, along with many other idols. In order to guide the people God appointed Noah with the duty of being the next prophet to humanity.

Early preaching - According to Islamic belief, Noah began preaching to his people both verbally and by example. He would praise God consistently and he urged his people to do the same, warning his tribe of the punishment they would face if they did not mend their ignorant ways. The Qur'an states that Noah repeatedly told his people: "O my people, worship Allah; you have no deity other than Him. Indeed, I fear for you the punishment of a tremendous Day!" Early on, a few were moved by Noah's words but the powerful and wealthy members of the tribe refused to hear his call. The unbelievers at the time were impelled to rebel by various evil motives. Firstly, they were extremely envious and jealous of men superior to them. Secondly, the people were ignorant of the weak and low-ranking, who were frequently superior intellectually, morally and spiritually. As a result of their ignorance, they were arrogant and mocked all who they felt were inferior to them. Saying, "Are we to believe you, when those who follow you are the most hopeless of people?" Noah responded: "Their judgment rests only with my Lord, if you could perceive." When Noah preached the faith of God to them, all they did was criticize the messenger, abuse the message and call the whole warning a lie. He then went on to explain the Message in depth, ensuring them that it was not a message of destruction but it was a message with mercy from God, and that their acts would lead to destruction if they did not accept faith. He questioned them, asking why they would not accept what would benefit them in the near future. Noah went further and told his community that he asked of no reward from them, telling them his only reward would be from God. But his people threatened to stone him. As time passed, Noah became firmer in his preaching. When the unbelievers began insulting those who accepted God's message, believing that Noah would send those faithful ones away to attract the wealthy unbelievers, Noah revealed that the arrogant and ignorant rich, were wicked and sinful ones. His people accused him of being soothsayer or like God. Noah declared that he was by no means a fortune-teller, pretending to reveal secrets which are not worth revealing. Noah also denied accusations claiming Noah was an angel, always maintaining he was a human messenger. When the people refused to acknowledge their sinfulness, Noah told them that it was not Noah, but God that would punish them, however God pleased.

Noah's prayer - The Qur'an states that Noah prayed to God, telling Him that his preaching only made his people disbelieve further. Noah told God how they had closed their minds to accepting the message, so that the light of truth should not affect their thinking. Noah told God how he had used all the resources of classical preaching, conveying the message both in public places and with individuals in private. Noah spoke of how he had told the people the rewards they would receive if they became righteous, namely that God would supply plentiful rain as a blessing, and that God would also guarantee them an increase in children and wealth.

Building of the Ark - According to the Qur'an, one day, Noah received a revelation from God, in which he was told that no one would believe the message now besides those who have already submitted to God. Noah's frustration at the defiance of his people led him to ask God to not leave even one sinner upon earth. God decreed that a terrible flood would come, He ordered Noah to build a ship (Safina) which would save him and the believers from this dreadful calamity. Ever obedient to God's instructions, Noah went out in search of material with which to build the vessel. When Noah began building the Ark, people laughed at him. Their conclusion was that he was surely a madman, they could not find any other reason why a man would build a huge vessel when no sea or river was nearby. Although Noah was now very old, the aged patriarch continued to work tirelessly until, at last, the Ship was finished.

Noah is praised by God in the Qur'an – it shows his great status amongst the prophets. In Surah Al-Isra, verse 3, God states: "Verily he was a devotee most grateful." Also, from the Qur'an it states: In the old days, Noah cried to us, for we are the best to hear a prayer. And we delivered him and his people from the Great Calamity, and made his progeny to endure on this earth; And We left this blessing for him among generations to come in later times: "Peace and salutation to Noah among the nations!" The Qur'an also states: "Allah did choose Adam and Noah, the family of Abraham and the family of Imran above all people,"

The story of Noah - The Qur'an states that Noah was inspired by God, like other prophets such as Ibrahim (Abraham), Isma'il (Ishmael), Ishaq (Isaac), Ya'qub (Jacob), Isa (Jesus), Ilyas' (Elijah), Ayyub (Job), Harun (Aaron), Yunus (Jonah), Daud (David) and Muhammad, and that he was a faithful messenger. Noah had firm belief in the oneness of God, and preached Islam. He continuously warned people of the painful doom that was coming and asked them to accept one God instead of worshipping idols. He called on people to serve God, and said that nobody but God could save them. He said that the time of the flood was appointed and could not be delayed, and that people should submit to God. God commanded Noah to build a ship, the Ark, and as he was building it, the chieftains passed him and mocked him. Upon its completion, the ship is said to be loaded with pairs of every animal available at that time, along Noah's household and a group of believers who did submit to God. The people who denied the

message of Noah, including one of his own sons, drowned. The final resting place of the ship was referred to as Mount Judi. Noah is called a grateful servant. Both Noah and Abraham were taught the Prophethood and the scripture.

Noah's family - Noah's wife, Naamah is referred to in the Qur'an as an evil woman. When God emphasizes upon the notion that everyone will be for themselves only on the Day of Judgement and that marital relations will not aid you when judgement takes place, the Qur'an says: Allah sets forth an example for the unbelievers regarding the wife of Noah and the wife of Lut: they were under two of our righteous servants, but they were false to their husbands, they profited nothing before Allah on their account, but were told: "Enter the Fire along with others! In contrast, the wife of the Pharaoh of the Exodus, Asiya, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, are referred to as among the best of women. This adds to the notion that, on the Last Day, everyone will be judged according to their own deeds.

Nuh (Noah) - According to Genesis 5, Noah was born one hundred and twenty six years after the death of 'Adam. Ibn Abbas narrated that the Prophet Muhammad said, "The period between Adam and Noah was ten centuries." Noah was born 1056 years after Adam's creation. Thus, keep in mind, however that any statement or narratives taken from the People of the Book are not necessarily credible. For many generations Noah's people had been worshipping statues that they called gods. They believed that these gods would bring them good, protect them from evil and provide all their needs. They gave their idols names such as Waddan, Suwa 'an, Yaghuthah, Ya'augah, and Nasran. These idols represented, respectively, manly power; mutability, beauty; brute strength, swiftness, sharp sight, insight according to the power they thought these gods possessed. Allah the Almighty revealed: "They (idolaters) have said, 'you shall not leave your gods nor shall you leave Wadd, nor Suwa, nor Yaghuth, nor Ya'uq nor Nasr. Originally these were the names of good people who had lived among them. After their deaths, statues of them were erected to keep their memories alive. After sometime, however, people began to worship these statues. Later generations did not even know why they had been erected; they only knew their parents had prayed to them. That is how idol worshipping developed. Since they had no understanding of Allah the Almighty Who would punish them for their evil deeds, they became cruel and immoral. Ibn Abbas explained, "Following upon the death of those righteous men, Satan inspired their people to erect statues in the places where they used to sit. They did this, but these statues were not worshiped until the coming generations deviated from the right way of life. Iblis crept into their minds saying: 'Your forefathers used to worship them, and through that worship they got rain.' So they worshipped them."

Ibn Hatim related this story, "Waddan was a righteous man who was loved by his people. When he died, they withdrew to his grave in the land of Babylonia and were overwhelmed by sadness. When Iblis saw their sorrow, he disguised himself in the form of a man saying: 'I have seen your sorrow because of this man's death; can I make a statue like him which could be put in your meeting place to make you remember him?' They said: 'Yes.' So he made a statue like himself and put it in their meeting place in order to be reminded of him. When Iblis saw their interest, he said: 'Can I build a statue in every home?' They agreed. They taught their children about the statues instead of Allah. People made sand pictures of ages of the past, they made these pictures into statues, so that their forms could be fully recognized; afterwards they were worshipped instead of Allah. It was narrated that 'Umm Salamah told Prophet Muhammad about a church called Maria which they had seen in the land of Abyssinia. They described its beauty and the pictures therein. He said, "Those are people who build places of worship on the grave of every dead man who was righteous and then make therein those pictures. Those are the worst of creation to Allah." Worshipping anything other than Allah is a tragedy that results not only in the loss of freedom; its serious effect reaches man's mind and destroys it as well. Almighty Allah created man and his mind with its purpose set on achieving knowledge the most important of which is that Allah Alone is the Creator and all the rest are worshipper's slaves

Noah was the only intellectual not caught in the whirlpool of man's destruction which was caused by polytheism. Allah in His Mercy sent His messenger Noah to guide his people. Noah was an excellent speaker and a very patient man. He pointed out to his people the mysteries of life and the wonders of the universe. He pointed out how the night is regularly followed by the day and that the balance between these opposites were designed by Allah the Almighty for our good. The night gives coolness and rest while the day gives warmth and awakens activity. The sun encourages growth, keeping all plants and animals alive, while the moon and stars assist in the reckoning of time, direction and seasons. He pointed out that the ownership of the heavens and the earth belongs only to the Divine Creator. Therefore, he explained to his people, there cannot have been more than one deity. He clarified to them how the devil had deceived them for so long and that the time had come for this deceit to stop. Noah spoke to them of Allah's glorification of man, how he created him and provided him with sustenance and blessings. He told them that idol worshipping was a suffocating injustice to the mind. He warned them not to worship anyone but Allah and described the terrible punishment Allah would mete out if they continued in their evil ways. The people listened to him in silence. His words were a shock to their stagnating minds. Noah's people were divided after his warning. His words touched the hearts of the weak, the poor, and the miserable and soothed their wounds with its mercy. As for the rich, the strong, the mighty and the rulers they looked upon

the warning with cold distrust. They believed they would be better off if things stayed as they were. Therefore they started their war of words against Noah. First they accused Noah of being only human like themselves. "The chiefs of the disbelievers among his people said: 'We see you but a man like ourselves. He, however, had never said anything other than that. He asserted that, indeed, he was only a human being; Allah had sent a human messenger because the earth was inhabited by humans. If it had been inhabited by angels Allah would have sent an angelic messenger. The contest between the polytheists and Noah continued. The rulers had thought at first that Noah's call would soon fade out on its own. When they found that his call attracted the poor, the helpless and common labourers, they started to verbally attack and taunt him, "You are only followed by the poor, the meek and the worthless." Allah the Almighty told us: "Indeed we sent Noah to his people (he said), 'I have come to you as a plain warner that you worship none but Allah, surely, I fear for you the torment of a painful Day.' The chiefs of the disbelievers among his people said, 'We see you like ourselves, nor do we see any follow you but the meanest among us and they too followed you without thinking. And we do not see in you any merit above us, in fact we think you are a liar. Thus the conflict between Noah and the heads of his people intensified. The disbelievers tried to bargain: "Listen Noah, if you want us to believe in you, then dismiss your believers. They are meek and poor, while we are elite and rich; no faith can include us both." Noah listened to his community and realized they were being obstinate. However, he was gentle in his response. He explained to his people that he could not dismiss the believers as they were not his guests but Allah's.

Noah appealed to them: "O my people! I ask of you no wealth for it, my reward is from none but Allah. I am not going to drive away those who have believed. Surely, they are going to meet their Lord, but I see that you are a people that are ignorant. O my people! Who will help me against Allah, if I drove them away? Will you not then give a thought? And I do not say to you that with me are the Treasures of Allah nor that I know the unseen, nor do I say I am an angel, and I do not say of those whom your eyes look down upon that Allah will not bestow any good on them. Allah knows what is in hearts. In that case, I should, indeed be one of the wrongdoers. Noah refuted the arguments of the disbelievers with the noble knowledge of the prophets. It is the logic of intellect that rids itself of personal pride and interests. The rulers were tired of Noah's arguments. Allah the Exalted related their attitude: "They said, 'O Noah! You have disputed and prolonged the dispute with us, now bring upon us what you threaten us with, if you are of truthful." He said, 'Only Allah will bring punishment on you, if He will, and then you will not escape. And my advice will not profit you, even if I wish to give you counsel, if Allah's Will is to keep you astray. He is your Lord! And to Him you shall return." The battle continued; the arguments between the disbelievers and Noah prolonged. When all the

refutations of the disbelievers collapsed and they had no more to say, they began to be rude and insulted Allah's Prophet: "The leaders of his people said, 'Verily, we see you in plain error.'" Noah responded in the manner of the Prophets: "O my people! There is no error in me, but I am a Messenger from the Lord of the 'Alamin (mankind, jinn and all that exists)! I convey to you the Messages of my Lord and give sincere advice to you. And I know from Allah what you do not know." Noah continued appealing to his people to believe in Allah hour after hour, day after day, year after year. He reminded his people and called them to Allah in secret and openly. He gave them examples, explained Allah's signs and illustrated Allah's ability in the formation of His creatures. But whenever he called them to Allah, they ran away. Whenever he urged them to ask Allah to forgive them, they put their fingers in their ears and became too proud to listen to the truth. Allah the Almighty related what Noah faced: "Verily, We sent Noah to his people saying, 'Warn your people before there comes to them a painful torment.' "He said, 'O my people! Verily, I am a plain Warner to you that you should worship Allah Alone, be dutiful to Him and obey me, Allah will forgive your sins and respite you to an appointed term. Verily, the term of Allah when it comes, cannot be delayed, if you but knew.' "He said: 'O my Lord! Verily, I have called my people to accept the doctrine of Islamic Monotheism, but all my calling added nothing but to their flight from the truth. Verily! Every time I called unto them that you might forgive them, they put their fingers in their ears, they cover themselves up with their garments, and are persistent in their refusal, and they magnified themselves in pride. Then verily, I called to them aloud; then verily, I proclaimed to them in public, and I have appealed to them in private, I said to them: 'Ask forgiveness from your Lord, Verily, He is Oft Forgiving; He will send rain to you in abundance, and give you increase in wealth and children, and bestow on you gardens and bestow on you rivers. What is the matter with you, why do you not fear Allah's punishment, and you do not hope for a reward from Allah nor do you believe in His Oneness. While He has created you in different stages. Do you not see how Allah has created the seven heavens one above another, and has made the moon a light therein and made the sun a lamp? And Allah has brought you forth from the dust of earth. Afterwards He will return you into it (the earth), and bring you forth again on the Day of Resurrection, Allah has spread out the earth for you so you may go about.

Noah said, 'My Lord! They have disobeyed me, and followed those who's wealth and children give no increase, only loss. They have plotted a mighty plot. They said, we shall not leave our gods, nor shall we leave Wadd, Suwa, Yaghuth, Ya'uq nor Nasr.' Indeed they have led many astray. O Allah! Do not grant any increase to the polytheists". Because of their sins they were drowned, then were made them enter the Fire and they found none to help them instead of Allah. Noah continued to call his people to believe in Allah for nine hundred and fifty years. Allah the Almighty said: "Indeed we sent Noah to his people and he stayed among them for

nine hundred and fifty years, inviting them to believe in the Oneness of Allah (Monotheism) and discard the false gods and other deities. It happened that every passing generation reminded the succeeding one not to believe Noah and to wage war against him. The father used to teach his child about the matter that was between himself and Noah and counsel him to reject his call when he reached adulthood. Noah saw the number of believers not increasing, while that of the disbelievers was. He was sad for his people, but he never reached the point of despair. There came a day when Allah revealed to Noah that no others would believe. Allah inspired him not to grieve for them at which point Noah prayed that the disbelievers be destroyed. He said: "My Lord! Leave not one of the disbelievers on earth. If you leave them, they will mislead your slaves and they will beget none but wicked disbelievers." Allah accepted Noah's prayer. The case was closed, and He passed His judgment on the disbelievers in the form of a flood. Allah the Exalted ordered His worshipper Noah to build an ark with His knowledge and instructions and with the help of angels. Almighty Allah commanded: "And construct the ship under Our Eyes and with Our Inspiration and address me not on behalf of those who did wrong; they are surely to be drowned." Noah chose a place outside the city, far from the sea. He collected wood and tools and began to day and night to build the ark. The people's mockery continued, "O Noah! Does carpentry appeal to you more than Prophethood? Why are you building an ark so far from the sea? Are you going to drag it to the water or is the wind going to carry it for you?" Noah replied, "You will come to know who will be put to shame and suffer." The ship was constructed, Noah sat and waited for Allah's command. Allah revealed to him that when water miraculously gushed forth from the oven of Noah's house that would be the sign of the start of the flood, and the sign for Noah to act. The terrible day arrived when the oven at Noah's house overflowed. Noah hurried to open the ark and summoned the believers. He also took with him a pair, male and female, of every type of animal, bird and insect. Seeing him taking these creatures to the ark, the people laughed loudly, "Noah must be out of his head! What is he going to do with the animals?"

Almighty Allah narrated: "So it was till then there came Our Command and the oven gushed forth (water like fountains from the earth). We said: 'Embark therein, of each kind two (male and female), and your family, except him against whom the Word has already gone forth, and those who believe.' And none believed him except a few." Noah's wife was not a believer with him so she did not join him; neither did one of Noah's sons, who was secretly a disbeliever but pretended faith in front of Noah. Likewise most of the people were disbelievers and did not go on board. Water rose from the cracks in the earth; there was not a crack from which water did not rise. Rain poured from the sky in quantities never seen before on earth. Water continued pouring from the sky rising from the cracks; hour after hour the level rose. The seas and waves

invaded the land. The interior of the earth moved in a strange way, and the ocean floors lifted suddenly, flooding the dry land. For the first time, the earth was submerged.

Allah told the story thus: Noah said, 'Embark with the Name of Allah. Surely, my Lord is Oft Forgiving, most Merciful.' So the ship sailed with them amidst the waves like mountains, and Noah called out to his son, who had separated himself, 'O my son! Embark with us and be not with the disbelievers.' The son replied, 'I will betake myself to a mountain, it will save me from the water.' Noah said, 'This day there is no saviour from the Decree of Allah except him on whom He has mercy.' And a wave came in between them so the son was among the drowned. It was said, 'O Earth! Swallow up your water, and O sky, withhold your rain!' The water diminished and the Decree of Allah was fulfilled. The ship rested on Mount Judi, and it was said, 'Away with the people who are polytheists, and wrongdoers!' "Noah called upon his Lord and said, 'O my Lord! Verily, my son is of my family! Certainly, Your Promise is true, and you are the Most Just of the judges.' He said, 'O Noah! Surely, he is not of your family; verily, his work is unrighteous, so do not ask me that of which you have no knowledge! I remind you, lest you would be of the ignorant.' Noah said, 'O my Lord! I seek refuge with you from asking you that of which I have no knowledge. And unless you forgive me and have Mercy on me, I would indeed be one of the losers.' It was said, 'O Noah! Come down from the ship with peace from us and blessings on you and on the people who are with you, but there will be other people to whom We shall grant their pleasures for a while, but in the end a painful torment will reach them from Us.

Al-Qur'an - With the issue of the divine command, calm returned to earth, the water retreated, and the dry land shone once again in the rays of the sun. The flood had cleansed the earth of the disbelievers and polytheists. Noah released the birds and the beasts which scattered over the earth. After that the believers disembarked. Noah put his forehead to the ground in prostration. The survivors kindled a fire and sat around it. Lighting a fire had been prohibited on board so as not to ignite the ship's wood and burn it. None of them had eaten hot food during the entire period of the flood. Following the disembarkation there was a day of fasting in thanks to Allah. The Qur'an draws the curtain on Noah's story. We do not know how his affairs with his people continued. All we know is that on his deathbed he requested his son to worship Allah alone, Noah then passed away.

Prophet Muhammad said: "When the death of the Messenger of Allah Noah approached, he reminded his sons, 'I command you to do 2 things and warning you against 2 things. I command you to believe that there is no god but Allah and that if the seven heavens and the seven earths were put on one side of a scale and the words 'there is no god but Allah' were

put on the other, the latter would outweigh the former. I warn you against associating partners with Allah and against pride.

Some traditions said that his grave is in the Sacred Mosque in Makkah, while others said that he was buried in Balabak, a city in Syria.

Prophet HUD

The people of 'Ad lived many years in the windswept hills of an area between Yemen and Oman. They were physically well built and renowned for their craftsmanship especially in the construction of tall buildings with lofty towers. They were outstanding among all the nations in power and wealth, which, unfortunately, made them arrogant and boastful. Their political power was held in the hand of unjust rulers, against whom no one dared raise a voice. They were not ignorant of the existence of Allah nor did they refuse to worship Him. What they did refuse was to worship Allah alone. They worshipped other gods, including idols. This is one sin Allah does not forgive. Allah wanted to guide and discipline these people so He sent a prophet from among them. This prophet was HUD, a noble man who handled this task with great determination and tolerance. Prophet HUD was from a tribe called Ad Ibn Us Ibn Sam Ibn Noah, who were Arabs living in Al Ahqaf in Yemen between Oman and Hadaramout, on a land called Ashar stretching out to the sea. The name of their valley was Mughith. Some traditions claimed that HUD was the first to speak Arabic while others claim, Noah was the first. It was also said that Adam was the first. HUD condemned idol worship and reminded his people. "People, what is the benefit of these stones that you carve with your own hands and worship? In reality it is an insult to the intellect. There is only One Deity worthy of worship and that is Allah. Worship Him and Him alone, it is compulsory on you. He created you, He provides for you and He is the One who will cause you to die. He gave you wonderful physiques and blessed you in many ways. So believe in Him and do not be blind to His favours or the same fate that destroyed Noah's people will overtake you." With such reasoning HUD hoped to instil faith in them, but they refused to accept his message. His people asked him: "Do you desire to be our master with your call? What payment do you want?" HUD tried to make them understand that he would receive his reward from Allah; he did not demand anything from them except that they let the light of truth touch their minds and hearts. Allah the Almighty states: to Ad people we sent their brother HUD. He said: "O my people! Worship Allah! You have no other Ilah (god) but Him; certainly, you do nothing but invent lies! O my people I ask of you no reward. My reward is only from Him Who created me. Will you not then understand? And O my people! Ask forgiveness of your Lord and then repent to Him, He will send you abundant rain, and add strength to your strength, so do not turn away as Mujrimeen (disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah)." They said: "O HUD! No evidence have you brought us and we shall not leave our gods for your mere saying! We do not believe you. We say that some of our gods have seized you with evil". He said: "I call Allah to bear witness that I am free from that which you ascribe as partners in worship with Him (Allah). SO plot against me, all of you, and give me no respite. I put my trust in Allah, my Lord and your Lord! There is not a living creature but HE has grasp of its forelock. Verily, my Lord is on the Straight Path. So if

you turn away, still I have conveyed the Message with which I was sent to you. My Lord will make another people succeed you, and you will not harm Him in the least. Surely, my Lord is Guardian over all things." HUD tried to speak to them and to explain about Allah's blessings: how Allah the Almighty had made them Noah's successors, how He had given them strength and power, and how He sent them rain to revive the soil.

HUD's people looked around and found they were the strongest on earth, so they become prouder and more obstinate. Thus they argued a lot with HUD. They asked "O HUD! Are you saying that when we die and become dust, we will be resurrected?" He replied, "Yes, you will come back on the Day of Judgment and each of you will be asked about what you did." A peal of laughter was heard after this statement. "How strange HUD's claims are!" The disbelievers muttered among themselves. They believed that when man dies his body decays and turns into dust, which is swept away by the wind. How could it return to its original state? Then what is the significance of the Day of Judgment? Why does the dead return to life? All these questions were patiently received by HUD. He then addressed his people concerning the Day of Judgment. He explained that belief in the Day of Judgment is essential to Allah's justice, teaching them the same thing that every prophet taught. HUD explained that justice demands that there be a Day of Judgment because good is not always victorious in life. Sometimes evil overpowers good. Will such crimes go unpunished? Suppose there is no Day of Judgment, if that's the case then a great injustice would have prevailed, but Allah has forbidden injustice to be incurred by Himself or His subjects. Therefore, the existence of the Day of Judgment, a day of accounting for our deeds and being rewarded or punished for them, reveals the extend of Allah's justice. HUD spoke to them about all things. They listened but disbelieved him. Allah recounts his people's attitude towards the Day of Judgment: The chiefs of his people, whom disbelieved and denied the meeting in the Hereafter, and to who We had given the luxuries and comforts of this life, said: "He is no more than a human being like you, he eats what you eat, and drinks what you drink. If you were to obey a human being like yourselves then verily! You indeed would be losers. He promises that when you die and become dust you shall be alive again. Far, very far, is that which you promise. There is nothing but the life of this world, we live and we die! We are not going to be resurrected! He is only a man who has invented a lie against Allah, We are not going to believe in him." The chiefs of HUD's people asked: "Is it not strange that Allah chose one of us to reveal His message to?" HUD replied: "What is strange in that? Allah wants to guide you to the right way of life, so HE sent me to warn you. Noah's flood and his story are not far away from you, so do not forget what happened. All the disbelievers were destroyed, no matter how strong they were. Who is going to destroy us HUD?" the chiefs asked. HUD replied "Allah". The disbelievers among his people answered: "We will be saved by our gods." HUD clarified to them that the gods they worshipped would

be the reason for their destruction, it is Allah alone who saves people and that no other power on earth can benefit or harm anyone. The conflict between HUD and his people continued. Years passed by and they became prouder and obstinate, and more tyrannical and more defiant of their prophet's message. Furthermore, they started to accuse HUD of being a crazy lunatic. One day they told him: "We now understand the secret of your madness you insulted our gods and they harmed you; that is why you have become insane." Almighty Allah repeated their words in the Qur'an: "O my HUD! No evidence have you brought us, we shall not leave our gods for your mere saying! And we are not believers in you. All that we say is that some of our gods have seized you with evil." HUD had to return their challenge. He had no other way but to turn to Allah alone, no other alternative but to give them a threatening ultimatum. Thus HUD renounced them and their gods and affirmed his dependence on Allah Who had created him. HUD realized that punishment would be upon the disbelievers among his people. It is one of the laws of life. Allah punishes the disbelievers, no matter how rich, tyrannical or great they are. HUD and his people waited for Allah's promise. A drought spread throughout the land, for the sky no longer sent rain. The sun scorched the desert sands, looking like a disk of fire which settled on people's heads. HUD's people asked him: "What is that drought HUD?" HUD answered: "Allah is angry with you. If you believe in Him, He will accept you and the rain will fall and you will become stronger than you are." They mocked him and became more obstinate and sarcastic in their unbelief. The drought increased, the trees turned yellow and plants died. A day came when they found the sky full of clouds. HUD's people were glad as they came out of their tents crying: "A cloud, finally rain is coming!" The weather changed suddenly from burning dry and hot to stinging cold with wind that shook everything; trees, plants, tents, men and women. The wind increased day after day and night after night. HUD's people started to flee. They ran to their tents to hide but the gale became stronger, ripping their tents from their stakes. They hid under the covers but the gale became stronger and tore away the covers. It slashed clothing and skin. The storm raged for 8 days and 7 nights. Almighty Allah recounts: Then when they saw it as a dense cloud coming towards their valleys, they said: "This is a cloud bringing us rain!" Nay it is that torment which you were asking for! A wind, in which is a painful torment! Destroying everything by the command of its Lord! Allah the Exalted described it: As for the Ad people, they were destroyed by a furious violent wind which Allah imposed on them for 7 nights and 8 days in succession, you could see men lying overthrown as if they were hollow trunks of palm trees! That violent gale did not stop until the entire region was reduced to ruins and its wicked people destroyed, swallowed by the sands of the desert. Only HUD and his followers remained unharmed. They migrated to Hadaramout and lived there in peace, worshipping Allah, their true Lord.

Prophet Salih

After the destruction of the Ad people, the tribe of Thamud succeeded them in power and glory. They also fell into idol-worshipping. As their material wealth increased so did their evil ways while their virtue decreased. Like the people of Ad, they erected huge buildings on the plains and hewed beautiful homes out of the hills. Tyranny and oppression became prevalent as evil men ruled the land. So Allah sent them His Prophet Salih, a man from among them. His name was Salih Ibn Ubeid, He called his people to worship Allah alone and to not associate partners with Him. While some of them believed him, majority of them disbelieved and harmed him by both words and deeds. Salih directed them: "O my people! Worship Allah, you have no other Ilah (god) but Him." Salih was known for his wisdom, purity and goodness and had been greatly respected by his people before Allah's revelation came to him. Salih's people said to him: "O Salih! You have been among us as a figure hope and we wished for you to be our chief, now you have brought this new thing to us and want us to leave our gods and worship your God (Allah) alone! Are you forbidding us to worship what our forefather worshipped? We have doubts to Monotheism that you invite us too. They merely wanted to worship the same gods as their fathers had, with no reason, no proof, no thought. The proof of Salih's message was evident, but despite this it was obvious that most of his people did not believe him. They doubted his words, thinking he was charmed. They saw that he would not stop preaching. Fearing that his followers would increase, they tried to put him off by assigning him an important task; they asked him to prove that he was a messenger of Allah by performing a miracle. Let a unique she camel come from the mountains. Allah granted Salih this miracle and a huge unique she camel appeared from the direction of the mountain. Salih again addressed them to believe in Allah, reminding them of the favours Allah had granted them. They pointed towards a rock and demanded: "Ask your Lord to make a she camel, she must be 10 months pregnant, tall and attractive, issue it from the rock for us." Salih replied: "Look now! If Allah sends you what you have requested, just as you have described, will you believe in that which I have come to you with and have faith in the message I have been sent with?" They answered: "Yes." So he took a vow from them on this, then prayed to Allah the Almighty to grant their request. Allah ordered the distant rock to split apart and brought forth a great ten month pregnant she camel. When their eyes set on it, they were amazed. They saw a dazzling power and clear evidence! A number of Salih's people believed, yet most of them continued in their disbelief, stubborn and going astray. Allah Almighty said: We sent a She-Camel to Thamud as a clear sign but they did her wrong. Also: Verily the dwellers of Al Hijr (the rocky tract) denied the Messengers. We gave them Our Signs, but they were against them.

There are a number of ancient accounts of this camel and its miraculous nature. It was said that the she camel was miraculous because a rock in the mountain split open and it came forth from it, followed by its young offspring. At first, the people of Thamud were greatly surprised when the she camel came out from the mountain rocks. It was a blessed camel, and its milk sufficient for thousands of men, women and children. If it slept in a place, that place was abandoned by other animals. It was obvious that it was not an ordinary camel, but one of Allah's signs. It lived among Salih's people, some of whom believed in Allah while a majority continued in their obstinacy and disbelief. Their hatred of Salih turned towards the blessed camel. A conspiracy hatched against the camel by the disbelievers. Salih feared that they might kill the camel, so he warned them: "O my people! This she camel of Allah, is a sign to you, leave her to feed on Allah's earth nor touch her with your evil, lest a torment will seize you." For a while, Salih's people let the camel graze and drink freely, but in their hearts they hated it. However, the miraculous appearance of the unique camel caused many to become Salih's followers, and they clung to their belief in Allah. The disbelievers now began complaining that this huge she camel with its unusual qualities drank most of the water and frightened their cattle. They plotted to kill the camel, and sought the help of their women to tempt the men to carry out their commands. Sadooq bint of Mahya, was from a rich and noble family, she offered herself to a young man named Masrai Ibn Mahraj on the condition that he hamstring the camel. Aniza, an old woman, offered one of her daughters to a young man, Qudar Ibn Salufl. Naturally these young men were tempted and set about finding seven others to assist them. They watched the camel closely, observing all its movements. As the she camel came to drink at the well, Masarai shot it in the leg with an arrow. It tried to escape but was hampered by the arrow. Qudar followed the camel and struck it with a sword in the other leg. As it fell to the ground, he pierced it with his sword. The killers were given a hero's welcome, cheered with songs and poetry composed in their praise. In their arrogance they mocked Salih, but he warned them: "Enjoy life for 3 days then the punishment will descend upon you." Salih was hoping that they would see the folly of their ways and change their attitude before the 3 days passed. "Why 3 days?" they asked. "Let the punishment come quicker." He pleaded with them: "My people, why do you rush to evil rather than good? Why don't you ask Allah to pardon you so you may receive mercy?" They replied: "We see your presence and your followers as bringing evil on us."

Almighty Allah related their story: And indeed we sent to Thamud their brother Salih, saying Worship Allah Alone and none else. Then look! They became two parties (believers and disbelievers) quarrelling with each other.

They plotted to kill Salih and his household.

Almighty Allah stated: So they planned a plot, and we planned, while they perceived not.

Allah saved Salih and his followers from their wicked plans. Heavy hearted, they left the evil doers and moved to another place. Three days after Salih's warning, thunderbolts filled the air, followed by severe earthquakes which destroyed the entire tribe. The land was violently shaken, destroying all living creatures in it. There was one terrific cry which had hardly ended when the disbelievers of Salih's people were struck dead, all of them at the same time. Neither their strong buildings nor their rock hewn homes could protect them. All were destroyed before they realized what was happening. As for the people who believed in the message of Salih, they were saved because they had left the place.

Prophet Muhammad passed by the Thamud's houses on his way to the battle of Tabuk, he stopped at the well where the she camel of Salih used to drink. He warned his companions against entering it due to the punishment that had fallen upon the people there, saying "I fear that you may be affected by what afflicted them; so do no enter."

Prophet Ibrahim / Abraham & Prophet Ismail (Ishmael)

Some of the People of the Book stated that his name was Abraham Ibn Tarikh. They said that when Tarikh was seventy five years old, he had Abraham, Nahor and Haran. Haran had a son named Lot. They also said that Abraham was the middle child and that Haran died in the lifetime of his father in the land where he was born, the land of the Babylonia. At that time some people worshipped idols of stone and wood; others worshipped planets, stars, sun and moon; and others worshipped their kings and rulers. Abraham was born into that atmosphere, in a typical family of that ancient time. The head of the family was not even an ordinary idolater, but was one who totally rejected Allah and who used to make idols with his own hands. Some traditions claim Abraham's father died before his birth and he was raised by an uncle whom Abraham called father. Other traditions say, his father was alive and was named Azer.

Abraham was born, destined to stand against his own family, against the entire system of his community. In brief, he stood against all kinds of polytheism. He was endowed with spiritual understanding from an early age. Allah enlightened his heart and mind, he gave him wisdom from childhood. Allah the Almighty stated: Indeed We bestowed a foretime on Abraham his portion of guidance, and we were Well Acquainted with him as to his Belief in the Oneness of Allah. During his early childhood Abraham realized that his father made strange statues. One day, he asked him about what it was he made. His father replied that he made statues of gods. Abraham was astonished and he spontaneously rejected the idea. Being a child he played with such statues sitting on their backs as people sit on the backs of donkeys and mules. One day his father saw him riding the statue of Mardukh and became furious. He ordered his son not to play with it again. Abraham asked: "What is this statue, father? It has big ears, bigger than ours." His father answered: "It is Mardukh, the god of gods, son! These big ears show his deep knowledge." This made Abraham laugh, he was only seven years old at that time. Years passed and Abraham grew. Since his childhood his heart had been full of hatred for these idols. He could not understand how a sane person could make a statue and then worship what he had made. He noticed the idols did not eat, drink or talk and they could not even turn themselves up or down. How, then could people believe that such statues could harm or benefit them? Abraham's people had a big temple full of idols, in the middle of which was a niche, accommodating the largest gods which was of different kinds, qualities and shapes. Abraham, used to go to the temple with his father when he was a child, greatly despised all that wood and stone. What surprised him was the way his people behaved when they entered the temple; they bowed and started to cry, begging and imploring their gods for help as if the idols could hear or understand their requests! At first, such a sight seemed funny to Abraham, but later he began to feel angry. Was it not astonishing that all those people could be

deceived? What added to the problem was that his father wanted him to be a priest. He wanted nothing more from his son, yet Abraham never stopped displaying his hatred and disdain of the statues.

One night Abraham left his house to go to a mountain. He walked alone in the dark until he chose a cave in the mountain where he sat resting his back against its wall. He looked at the sky. He had hardly seen it when he remembered that he was looking at planets and stars which were worshipped by some people on earth. His young heart was filled with tremendous pain. He considered what was beyond the moon, the stars and the planets and was astonished that these celestial bodies were worshipped by men when they had been created to worship and obey their Creator, appearing and disappearing at His command. Therefore Abraham, addressed his people who worshipped celestial bodies as Almighty Allah revealed: Thus did we show Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth that he be one of those who have Faith and certainty. When the night covered him over with darkness he saw a star. He said: "This is my lord." But when it set, he said: "I do not like those who set." When he saw the moon rising up he said: "This is my lord." but when it set, he said: "Unless my Lord guides me, I shall surely be among the erring people." When he saw the sun rising, he said: "This is my lord, this is greater." But when it set, he said: "O my people! I am indeed free from all that you join as partners in worship with Allah. Verily, I have turned my face towards Allah, who created the heavens and the earth (Islamic Monotheism).

His people disputed with him. He said: "Do you dispute with me concerning Allah while he has guided me and I fear not those whom you associate with Allah in worship. Nothing can happen to me unless my Lord (Allah) wills something. My Lord comprehends all things in His Knowledge. Will you not remember? And how should I fear those whom you associate in worship with Allah though they can neither benefit nor harm, while you do not fear that you have joined in worship with Allah things for which HE has not given any authority. So which of the two parties has more right to be in security? If you but know. It is those who believe in the Oneness of Allah and worship none but Him Alone and do not confuse in their belief with Zulm (wrong, i.e. by worshipping others besides Allah), for only them there is security and they are the guided. And that was our proof which we gave Abraham against his people. We raise whom we will in degrees. Certainly your Lord is All Wise, All Knowing. In that debate, Abraham clarified to his people that these celestial bodies do not serve as deities and cannot be worshipped as partners with Allah the Almighty. Indeed these bodies are created things, fashioned, controlled, managed and made to serve. They appear sometimes and disappear at others, going out of sight from our world. However, Allah the Almighty does not lose sight of anything and nothing can be hidden from Him. He is without end, everlasting without

disappearance. There is no other deity but Allah. Abraham made clear to them, first that the celestial bodies are unworthy of worship and second that they are among the signs of Allah. Almighty Allah commanded: And from among His Signs are night and day, and the sun and the moon. Prostrate not to the sun nor to the moon, but prostrate to Allah Who created them if you really worship Him. Abraham's reasoning helped to reveal the truth, then the conflict between him and his people began for the worshippers of the stars and planets, for they did not stand mute. They began arguing and threatening Abraham.

The next situation reveals the second group, those who were practicing idolatry. Allah gave Abraham the reasoning he needed the first time round, then every time he argued with his people, Almighty Allah declared: And that was Our Proof which we gave to Abraham against his people. We raise whom we will in degrees. Certainly your Lord is All Wise, All Knowing. Abraham did his best to make his people heedful to the belief in the oneness of Almighty Allah and to the worship Him alone. He said to his father and his people: "What are these images, to which you are devoted?" they said: "We found our fathers worshipping them." He said: "Indeed you and your fathers have been in manifest error." They said: "Have you brought us the truth, or are you of those who play about?" He said: "Nay, your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, who created them and I bear witness." All was finished between Abraham and his people and the struggle began. Most amazed and furious was his father, for it is well known, he not only worshipped idols but sculpted and sold them as well. Abraham felt that it was his duty as a good son to advise his father against this evil so that he could be saved from Allah's punishment. Being a wise son he did not make his father feel foolish nor did he openly laugh at his conduct. He told him that he loved him, thereby hoping to generate fatherly love. Then he gently asked him why he worshipped lifeless idols who could not hear, see or protect him. Before his father could become angry he hastily added: "O my father! This knowledge came to me which did not come to you. So follow me. I will guide you to the right Path. O my father! Do not worship Satan. Verily! Satan has been a rebel against the Most Beneficent (Allah). "O my father! I fear a torment from Allah will overtake you and you will become a companion of Satan in the Hellfire." The father said: "Do you reject my gods, O Abraham? If you don't stop this now, I will stone you. So get away from me safely before I punish you." Abraham said: "Peace be on you! I will ask Forgiveness of my Lord for you. Verily! He is to me, Most Gracious. And I shall turn away from you and from those whom you invoke besides Allah." His father's harsh treatment did not stop Abraham from delivering the message of truth. Angry and sad to see people prostrate before idols, he was determined to stamp out these practices and went to the town to debate with the people, fully knowing that he might suffer harm. Abraham asked them: "Do these idols see you when you prostrate before them? Do they benefit you in any way?" They quickly tried to defend their beliefs. They argued that

they knew the idols were lifeless but that their forefathers had worshipped them; to them this was proof enough for their belief. Abraham explained that their forefathers had been wrong. This angered them and they retorted: "Are you condemning our gods and our forefathers? Or are you joking?" Abraham showed no fear as he replied: "I am serious. I come to you with a true religion. I have been sent with guidance from our Lord who alone is worthy of worship, who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and who regulates all affairs of life, unlike the dumb idols which are just stone and wood." To convince them that the idols could not harm him, he challenged: "I have already condemned them; if they had any power they would have harmed me by now!"

Almighty Allah recounted: Recite to them the story of Abraham. When he said to his father and his people. "What do you worship?" They said: "We worship idols, and to them we are ever devoted." He said: "Do they hear you when you call on them? Or do they benefit you or do they harm you?" They said: "Nay but we found our father doing so." He said: "Do you observe that which you been worshipping, you and your ancient fathers? Verily! They are enemies to me, save the Lord of the Alamin (mankind, jinn and all that exists); who created me and it is HE Who guides me and it is HE Who feeds me and gives me drinks. And when I am ill, it is He who cures me; and who will cause me to die and then will bring me to life again and who I hope will forgive my faults on the Day of Resurrection."

In another surah The Almighty revealed: remember Abraham when he said to his people: "Worship Allah Alone and fear Him that is better for you only if you knew. You worship besides Allah idols, you only invent falsehood. Verily, those whom you worship beside Allah have no power to give you provisions, so seek your provisions from Allah Alone, you will be brought back. Yet you deny like nations before you denied their Messengers. The duty of the Messenger is only to convey the Message plainly." Do you not see how Allah originates creation, then repeats it? Verily, that is easy for Allah. Say: "Travel in the land and see how Allah originated creation and then Allah will resurrect after death for the Hereafter, verily, Allah is Able to do all things." He punishes whom HE wills and shows mercy to whom He wills, and to Him you will be returned. You cannot escape in the earth or in the heaven. And besides Allah you have neither a protector or guardian nor any Helper. And those who disbelieve in the Ayat (verses and signs) of Allah and the Meeting with Him, it is they who have no hope of My Mercy, and it is they who will have a painful torment. He explained to them the beauty of Allah's creation, His power and wisdom. Idol worship is detested by Allah, for Allah is the Lord of the universe who created mankind.

Abraham left his father's house and abandoned his people and what they worshipped. He decided to do something about their state of disbelief, but did not reveal it. He knew that there was going to be a great celebration on the other bank of the river which would be attended by all the people. Abraham waited until the city was empty, then came out cautiously, directing his steps towards the temple. The streets leading to it were empty and the temple itself was deserted for the priests had also gone to the festival outside the city. Abraham went there carrying a sharp axe. He looked at the stone and wood statues of the gods and at the food laid in front of them as offerings. He approached one of the statues and asked: "The food in front of you is getting cold. Why don't you eat?" the statue kept silent and rigid. Abraham asked all the other statues around him: "Will you not eat of the offering before you?" He was mocking them for he knew they would not eat. He once again asked then: "What is the matter with you that you do not speak?" he then raised his axe and started smashing the false gods worshipped by the people. He destroyed them all except one on whose neck he hung the axe. After this his anger subsided, he felt at peace. He left the temple. He had fulfilled his vow to show his people practical proof of their foolishness in worshipping something other than Allah. When the people returned, they were shocked to see their gods smashed to pieces, lying scattered all over the temple. They began to guess who had done that to their idols and Abraham's name came to their minds. Allah the Almighty said: they said: "Who has done this to our aliah (gods)? He must indeed be one of the wrongdoers." They said: "We heard a young man talking against them who is called Abraham." They said: "Bring him before the eyes of the people, so they may testify." they said: "Are you the one who has done this to our gods, O Abraham?" Abraham said: "nay, this one, the biggest of them (idols) did it, ask them, if they can speak!" so they turned to themselves and said: "Verily you are the Zalimun (polytheists, and wrongdoers)." Then they turned to themselves (their first thought and said): "Abraham you know very well that these idols cannot speak?" Abraham said: "why then do you worship idols besides Allah, things that can neither profit you nor harm you? Have you no sense?" Furious, they demanded that Abraham be arrested and tried. Abraham did not resist. This was precisely what he had been aiming for, so that he could show them up in public, their foolish beliefs. At the trial they asked him if he was responsible for breaking the idols. Smiling, he told them to ask the biggest idol which was still whole. He told them that he must be the culprit! They replied that he knew well that the idol could not speak or move which gave Abraham the chance to prove the foolishness of worshipping these lifeless objects. They then realized the senselessness of their beliefs; however, their arrogance would not allow them to admit their foolishness. All they could do was to use their power of authority as tyrants to punish Abraham. They kept him in chains and planned their revenge. Anger was burning in their hearts. They decided to throw Abraham into the biggest fire they could build. All the citizens were ordered to gather wood as a service to their gods. Ignorant, sick women vowed that if they were cured

and they would donate so much wood to burn Abraham. For several days they collected fuel. They dug a deep pit, filled it with firewood and ignited it. They brought a catapult with which to cast Abraham into the fire. Abraham was put on the catapult, his hands and feet were tied. The fire was ready with its flame reaching the sky. The people stood away from the pit because of the great heat. Then the chief priest gave his order to cast Abraham into the fire. The angel Gabriel came near Abraham's head and asked him: "O Abraham do you wish for anything?" Abraham replied: "Nothing from you." The catapult was shot and Abraham was cast into the fire. But his descent into the blaze was as one descends on steps in a cool garden. The flames were still there, but they did not burn, for Allah the Almighty had issued His command: "O fire! Be cool and safe for Abraham." The fire submitted to the will of Allah, becoming cool and safe for Abraham. It only burned his bonds and he sat in the midst of the fire as if he were sitting in a garden. He glorified and praised Allah the Almighty, with a heart that contained only his love for Allah. There was not any vacant space therein for fear, awe or worry. It was filled with love only. Fear and awe were dead and the fire turned into coolness, making the air pleasant. Those who love Allah as Abraham, do not fear. Allah declared: The hypocrites said to the believers, "The pagan people have gathered a great army against you, therefore, fear them." but it only increased them in Faith, and they said: Allah Alone is Sufficient for us, He is the Best Disposer of affairs for us." So they returned with Grace and Bounty to Allah. No harm touched them; they followed the good Pleasure of Allah. Allah is the Owner of Great bounty. It is only Satan who suggests you fear his Auliya (supporters). Do not fear them but fear Allah if you are true believers."

The priests and chiefs sat in a distance looking at the fire. It was burning their faces and nearly suffocating them. It kept burning for such a long time that the disbelievers thought it would never extinguish. When it did burn out, they were greatly amazed to find Abraham coming out of the pit untouched by the fire. Their faces were black from the smoke, but his was bright with the light and grace of Allah. The raging fire had become cool for Abraham and had only charred the ropes which held him. He walked out of the fire as if he were walking out of a garden. Cries of astonishment were heard from the pagans. They wanted to harm him, but we made them the worst losers. This miracle shamed the tyrants, but it did not cool the flame of anger in their hearts. However after his event many of the people followed Abraham, although some kept their belief secret for fear of harm or death at the hands of the rulers. Abraham established a definite reasoning against the idolaters. Nothing was left for him except to reason against the people who proclaimed themselves as gods. When the king, Namrud, heard of Abraham's safe exit from the fire he became very angry. He feared that the status of godhead he had proclaimed for himself was not challenged by an ordinary human being. He summoned Abraham to the palace and held a dialogue with him which Allah Almighty recounted: Have

you not thought about him who disputed with Abraham about his Lord (Allah) because Allah had given him the kingdom? When Abraham said to him: "My Lord (Allah) is He Who gives life and causes death." He said: "I give life and cause death." Abraham said: "Verily, Allah causes the sun to rise from the east; cause the sun to rise from the west if you are true." So the disbeliever was utterly defeated. Allah does not guide people who are wrongdoers. Abraham's fame spread throughout the entire kingdom. People talked about how he had been saved from the blazing fire and how he had debated with the king and left him speechless. In the meantime, Abraham continued calling people to believe in Allah, exerting a great effort to guide his people to the right path. He tried every means to convince them. However in spite of his love and care for his people, they felt angry and deserted him. Only one woman and one man of his people shared his belief in Allah. The woman's name was Sarah, she became his wife. The man's name was Lot and he became a prophet. When Abraham realized that no one else was going to believe in his call, he decided to emigrate. He left his people and travelled with his wife and Lot to a city called Ur, then another called Haran and then to Palestine. Allah Almighty told us: So Lot believed in him (Abraham's message of Islamic Monotheism). He (Abraham) said: "I will emigrate for the sake of my Lord. Verily, He is the All Mighty, the All Wise." After Palestine, Abraham travelled to Egypt, calling people to believe in Allah wherever he travelled, judging fairly between people, guiding them to truth and righteousness.

Abu Huraira narrated that Abraham did not tell a lie except on three occasions, twice for the sake of Allah Almighty, the Exalted, when he said: "I am sick," when his people were holding a festival in honour of their gods and also when he said: "the big idol did it." The third was when Abraham and Sarah (his wife) were on a journey, they passed the territory of a tyrant. Someone said to the tyrant: "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 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 told him that you are my sister, so do not contradict my statement." the tyrant then called Sarah, when she went to him, he tried to take a hold of her with his hand, but his hand got stiff and he was confounded. He 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 again, but his hand got stiffer than before and he 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 all right. He then called the guard who brought her and said: "You have not brought me a devil and not a human being." The tyrant gave a maid called Hajar to Sarah as a gift. Abraham asked: "What happened?" Sarah replied: "Allah spoiled the evil plot of the tyrant, he gave me Hajar for service." Abraham's wife Sarah

was sterile. She had been given an Egyptian woman Hajar, as a servant. Abraham had aged and he spent many years calling people to Allah. Sarah thought she and Abraham were lonely because she could not have children. Therefore, she offered her husband her servant Hajar in marriage. Hajar gave birth to her first son Ishmael (Isma'il) when Abraham was an old man. Abraham lived on earth worshipping Allah and calling people to monotheism, he was journeying to Allah, knowing that his days on earth were limited and death was approaching and also resurrection. The knowledge of life after death filled Abraham with peace, love and certainty. One day he begged Allah to show him how He brought the dead back to life. Allah commanded Abraham to take four birds, cut them up and mingle their body parts, divide them into four portions and place them on top of four different hills, then call the birds back in Allah's name. Abraham did as he was told. Immediately the mingled parts of the birds separated to join their original bodies in different places and the birds flew back to Abraham. Almighty Allah revealed: 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, it will strengthen my Faith." Allah said: "Take four birds, cause them to incline towards you then slaughter them, cut them into pieces, then put a portion of them on every hill and call them they will rush to you. And know that Allah is All Mighty and All Wise."

One day, Abraham woke up and asked his wife Hajar to get Ishmael, their son and prepare for a long journey. The child was still nursing and not yet weaned. Abraham walked through cultivated land, desert and mountains until he reached the desert of the Arabian Peninsula, he came to an uncultivated valley where, there were no fruit, no trees and no water. The valley had no sign of life. After Abraham helped his wife and child to dismount, he left them with a small amount of food and water which was hardly enough for 2 days. He turned around and walked away. His wife hurried after him asking: "Where are you going and why are you leaving us in this barren valley?" Abraham did not answer her, he continued walking. She repeated what she had said, but he remained silent. Finally she understood that he was not acting on his own initiative. She realized that Allah had commanded him to do this. She asked him: "Did Allah command you to do this?" He replied: "Yes." Then his great wife said: "We are not going to be lost, Allah Who commanded you is with us." Abraham invoked Allah Almighty: "O Our Lord! I have made some of my offspring dwell in a valley with no cultivation, by Your Sacred House (the Kaabah at Makkah); in order that they may offer prayers perfectly, so fill some hearts among men with love towards them, and O Allah provide them with fruits so that they may give thanks. O our Lord! Certainly, you know what we conceal and what we reveal. Nothing on the earth or in the heavens is hidden from Allah." Ishmael's mother went on suckling Ishmael and drinking the water she had. When the water skin was used up, she and her child became thirsty. She started looking at Ishmael tossing in agony. She left him, for she

could not endure looking at him in agony, she found the mountain of As-Safa was the nearest mountain to her. She climbed it and started looking at the valley keenly so that she might see somebody, but she could not see anybody. Then she descended for As-Safa and when she reached the valley, she tucked up her robe and ran in the valley like a person in distress and trouble till she crossed the valley and reached the mountain of Al-Marwah. There she stood and started looking expecting to see somebody, but she could not see anybody. She repeated running between As-Safa and Al-Marwah seven times

Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him said: "This is the source of the tradition of the sa'i (rituals of the hajj, pilgrimage) People going between As-Safa and Al-Marwah. When she reached Al-Marwah (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 maybe! You have made me hear your voice; have you got something to help me with?' And behold, she saw an angel at the place of Zamzam, digging the earth with his heel or his wing till water flowed from that place. She started to make something like a basin around it, using her hands, she started filling her water skin

The Prophet peace be upon him added: "May Allah bestow mercy on Ishmael's mother, Had she let the Zamzam flow without trying to control it or had she not scooped the water to fill her water skin, Zamzam would have been a stream flowing on the surface of the Earth." She drank water and suckled her child. The angel said to her, 'Don't 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 (Kaabah) at that time was on a high place resembling a hillock and when torrents came, they flowed to its right and left. She lived that way till some people from the tribe of Jurhum came. They landed in the lower part of Makkah where they saw a bird that had the 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.' They sent one or two messengers who discovered the source of water and returned to inform them of the water. So they all came towards the water. Ishmael's mother was sitting near the water. They asked her, 'would you allow us to stay with you?' She replied, 'Yes, but you will have no right to possess the water.' They agreed to that. Ishmael's mother was pleased with the whole situation, she always enjoyed the company of people, so they settled there and later on they sent for their families who came and settled with them. Ishmael grew up and learned Arabic from them and his virtues caused them to love and admire him. When he reached the age of puberty they made him marry a woman from amongst themselves

After Ishmael's mother died, Abraham came after Ishmael's marriage in order to see his family that he had left, he did not find Ishmael there. When he asked Ishmael's wife about him, she replied, 'He has gone in search of livelihood.' Then he asked her about their way of living and their condition, she replied, 'We are living in misery; we are living in hardship and destitution,' He said, 'When your husband returns, convey my salutations to him and tell him to change the threshold of the gate of his house. When Ishmael came, he seemed to have felt 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 you and I informed him and he asked about our state of living and I told him that we were living in a hardship and poverty.' On that Ishmael said, 'Did he give any advice?' She said, 'Yes he told me to convey his salutation to you and to tell you to change the threshold of your gate.' Ishmael said, 'It was my father and he has ordered me to divorce you. Go back to your family.' So, Ishmael divorced her and married another woman from among them (Jurhum). Abraham stayed away from them for a period as long as Allah wished and called on them again but did not find Ishmael. So he came to Ishmael's wife and asked her about Ishmael. She said, 'He has gone in search of our livelihood.' Abraham asked her, 'How are you getting on?' She replied, 'We are prosperous and well off. Then she thanked Allah. Abraham said, 'What kind of food do you eat?' she said, 'Meat.' He said, 'What do you drink?' She said, 'Water.' He said, 'O Allah! Bless their meat and water.' Then Abraham said to Ishmael's wife, 'When your husband comes give my regards to him and tell him that he should hold firm the threshold of his gate.' When Ishmael came back he asked his wife, 'Did anyone call?' She replied, 'Yes, a good looking old man came to me.' She praised him and added, 'He asked about you and I informed him that we were in a good condition.' Ishmael asked her, 'Did he give advice?' She said, 'Yes, he told me to give his regards to you and that you should hold firm the threshold of your gate.' On that Ishmael said, 'It was my father, you are the threshold of the gate and he ordered me to keep you with me.' Abraham stayed away from them for a period as long as Allah wished and called on them afterwards. He saw Ishmael under a tree near Zamzam, sharpening his arrows. When he saw Abraham, They greeted each other. Abraham said, 'O Ishmael! Allah has given me an order.' Ishmael said, 'Do what your Lord has ordered you to do.' Abraham asked, 'Will you help me?' Ishmael said, 'I will help you.' Abraham said, 'Allah has ordered me to build a house here,' pointing to a hillock higher than the land surrounding it. They raised the foundations of the House (the Kaabah). Ishmael brought the stones while Abraham built the walls. When the wall became too high, Ishmael brought one stone and put it under Abraham's foot which helped him carry on building. While Ishmael was handing the stones, both of them were saying: "'Our Lord! Accept this service from us. Verily, you are the All-Hearer, the All-Knower

Allah Almighty told us of Abraham's affliction with his beloved son: "And he said after his rescue from the fire, "Verily! I am going to my Lord. He will guide me! My Lord! Grant me offspring from the righteous.' So we gave him glad tidings of a forbearing boy. And when his son was old enough to walk with him, he said, 'O my son! I saw in a dream that I am slaughtering you (offer you in sacrifice to Allah), what do you think?' His son said, 'O my father! Do that which you are commanded Insha'Allah (if Allah wills), you shall find me to be patient.' Then when they both submitted themselves to the Will of Allah and he had laid him prostrate on his forehead, We called out to him, 'O Abraham! You have fulfilled the dream.' Verily! We do reward those who perform good deeds, totally for Allah's sake only. Verily, that indeed was a manifest trial and we ransomed him with a great sacrifice (a ram) and we will leave him as a great remembrance among generations to come. Peace be upon Abraham! Indeed we reward good-doers. Verily, he was one of our believing slaves

Time passed. One day Abraham was sitting outside his tent thinking of his son Ishmael and Allah's sacrifice. His heart was filled with awe and love for Allah and for His countless blessings. A big tear drop fell from his eyes. In the meantime, three angels descended to earth; Gabriel, Israfil and Michael. They came in human form and saluted Abraham. Abraham arose and welcomed them. He took them inside his tent thinking they were strangers and guests. He seated them and made sure that they were comfortable, then excused himself to go to his people. His wife Sara arose when he entered. She had become old and white haired. Abraham said to her, "We have three strangers in the house. Slaughter a fat calf for them; they are strangers and guests," he ordered while leaving. The servants roasted and served the calf. Abraham invited the angels to eat and he started eating so as to encourage them. He continued, but when he glanced at his guests to assure they were eating, he noticed that none of them touched the food. He said, "Are you not going to eat?" He resumed eating, but when he glanced at them again he found that they were still not eating. Their hands did not reach out for the food. He began to fear them. Abraham's fears increased. The angels, however were reading his inner thoughts and one of them said, "Do not fear." Abraham raised his head and replied, "Indeed I am in fear. I have asked you twice to eat food but you are not eating. Do you intend me evil?" One of the angels smiled and said, "We do not eat. We are Allah's angels." One of them then turned towards his wife and conveyed glad tidings about Isaac (Ishaq)

Allmighty Allah revealed: Verily! Our Messengers came to Abraham with glad tidings. They said, Salam (greetings or peace)! He answered: Salam (greetings or peace)! And he hastened to entertain them with a roasted calf. But, when he saw their hands not going toward the meal, he felt some mistrust of them and conceived a fear of them. They said, Fear not, we have

been sent against the people of Lot. And his wife was standing there and she laughed. But we gave her glad tidings of Isaac, and after him of Jacob. She said (in astonishment), 'Woe unto me! Shall I bear a child while I am an old woman, and here is my husband an old man? Verily! This is strange!' They said, 'Do you wonder at the Decree of Allah? The Mercy of Allah and His Blessings be on you, O family of Abraham. Surely, Allah is All-Praiseworthy, All-Glorious

Prophet Lut



Prophet Lut was the nephew of Prophet Ibrahim. The story of his people and the punishment they were afflicted with was a shocking incident in the life of Prophet Ibrahim. Lut, settled in Palestine. Nothing authoritative is known of Lut's earlier life. What is evident is that as some point after his settling, Allah appointed him as prophet to communities on the shore of what is now the Dead Sea, at a distance of 24 hours' journey from Ibrahim's home. Lut went to the city of Sodom after Ibrahim had asked him to do so. It was the main city in that region with suburbs and satellite villages, prosperous and well-populated. There were 5 cities, referred to in the Qur'an as Al-Mu'tafikat, meaning "the Overturned Cities". Sodom was the largest of these. The people of Sodom were of the most immoral and insolent nature. Although they were guilty of many vices, one stands out glaringly among all the rest – homosexuality or sodomy – they were the first people in human history to practice homosexuality. It is reported that these people would commit perverted deeds openly in of their gatherings, they cut the access of travelers to their roadways, robbing and killing them, perhaps after forcing them to engage in unnatural acts. It was not only some people, rather it was the entire population. Allah in His Mercy, caused Lut to settle among them so they might perhaps be guided. Lut called them to heed Allah's command and to worship Him alone, without associating any partner with Him. And he forbade them from their indecent practice and abhorring act. But they ignored and rejected his appeal, and continued in their wrongful unnatural acts. As a result, Allah destroyed them with a severe punishment.

Lut warns his People: "Will you not fear Allah?" he said, appealing to them to reflect on their accountability to their Creator. And assuring his people of his absolute reliability, he added, "Indeed, I am to you a trustworthy messenger. So fear Allah and obey me. And I do not ask you for any payment. My payment is only from the Lord of the worlds." As if holding up a mirror in front of his people, Lut tried to make them look at the awfulness of their perverted habits and criminal behaviors. Why do you approach men with desire instead of women? You are a people behaving ignorantly." But the response of his people, already extraordinarily hardened and callous, was, "Expel the family of Lut from your city. Indeed, they are people who keep

themselves pure.” Lut’s reminder became stronger: He asked: “Why do you commit such immorality, no one ever committed such acts from among the worlds?” The people simply replied with the same words as before, asking to drive Lut and his family out. But ignoring their enmity and threats, Lut faithfully continued to preach and warn, reiterating his message, emphasizing the error and ingratitude of turning away from whom Allah had granted for the natural fulfillment of their needs. Continuing to preach despite his people’s hostility and threats, he listed the entire catalogue of their misdeeds, saying: “Indeed, no one has ever committed such immorality before you people in the world. Indeed, you approach men and obstruct the road and commit in your meetings every evil.” The answer of his people was this: “Bring us the punishment of Allah, if you are truthful.” It is said that they openly engaged in homosexual acts in their assemblies, without anyone objecting to it, as it was generally accepted practice. Satan was amongst them, and as is his way, he made their actions appear fair and wholesome. They would spout obscenities in their gatherings, and pass wind and laugh at it. They relished cock, pigeon and goat fights. It is also said that they used to mock passersby’s, throwing rocks and whistling at them and they walked about naked. Steeped in sin, they turned a deaf ear to all of Lut’s reminders. They said, “Bring us the punishment of Allah, if you are truthful.” Lut prayed to his Lord: “support me against these corrupted people.” In the entire region, there was only one household with righteous people and that was his own. Although his two daughters were believers, his wife, who is said to have been a Sodomite, was connected to the people of the area and her loyalty was with them.

The Angels visit to Ibrahim

Lut’s story is entangled with Ibrahim. We return now to the Qur’anic narrative concerning the angels’ visit. You may recall the mistrust Ibrahim felt when he saw that his visitors did not touch the food he had set before them and his saying to them openly, “Indeed, we are fearful of you.” Then they reassured him and said, “Fear not. We have been sent to the people of Lut.” They made know to him that they were angels, sent by Allah. The angel’s task to Lut’s people was then temporarily put aside while they gave Ibrahim and Sarah tidings of the son who was to be born to them, Ishaq. But once the matter had been addressed, Ibrahim, who knew well that angels do not visit human beings except for some very serious purpose, returned to the subject of Lut’s people. The aged prophet asked the reason of their visit besides giving him and his wife glad tidings of a son. The angels then made their task clear to Ibrahim. “We have been sent to criminal people, to pour down upon them stones of clay, marked in the presence of your Lord for the transgressors, except the family of Lut. Indeed, we will save them all except his wife.” Allah decreed that she is of those who remain behind. The angels repeated that they would destroy the entire people of that city. Ibrahim exclaimed

in alarm that Lut is among those people. They said, “We are more knowing of who is within it. We will surely save him and his family, except his wife. She is to be with those who remain behind.” Even then Ibrahim did not remain silent and when the fright had left Ibrahim and the good tidings had reached him, he began to argue with us concerning the people of Lut. As if Ibrahim’s appeal for such sinful and criminal people required an explanation, Indeed, Ibrahim was forbearing, grieving and returning to Allah. When Ibrahim pleaded with the angels, they reminded him gently. “O Ibrahim, give up this plea. Indeed, the command of your Lord has come and the punishment cannot be pushed back. Ibrahim continued to plead until the angels told him that if there were five people in Lut’s city who prayed, the punishment would be averted from them.

The Angels arrive in Sodom

The three angels are said to have been Jibril, Mikael and Israfil. They arrived at the outskirts of Lut’s town in the form of very handsome human beings. When Lut heard of the strangers, he felt distressed and wondered how he could convince them to bypass the town of Sodom and continue on their travels. He tried to make them understand the nature of the townspeople but only succeeded in convincing the messengers to wait for nightfall before entering the town. He brought them to his house secretly, no one except his family knew they were there. However, his wife went out to inform her people, saying, “There are very handsome men in Lut’s house, nor have I ever seen such handsome faces.” Lut said to the visitors, “you are people unknown.” thus giving them an indirect hint of what they might expect in his town. His guests showed no trace of fear or concern. They instructed Lut, “We have come to you about that which is disputed and we come in truth. Take your family in the early hours of the morning and do not look back, continue to where you are commanded. Despite this reassurance, Lut remained greatly troubled about the strangers’ safety. Although, as his guests, they were under his protection, he knew well enough that as soon as their presence became known, the men of his town would be at his door. As Lut had anticipated, the news of the incredibly handsome strangers visiting the city brought the townsmen to his house, rejoicing at the prospect of the male visitors. He warned the people that the men were his guests and not to disgrace him in front of his guests. The intruders flung back at their prophet saying “indeed you know what we want!” Lut cried in anguish, feeling totally powerless to save the guests to whom he had given the protection of his house. “O Lut, indeed we are messengers of your Lord; they will never reach you,” his guests reassured him. The last words suggest that the attackers intended to eliminate Lut to get to his guests. But as the men approached the heat of their unnatural lust or perhaps tried to force their way in, the angels took their sight away.

The angels said to Lut

Set out with your family during the last portion of the night and do not look back, except your wife; indeed, she will be struck by that which strikes them. Indeed, their appointment is the morning. It was early dawn, Lut departed with his family, except his wife. She remained behind and was afflicted by the punishment along with the wrong doers and wicked townspeople.

Retribution!

As he had been directed, Lut set out with his family. When Lut and his party had cleared the area, the divine command came forth to destroy Lut's people. Various commentators have said that angel Jibril lifted all the sinful towns into the sky together with their inhabitants, and turned them over; hence the name Al-Mu'tafikat, the Overturned Cities. Then Allah sent upon them a storm of stones of clay, marked in the presence of your Lord for the transgressors. It is said that each stone was inscribed with the name of the person for whom it was intended, and that the heavenly missiles struck the heads of their human targets, smashing their brains. Thus the flourishing cities of Sodom and the 4 other towns in the vicinity obliterated with all their people, including the wife of their prophet, as a recompense for the wickedness and perverse lusts of its inhabitants. Thus, the pages were closed on the people of Lut. Their names were erased from historical memory. The punishment that Allah promised and the warning from Prophet Lut, happened, for sure Allah keeps His promises. He promises severe punishment for the wrongdoers and Paradise for the righteous. Lut and his family walked into the sunrise and the Qur'an mentions them no more. And to Lut we gave judgment and knowledge, and we saved him from the city that was committing wicked deeds. Indeed, they were people of evil, defiantly disobedient. And we admitted him into our mercy. Indeed, he was of the righteous. May Allah's highest blessings be upon Lut.

Today, in many cities across the world, it is unsafe to walk down the streets, even in daylight. Murder, sexual crimes against adults and children are widespread, and drugs abound. Most children in high schools have already encountered drug users and sellers. Alcohol is freely available, even though it is responsible for the breakup of families, domestic violence and the corrosion of society. Degenerate lifestyles are accepted, it's even though as normal. This description paints a picture of a scary, out of control world, but is it really so different from the time of Prophet Lut? Should we not take heed from the horrific fate of these people and those before them who have been destroyed by Allah for not obeying His message?

Prophet Jacob (Ya'qub) / Ishaq (Isaac)

The Quran does not give details of Isaac's life, but reliable Qur'anic commentators mentioned that when Abraham felt that his life was drawing to a close, he wished to see Isaac married. He did not want Isaac to marry one of the Canaanites, who were pagans, so he sent a trustworthy servant to Haran in Iraq to choose a bride for Isaac. The servant's choice fell upon Rebekah Bint Bethuel. Isaac married her and she gave birth to a set of twins, Esau (Al Eis) and Jacob (Ya'qub). Ill feelings developed between the two brothers when they grew into manhood. Esau disliked the fact that Jacob was favoured by his father and by Allah with Prophethood. This ill feeling became so serious that Esau threatened to kill his brother. Fearing for his life, Jacob fled the country.

The People of the Book said that when Isaac was forty years old, he married Rebekah, Bint Bethuel, during his father's life. They said she was sterile, so Isaac prayed to Allah and then she became pregnant. She gave birth to twin boys. The first one was called Esau whom the Arabs called Al-Eis. He became the father of Rum. The second one was called Jacob, which means Israel, (belonging to the people of Israel). They also claim that when Isaac grew old and his eye sight weakened, he had a desire for food, so he asked his son Esau to go hunting and bring him some cooked game. Esau asked him to bless the food and pray for him. Esau, a hunter, went out to get his father the meat. Rebekah, overhearing this, ordered her son Jacob to slaughter two goats of his best flock and cook them as his father liked and bring it to him before his brother returned. She dressed Jacob in his brother's clothes and put goat skin on his arms and neck, Esau was hairy while Jacob was not. When he approached his father with the food, his father asked: 'Who are you?' Jacob answered: 'I am your son.' When his father finished eating, he prayed for his son to be the more blessed brother and to prevail over them and all people, and for Allah to sustain him and his children. When he left his father, his brother Esau, who had carried out his father's command, entered. Isaac asked him: "What is this my son?" He answered: "This is the food you like." Isaac asked: "Didn't you bring it an hour ago and ask me to pray for you?" Esau said: "No, I swear I did not," he knew his brother had preceded him in this matter and he was sick at heart. The People of the Book also say, Esau threatened to kill his brother when their father was dead. They also said that he asked his father to pray for him so that Allah make the earth good for his offspring and multiply his sustenance and fruits. Their mother knew Esau threatened his brother Jacob, she commanded her son Jacob to go to her brother Laban in the land of Haran and live with him until his brother's anger had abated, and to marry one of Laban's daughters. She told her husband to command Isaac to abide by this command and pray for him, and he did.

Jacob left his family, when night came he found a place to rest. He took a stone and put it under his head and slept. He dreamt of a ladder from heaven to earth. Angels were ascending and descending and the Lord addressed him; "I will bless you and your offspring and make this land for you and for those who come after you." When he awoke he felt joyful from what he had seen in his dream and vowed, for Allah's sake that if he returned to his family safely, he would build a temple for Allah Almighty. He also vowed to give one tenth of his property to the sake of Allah. He poured oil on the stone so as to recognize it and called the place "Ayle's House" (Bethel), which means "House of Allah". It was to be the location of Jerusalem later. The People of the Book also said that when Jacob came to his maternal uncle in the land of Haran, his uncle had two daughters. The elder one was called Leah (Lia) and the younger one was Rachel (Rahil). The latter was the better and lovelier of the two. His uncle agreed to marry his daughter to him on the condition that Jacob pasture his sheep for seven years. After a period of time, his uncle prepared a feast and gathered people for the wedding. He married Leah, his elder daughter to him at night. She was weak-sighted and ugly. When morning came, Jacob discovered she was Leah and he complained to his uncle. "You deceived me; I was engaged to Rachel and you married me to Leah." His uncle said: "It is not our tradition to marry the younger daughter before the elder daughter. However, if you love her sister, work another seven years and I will marry you to both of them." Jacob worked for seven years and then married Rachel. It was acceptable in their time, as described in the Torah, for a man to marry two sisters. Laban gave a female slave to each daughter. Leah's slave was called Zillah and Rachel's slave was called Bilha. Almighty Allah compensated Leah's weakness by giving her sons. Named Rueben (Robel), Simon (Shamun), Levi (Lawi) and Judah (Yahudh). Rachel felt jealous of Leah having sons, since she was barren. She gave her slave Bilha to her husband and he had relations with her until she became pregnant. She gave birth to a son and named him Naphtali. Leah was furious that Rachel's slave had given birth to a son, so she in turn gave her slave Zilpah to Jacob, Zilpah gave birth to two sons, Gad and Asher. Then Leah got pregnant and gave birth to her fifth son, Issachar and later she gave birth to a sixth son Zebulon. After this Leah gave birth to a daughter named Dinah. Thus, Leah had seven sons from Jacob. Rachel prayed to Allah to give her a son with Jacob. Allah heard her call and responded to her prayer. She gave birth to a son, who was great, honourable and beautiful. She named him Joseph (Yusuf). All of this happened when they were in the land of Haran and Jacob was pasturing his uncle's sheep, which he did for a period of twenty years.

Jacob then asked his uncle Laban to let him go and visit his family. His uncle said: "I have been blessed because of you; ask for whatever money you need." Jacob said: "Give me each spotted and speckled goat born this year and each black lamb." But at Laban's command his sons removed their father's goats that were striped, spotted or speckled, along with the black

lambs, lest others should be born with those traits. They walked for three days with their father's goats and sheep while Jacob tended the remaining flock. Jacob took fresh rods of poplar, almond and plane. He peeled streaks in them and cast them into the water for the goats to look at. The young inside their abdomens were terrified and moved, they were born striped, spotted or speckled. When the sheep were breeding, he set their faces towards the black sheep in Laban's flock and put the rods among them. Their lambs were born black. This was considered an example of supernatural powers, a miracle. Jacob had many goats, sheep, beasts and slaves. His uncle and his son's faces changed, it was as if their sheep and goats had been stolen from them. Allah the Almighty inspired Jacob to return to his father's country and people, Allah also promised to stand by him. Jacob told his family and they obeyed him. Jacob did not tell Laban of his plans, he left without bidding farewell. Upon leaving, Rachel stole her father's idols. After Jacob and his people fled for his country, Laban and his people followed him. When Laban met up with Jacob, he blamed him for leaving without his knowledge. He said that he would have sent them off with celebrations and joy, with drums and songs, and that he could have bidden farewell to his daughters and sons. Laban then said, "Why have they taken his idols with them?" Jacob had no knowledge the idols, so he denied the accusation. Laban entered his daughters and slaves tent to search, he found nothing, for Rachel had put the idols in the camel saddle under her. She did not get up and apologized for she had her menses. Then they sat on a hill called Galeed and made an agreement there. Jacob would not ill-treat Laban's daughters nor marry others. Neither Laban nor Jacob would pass the hill into the other's country. They cooked food and their people ate with them. Each bade the other farewell as they departed, each returning to his own country.

When Jacob approached the land of Seir, the angels greeted him. He sent a messenger ahead with greetings to his brother Esau, asking forgiveness and humbling himself before him. The messenger returned greetings and told Jacob that Esau was riding towards him with four hundred men. This made Jacob afraid and he entreated and prayed to Allah Almighty. He prostrated and asked Allah to fulfil His promise which He had made before. He asked Him to stop the evil of his brother Esau. Then Jacob prepared a great present for his brother: two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, and thirty milch camels, forty cows and two bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. He commanded his slaves to take the animals, He also instructed them: "When you meet my brother Esau he will ask you, 'to whom do you belong? Where are you going?' you shall say, 'they belong to your servant Jacob; they are a present to my master Esau. Moreover, he is behind us.'" Jacob stayed behind with his two wives, his slaves and his children for two nights, then continued walking by night and resting by day. When the dawn of the second day came one of the angels appeared in the shape of a man. Jacob began to wrestle with him. They

were neck and neck until the angel injured his thigh and Jacob became lame. At dawn, the angel said to him: 'What is your name?' He answered: 'Jacob.' The angel said: "After today you shall not be called anything but Israel." Jacob asked: "Who are you? What is your name?" He vanished. Then Jacob knew that he was one of the angels. Jacob was lame, and for this reason the children of Israel do not eat the thigh muscle on the hip socket. Jacob raised his eyes and saw his Brother Esau coming. Jacob prostrated seven times before him, as this was their salutation during that time. It was lawful for them just as the angels had prostrated in salutation to Adam. When Esau saw him, he ran towards him, embraced and kissed him and wept. When Esau raised his eyes and saw the women and children he asked: "Who are these with you?" Jacob answered: "Those whom Allah has given me, your servant." Leah, Rachel, their slaves and all the children approached and prostrated before him. Jacob asked Esau to accept his gift and insisted until he did so. Esau returned, Jacob and his family followed to the mountains (Seir). When he came to Succoth, he built a house for himself and shades for his beasts. Then he passed by Jerusalem, in a village called "Shechem" know today as western Palestine, there they camped. He bought a farm from Shchem Ibn Hamor with one hundred goats and built an altar, which he called Ayl, as Allah commanded him. He built the altar where Jerusalem stands today and later Solomon son of David rebuilt it. It is in the place of the stone which he had earlier rubbed with oil as was mentioned before.

The people of the book tell a story of Dinah, daughter of Jacob and Leah. Shechem Ibn Hamor seized her and lay with her by force. Then he asked her father and brothers to let him marry her. Her brothers said: "Circumcise all of you, then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters for ourselves; but we do not marry with uncircumcised people." The men of the city agreed and all of them got circumcised. When the third day came, the pain from the circumcision had increased, Jacob's sons approached and killed them. They killed Shchem and his father for the evil they had committed against them and for their worship of idols. That is why Jacob's sons killed them and seized their money as spoils. Then Rachel got pregnant and gave birth to a son, Benjamin, she had a hard labour and died after delivery. Jacob buried her in Bethlehem. The tomb of Rachel is there today. Jacob's sons were twelve men. From Leah there were Rueben (Robil), Simon (Shamun), Levi (Lawi), Judah (Yahudh), Issachar (isakher), and Zebulun (Zablun). From Rachel there was Joseph (Yusuf) and Benjamin and from Rachel's slave there was Dan and Naphtali (Neftali), and from Leah's slave there were Gad and Asher.

Jacob came to his father Isaac and settled with him in the village of Hebron which lies in the land of Canaan where Abraham had lived. Then Isaac fell ill and died when he was one hundred and eighty years old. His sons Esau and Jacob buried him with his father Abraham

Al Khalil in a cave which he had bought. It was said that Abraham died at the age of one hundred and seventy five. Allah the Almighty declared in the Glorious Qur'an: "And who turns away from the religion of Abraham (Islamic Monotheism) except him who befools himself? Truly, we chose him in this world and verily, in the Hereafter he will be among the righteous". When his Lord said to him: "Submit (be a Muslim)!" He said: "I have submitted myself (as a Muslim) to the Lord of the Alamin (mankind, jinn and all that exists)." And this submission to Allah, (Islam) was enjoined by Abraham upon his sons and by Jacob, saying: "O my sons! Allah has chosen for you the true religion, do not die except in the Faith of Islam (as Muslims -- Islamic Monotheism)." Or were you witnesses when death approached Jacob? When he said unto his sons: "What will you worship after me?" They said: "We shall worship you (Ilah (God - Allah) the Ilah (God) of your fathers, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, One Ilah (God), and to Him we submit (in Islam)." That was a nation who had passed away. They shall receive the reward of what they earned and you of what you earn. And you will not be asked of what they used to do.

They say: "Be Jews or Christians, and then you will be guided." Say to them O Muhammad: "Nay, we follow only the religion of Abraham, (Islamic monotheism, i.e. to worship none but Allah Alone, and he was not of the Al Mushrikeen (those who worshipped others along with Allah)." Say O Muslims: "We believe in Allah and that which has been sent down to us and that which had been sent down to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and to Al Asbat (the twelve sons of Jacob), and that which has been given to Moses and Jesus and that which has been given to the Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we have submitted ourselves (in Islam)." So if they believe in the like of that which you believe, then they are rightly guided, but if they turn away, then they are only in opposition. So, Allah, will suffice you against them. He is the All Hearer, the All Knower.

Say O Muhammad, to the Jews and Christians: "Dispute you with us about Allah while He is our Lord and your Lord? And we are to be rewarded for our deeds and you for your deeds. We are sincere to Him in worship and obedience." Or say you that Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and Al Asbat (the twelve sons of Jacob) were Jews or Christians? Say: "Do you know better or does Allah know better that they were all Muslims? And who is more unjust than he who conceals the testimony of Prophet Muhammad, he has written confirmation with him in the Qur'an which is from Allah? Allah is not unaware of what you do." In another surah Almighty Allah declared: O People of the Scripture (Jews and Christians)! Why do you dispute about Abraham, the Torah and the Gospel were not revealed until after him? Have you no sense? Verily, you are those who dispute about that of which you have no knowledge. Allah knows and you do not. Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was a true Muslim.

Verily, the best claim to Abraham among mankind are those who follow him. The likes of Prophet Muhammad and those who believe in him. Allah is the protector and helper of the believers. Allah the Exalted also affirmed: Then verily! Your Lord for those who do evil (commit sins and are disobedient to Allah) in ignorance and afterward repent and do righteous deeds, verily, your Lord thereafter to such is Oft Forgiving, Most Merciful. Verily, Abraham was a leader having all the good righteous qualities, he was obedient to Allah and he was thankful for Allah's Graces. Allah chose him as a friend and guided him onto the straight path. We gave him good in this world, and in the Hereafter he shall be of the righteous. Then, we inspired you O Muhammad saying: "Follow the religion of Abraham and worship none but Allah."

Prophet Yusuf (Joseph)

This is the most detailed and fascinating story in the Qur'an, involving both human weaknesses such as jealousy, hatred, pride, passion, deception, intrigue, cruelty and terror as well as noble qualities such as patience, loyalty, bravery, nobility and compassion. It is related that among the reasons for its revelation the Jews asked Prophet Muhammad to tell them about Joseph who was one of their oldest prophets. His story had been distorted. Therefore it was revealed in the Book of Allah, his Holy Qur'an, complete and carefully detailed. Allah Almighty declared: We relate to you O Muhammad the best of stories through Our Revelations. Before this you were among those who knew nothing about it. Whoever turns away from this Qur'an and does not believe in it or act on its orders, verily they will bear a heavy burden on the Day of Resurrection. They will abide in Fire of Hell, evil indeed will it be that load for them on the Day of Resurrection. The story of Joseph moves in a stream from beginning to end; its substance and form are equally coherent. It inspires you with a feeling for the depth of Allah's power and supremacy and the execution of His rulings despite the challenge of human intervention. Allah has full power and control over His Affairs, but most of men know not. The story of Joseph, confirms categorically, for it ends with comfort and marvels. Joseph lived all his life confronting schemes made by the people closest to him. His brothers plotted to kill him, but they amended it to exiling him. This happened to him while he was a boy. He was sold into the slave market in Egypt, where he was bought for a nominal sum. Then he fell victim to the attempted seduction by a great man's wife who, when her wish was foiled, sent him to prison, where he remained for some time. In spite of all of this, he at length approached close to the Egyptian throne and became the king's chief minister. He then began his call to Allah from the position of the ruling authority. Allah's plans were carried out and the matter ended.

The story begins with a dream and ends with its interpretation. As the sun appeared over the horizon, bathing the earth in its morning glory, Joseph, son of Prophet Jacob awoke from his sleep, delighted by a pleasant dream he had. He was filled with excitement as he ran to his father and related the dream. "O father! I saw in a dream eleven stars and the sun and the moon, I saw them prostrating themselves to me." His father's face lit up. He foresaw that Joseph would be one through whom the prophecy of his grandfather, Prophet Abraham would be fulfilled, in that his offspring would keep the light of Abraham's house alive and spread Allah's message to mankind.

However, Prophet Jacob, was aware of the Jealousy of Joseph by his brothers, so he warned him against telling his dream to them. "O son! Do not relate your vision to your brothers, for

they would arrange a plot against you. Verily! Satan is an open enemy to man! For your Lord will choose you and teach you the interpretation of dream and perfect his favour on you and on the offspring of Jacob, just as he perfected it on your fathers, Abraham, and Isaac! Verily! Your Lord is All-Knowing, All-Wise." Joseph heeded his father's warning. He did not tell his brothers what he had seen. It is well known that they hatred him so much that it was difficult for him to feel secure telling them what was in his heart and in his dreams. Joseph was eighteen years old, very handsome and robust, with a gentle temperament. He was respectful, kind and considerate. His brother Benjamin was equally pleasant. Both were from one mother, Rachel. Because of their refined qualities, the father loved the two more than his other children, and would not let them out of his sight. To protect them, he kept them busy with work in the house garden.

Joseph's brothers plot against him. "Truly, Joseph and his brother (Benjamin) are loved more by our father than we, but we are a strong group. Really our father is wrong. Kill Joseph or cast him out to some other land, so that the favour of your father may be given to you alone, and after that you will be righteous folks." One from among them said: "do not kill Joseph, but if you must do something, throw him down to the bottom of a well, he will be picked up by travellers.

The pages of the Old Testament say that Joseph told his dream to his brothers, whereas the Qur'an states, that did not happen. The Old Testament claims they lost their own rights by him, so they would kill him. Indeed Joseph kept his father's command and did not tell his brothers. In spite of this, his brothers sat down to conspire against him. One of them asked: "Why does our father love Joseph more than us?" Another answered: "Perhaps because of his beauty." A third said: "Joseph and his brother occupied our father's heart." The first complained: "Our father has gone all astray." One of them suggested a solution to the matter; kill Joseph. "Where should we kill him?" "We should banish him from these grounds." "We will send him far away." "Why shouldn't we kill him and have peace so that our father may favour us alone?" However, Judah (Yahudh), the eldest and most intelligent among them, said: "There is no need to kill him when all you want is to get rid of him. Look here, let us throw him into a well, he will be picked up by a passing caravan. They will take him to a distant land. He will disappear from your father's sight and our purpose will be served with his exile. Then after that we shall repent for our crime and become good people once again." The discussion continued on the idea of dropping Joseph into a well, it was seen as the safest solution. They said: "O father! Why do you not trust us with Joseph, when we are indeed his well-wishers? Send him with us tomorrow to enjoy himself, we will take good care of him." Jacob said: "Truly, it saddens me that you should take him away. I fear lest a wolf should devour him, while you

are careless of him." They said: "If a wolf devours him, while we are a strong group to guard him, then surely we are the losers." They persuaded their father to send Joseph with them; he agreed under their pressure. They were excited that they could now get rid of Joseph for after this they could stand a better chance of receiving their father's affection. On leaving home, they went directly to the well on the pretext of drinking water. One of them put his arms around Joseph and held him tightly. Startled by this unusual behaviour, Joseph struggled to free himself. More brothers rushed to hold him. One of them removed his shirt. Some more joined in to lift Joseph up and cast him into the well. Joseph's piteous pleas made no difference to their cruel hearts. Then Allah revealed to Joseph that he was safe and should not fear, for he would meet them again someday to remind them of what they had done. There was water in the well, which helped keep Joseph's body afloat, so he was not harmed. He sat lonely in the water. The brothers then went and killed a sheep and soaked the blood with Joseph's shirt. One brother said that they should swear to keep their deed a close secret. All of them took the oath. And they came to their father in the early part of the night weeping. Jacob asked why they were crying. They answered crying: "O father! We were racing with one another and left Joseph by our belongings, a wolf came and devoured him; but you will never believe us even though we are telling you the truth. "This is Joseph's shirt. We found it soaked in blood but could not find Joseph!"

Deep down in the heart Jacob knew that his beloved son was still alive and that his sons were lying. He held the blood stained shirt in his hands, spread it out and said: "What a merciful wolf! He ate my beloved son without tearing his shirt!" Their faces turned red when he demanded more information, but each swore by Allah that he was telling the truth. The heartbroken father burst into tears and said: "I have to be patient for Allah alone can help me against this tragedy. In the dark well Joseph managed to find a stone ledge to hold onto. Around him was total darkness and an eerie silence. Fearful thoughts entered his mind: what would happen to him? Where would he find food? Why had his own brothers turned against him? Would his father know of his plight? His father's smile flashed before him recalling the love and affection he had always shown him. Joseph began to pray earnestly, pleading to Allah for salvation. Gradually his fear began to subside. His Creator was testing the young man with a great misfortune in order to infuse in him a spirit of patience and courage. Joseph, surrendered himself to the will of his Lord. A caravan of merchants halted at this famous well for water. A man lowered in his bucket. Joseph was startled by the bucket hurtling down and grabbed hold of it before it could land in the water. As the man began to haul he felt the load unusually heavy, so he peeped into the well. What he saw shocked him; a man was clinging to the rope! He held the rope tightly and shouted to his friends: "Better give me a hand fellows! Looks like I found real treasure in the well!" His companions rushed to the well and helped him

to pull out the stranger holding onto the rope. Standing before them was a healthy, handsome youth, beaming with an angelic smile. They saw a handsome prize in him, for money was all that mattered to them. Immediately, they clapped iron shackles on his feet and took him to Egypt, far away from his beloved homeland of Canaan.

All over the Egyptian city the news spread that an unusually handsome, robust young slave was on sale. People gathered by the hundreds at the slave market. Some were spectators, others were bidders the elite and the rich, each one craning his neck to view the handsome specimen. The auctioneer had a field day as the bidding went wild, each buyer trying to outbid the other. Eventually, the Aziz, the chief minister of Egypt, outbid all the others and took Joseph to his mansion. The Qur'an describes this scene as follows: And there came a caravan of travellers; they sent their water drawer, and he let down his bucket into the well. He said: "What good news! Here is a boy." So they hid him as merchandise (a slave). Allah was the All-Knower of what they did. They sold him for a low price, for a few Dirhams (silver coins). They were of those who regarded him insignificant. The man who bought him said to his wife: "Make his stay comfortable, maybe he will profit us or we shall adopt him as a son." Thus we did establish Joseph in the land, so that we might teach him the interpretation of events. See how Allah the Almighty reveals the substance of this long story from its beginning: Allah has full power and control over His Affairs, but most of mankind do not know. Joseph felt at ease, for at last he was sheltered and would be well cared for. He thanked Allah over and over and wondered at the mysterious of life. Not so long ago he had been cast into a deep, dark well with no hope of ever coming out alive. Next he was rescued, then enslaved in iron shackles, and now he was moving freely in a luxurious mansion with enough food to enjoy. However, his heart ached with the longing to be with his parents and Brother Benjamin, he shed tears daily. Joseph was made the personal attendant of the chief minister's wife. He was obedient and ever-obliging. With his pleasant manners and charming behaviour, he won everybody's heart. Joseph's handsomeness became the talk of the town. People referred to him as the most attractive man they had ever seen and wrote poetry about him. His face carried immaculate beauty. The purity of his inner soul and his heart showed on his face, increasing his beauty. People from afar came to the city to have a glimpse of him. The prettiest maidens and rich ladies all wanted to possess him, but not once did he show pride or vanity, he was always humble and polite. The days passed and Joseph grew. Almighty Allah said: And when he (Joseph) attained his full manhood, we gave him wisdom and knowledge, thus we reward the doers of good. He was given wisdom in affairs and knowledge of life. He was given the art of conversation, captivating those who heard him. He was given nobility and self-restraint, which made him an irresistible personality. His master soon knew that Allah had graced him with Joseph. He understood that Joseph was the most honest, straightforward and noble

person he had ever met in his life. Therefore, he put Joseph in charge of his household, honoured him and treated him like a son. The wife of the chief minister, Zulaikha, watched Joseph from day to day. She ate with him, talked with him, listened to him and her wonder increased over the passage of time. Joseph was soon confronted with his second trial. The chief minister's wife, Zulaikha could not resist the handsome Joseph, and her obsession with him caused her sleepless nights. She fell in love with him, it was painful for her to be so close to a man, yet be unable to hold him. Yet, she was not a rebellious woman, for in her position she could get any man she desired. By all accounts, she must have been a very pretty and intelligent lady, or why would the chief minister have chosen her of all the pretty women in the kingdom? Although she bore him no child, he would not take another wife, as he loved her passionately. Joseph's refusal only heightened her passion. As he moved to the door to escape, she ran after him and caught hold of his shirt. In her tugging she tore his shirt and held the torn piece in her hand. They reached the door together. It opened suddenly and there stood her husband and a relative of hers. The sly woman immediately changed her tone to anger, and, showing the torn piece of the shirt in her hand, asked her husband: "What is the punishment for him who intended an evil design against your wife, should he be put in prison or be given a painful torment?" The shirt was passed from hand to hand, while she watched. The witness (her cousin) looked at it and found that it was torn at the back. The evidence showed that she was guilty. The disappointed husband said to his wife: "Surely, this is a situation created by you, woman. The wise and just Aziz apologized to Joseph for his wife's indecency. He also instructed her to beg Joseph's forgiveness for accusing him falsely. This incident went all over the city, woman talked about it throughout the land. Naturally their gossip distressed Zulaikha. She honestly believed that it was not easy for any women to resist a man as handsome as Joseph. To prove her helplessness, she planned to subject the women to the same temptation she faced. She invited them to a lavish banquet. No one wanted to miss the honour of dining with the chief minister's wife; besides, they secretly harboured the desire to meet the handsome Joseph face to face. Some of her close friends jokingly said they would come only if she introduced them to Joseph.

The invitation was restricted to ladies only. The banquet began, laughter and mirth abounded. The ladies were told not to mention the topic of Joseph. They were shocked, therefore, when Zulaikha opened the topic. "I have heard of those who say I have fallen in love with the young Hebrew man, Joseph." Silence fell upon the banquet. At once all the guests' eyes fell on the chief minister's wife. She said, while giving orders for the fruit to be served: "I admit that he is a charming fellow. I do not deny that I love him. I have loved him for a long time." The confession of the chief minister's wife removed the tension among the ladies. After finishing their dinner, the guests began cutting their fruit. At that very moment she summoned Joseph

to make his appearance. He entered the hall gracefully, his gaze lowered. Zulaikha called him by his name and he raised his head. The guests were astonished and dumbfounded. His face was shining and full of angelic beauty. It reflected complete innocence, so much so that one could feel the peace of mind in the depth of his soul. The women cried out in astonishment while cutting their fruit. All their eyes were fixed on Joseph. Some of them began to cut their palms without realizing and not even feeling that they had cut themselves. The chief minister's wife stood up and announced: "This is the young man about whom you blame me, I did seek to seduce him, but he refused. Now if he refuses to obey my order, he shall certainly be cast into prison and will be one of those who is disgraced." That evening, Zulaikha convinced her husband that the only way to save her honour was to put Joseph in prison; otherwise she would not be able to control herself or to safeguard his prestige. The chief minister knew Joseph was absolutely innocent, that he was a young man of honour, a loyal servant, and he loved him for these reasons. It was not an easy decision for him to put an innocent man behind bars. However, he was left with no choice. He reasoned that Joseph's honour would also be safeguarded if he was kept out of Zulaikha's sight. That night, with a heavy heart, the chief minister sent Joseph to prison. During this period Allah blessed him with an extraordinary gift; the ability to interpret dreams. At about the same time two other men landed in the prison. One was the cupbearer of the king; the other was the king's cook. The two men sensed that Joseph was not a common criminal, for piety glowed on his face. Both men had vivid dreams, they were anxious to have them explained. The king's cook dreamed that he stood in a place with bread on his head, while two birds ate the bread. The cupbearer dreamed that he was serving the king wine. Both went to Joseph and told him their dreams, asking him to give them their meaning. First, Joseph called them to Allah. Then he said that the cook would be crucified and the cupbearer would return to the service of the king. Joseph told the cupbearer to remind the king of him, and say that there was a wronged soul called Joseph in prison. What Joseph predicted did happen; the cook was crucified and the cupbearer returned to the palace. After the cupbearer returned to service, Satan made him forget to mention Joseph's name to the king. Therefore, Joseph remained in prison for a few more years, but he had patience by praying to Allah.

The king had a dream in which he sees himself on the banks of River Nile. The water is receding before him, becoming mere mud. The fish begin to skip and jump in the mud. Seven fat cows come out of the river followed by seven lean cows. The seven lean ones eat the seven fat ones. Then seven ears of green grain grow on the riverbanks and disappear in the mud. On the spot seven dry ears of grain grow. The king awoke frightened, shocked and depressed, not knowing what all this meant. He sent for the sorcerers, priests and ministers and told them his dream. The sorcerers said: "This is a mixed up dream. How can any of that

be? It is a nightmare." The priests said: "Perhaps his majesty had a heavy supper." The chief minister said: "Could it be that his majesty was exposed and did not draw the blanket up at night?" The king's jester said, jokingly: "His majesty is beginning to grow old, and so his dreams are confused." They all reached a unanimous conclusion, it was only a nightmare. The news reached the cupbearer. He recollected the dream he had in prison and compared it to the king's dream, and, therefore Joseph came to mind. He ran to the king to tell him about Joseph, who was the only one capable of interpreting the dream. The cupbearer said: "He had asked me to remember him to you, but I forgot." The king sent the cupbearer to ask Joseph about the dream. Joseph interpreted it and said: "There will be seven years of abundance. If the land is properly cultivated, there will be an excess of good harvest, more than people will need. This should be stored. Thereafter, seven years of famine will follow, during which time the excess grain could be used." He also advised that during the famine they should save some grain to be used for seed for the next harvest. Joseph then added; "After seven years of drought, there will be a year during which water will be plentiful. If the water is properly used, grapevines and olive trees will grow in abundance, providing plenty of grapes and olive oil." The cupbearer hurried back with the good news. The king was greatly astonished. Who could this person be? He commanded that Joseph be set free from prison and presented to him at once. The king's envoy went to fetch him immediately, but Joseph refused to leave prison unless his innocence was proven. The envoy returned to the king. The king asked him: "Where is Joseph? Did I not command you to fetch him?" The envoy replied: "He refused to leave until his innocence is established regarding the ladies who cut their hands." The king said: "Bring the wives of the ministers and the wife of the chief minister at once." The king felt that Joseph had been harmed unfairly but he did not know exactly how. The wife of the chief minister came with the other ministers' wives. The king asked: "What is the story of Joseph? What do you know about him? Is it true that?" One of the ladies interrupted the king exclaiming: "Allah forbid!" A second said: "We know of no evil he has done." A third said: "He enjoys the innocence of angels." The eyes of everyone turned to the wife of the chief minister. She now had a wrinkled face and had lost weight. She had been overwhelmed by sorrow over Joseph while he was in prison. She boldly confessed that she had lied and he had told the truth. "I tempted him; but he refused." She confirmed what she said, not out of fear of the king or the other ladies, but for Joseph, so he knew that she never betrayed him during his absence, for he was still in her mind and soul. Of all creation he was the only one she cared for, so she confirmed his innocence before all. The king said to the women: "What was your affair when you did seek to seduce Joseph?" The women said: "Allah forbid! No evil know we against him!" The wife of Al Aziz said: "Now the truth is manifest to all, it was I who sought to seduce him and he is surely one of the truthful." Joseph said: "I asked for this inquiry in order that the Aziz may know that I never betrayed him in secret. Verily! Allah does not guide the plots of the

betrayers. I do not free myself from blame. Verily, humans are inclined to evil, except when my Lord bestows His Mercy upon whom He wills. Verily, my Lord is Oft-Forgiving, most Merciful.

Joseph advised the king to start planning for years of famine ahead. He informed him that the famine would affect not only Egypt but the neighbouring countries as well. The king offered him a high position. Joseph asked to be made controller of the grain storehouse, he wanted to rescue hungry nations for a period of seven years. It was a sheer self-sacrifice on his part. The wheels of time turned. During the seven good years, Joseph had full control over the cultivation, harvesting and storage of crops. During the following seven years, drought followed and famine spread throughout the region, including Canaan, the homeland of Joseph. Joseph advised the king that as his kingdom was blessed with reserved grain, he should sell his grain to the needy nations at a fair price. The king agreed, and the good news spread all over the region. Jacob sent ten of his sons, all except Benjamin to Egypt to purchase provisions. Joseph heard of the ten brothers who had come from afar and who could not speak the language of the Egyptians. When they called on him to purchase their needs, Joseph immediately recognized his brothers, but they did not know him. Joseph received them warmly. After supplying them with provisions, he asked where they had come from. They explained: "We are eleven brothers, children of a noble prophet. The youngest is at home tending to the needs of our aging father." On hearing this, Joseph's eyes filled with tears; his longing for home swelled up in his heart. Joseph asked, "Are you telling the truth". They replied, "Why would we lie?" Joseph said, "If what you say is true then bring your brother as proof and I will reward you with double rations. But if you do not bring him to me, it would be better if you do not return," They assured him that they would gladly fulfil his command but that they would have to get their father's permission. Joseph ordered his servant to secretly place the purse, with the money they had paid, into one of their grain sacks. The brothers returned to their father. Before they could unload the camels, they greeted him, then said to him: "We were denied some supplies because you did not let Benjamin go with us. Please send him with us and we will take good care of him." Jacob became sad and told them: "I will not permit Benjamin to travel with you. I will not part with him, for I entrusted Joseph to you and you failed me." Later, when they opened their grain sacks, they were surprised to find the money purse returned intact. They rushed to their father; "Look, father! The noble official has returned our money; this is surely proof that he would not harm our brother and it can only benefit us." But Jacob refused to send Benjamin with them. After some time, when they had no more grain, Jacob asked them to travel to Egypt for more. They reminded him of the warning the Egyptian official had given them. They could not return without Benjamin. Jacob agreed, but not before he extracted a pledge from them. "I will not send him with you unless

you give me a pledge in Allah's name that you shall bring him back to me as safely as you take him." They gave their solemn pledge. He reminded them: "Allah is witness to your pledge." He then advised them to enter the city through several different gates. Jacob blessed them on their departure and prayed to Allah for their protection. The brothers undertook the long journey to Egypt, taking good care of Benjamin.

Joseph welcomed them heartily, although, with difficulty, he suppressed the desire to embrace Benjamin. He prepared a feast for them and seated them in pairs. Joseph arranged to sit next to his beloved brother Benjamin, who began to weep. Joseph asked him why he was crying. He replied: "If my brother Joseph had been here, I would have sat next to him." That night, when Joseph and Benjamin were alone in a room, Joseph asked whether he would have him for a brother. Benjamin respectfully answered that he regarded his host as a wonderful person, but he could never take the place of his brother. Joseph broke down and amidst flowing tears said; "My loving brother, I am the brother who was lost and whose name you are constantly repeating. Fate has brought us together after many years of separation. This is Allah's favour. But let it be our secret for a while." Benjamin flung his arms around Joseph and both brothers shed tears of joy.

The next day, while their bags were being filled with grain, Joseph ordered one of his attendants to place the king's gold cup which was used for measuring grain into Benjamin's saddlebag. When the brothers were ready to leave, the gates were locked and the court crier shouted: "O you travellers, you are thieves!" The accusation was unusual and the people gathered around Joseph's brothers. "What have you lost?" his brothers inquired. A soldier said: "The king's golden cup. Whoever can trace it we will give a beast load of grain." Joseph's brothers said: "We have not come here to corrupt the land and steal." Joseph's officers said: "What punishment should you choose for the thief?" The brothers answered: "According to our law, whoever steals becomes a slave to the owner of the property." The officers agreed: "We shall apply your law instead of the Egyptian law, which is imprisonment." The chief officer ordered his soldiers to start searching the caravan. Joseph was watching the incident from high upon his throne. He had given instructions for Benjamin's bag to be the last to be searched. When they did not find the cup in the bags of the ten older brothers, the brothers sighed in relief. Joseph said, there was no need to search Benjamin's saddle as he did not look like a thief. His brothers affirmed: "We will not move an inch unless his saddle is searched as well. We are the sons of a noble man, not thieves." The soldiers reached in and pulled the king's cup out. The brothers exclaimed: "If he steals now, a brother of his has stolen before." They strayed from the present issue in order to blame a particular group of the children of Jacob. Joseph heard their resentment with his own ears and was filled with regret. Yet, he

swallowed his resentment. He said to himself, "you went further and did far worse; it shall go bad with you and worse in the hereafter, Allah knows your intention." Silence fell and the brothers thought of Jacob; they had taken an oath with him that they would not betray his son. They began to beg Joseph for mercy. "Joseph, O minister! Take one of us instead. He is the son of a good man, and we see you are a good man." Joseph answered calmly: "How can you expect me to free the man who stole the king's cup? It would be sinful." The brothers went on pleading for mercy. However, the guards said that the king had spoken and his word was law. Judah, the eldest, was much worried and told the others: "We promised our father in the name of Allah not to fail him. I will, therefore, stay behind and will only return if my father permits me to do so." The brothers left enough provisions behind for Judah, who stayed at a tavern awaiting the fate of Benjamin. In the meantime, Joseph kept Benjamin in his house as his personal guest and told him how he had devised the plot to put the king's cup in his bag, in order to keep him behind, as to protect him. He was also glad that Judah had stayed behind, as he was a good hearted brother. Joseph secretly arranged to watch over Judah's wellbeing.

Joseph's plan in sending the others back was to test their sincerity, to see if they would come back for the two brothers. When they arrived home, they told said to their father, "Your son has stolen!" He was puzzled, scarcely believing the news. He was overwhelmed with sorrow and his eyes wept tears. "Patience be with me; perhaps Allah will return all of them to me. He is Most Knowing, Most Wise." He found consolation in patience and trusted in Allah. The father was deeply hurt. Only prayer could comfort him and strengthen his faith. Weeping all those years for his beloved son Joseph, and now his best sons had been snatched from him. Jacob almost lost his sight. The other sons pleaded with him: "O father, you are a noble prophet and a great messenger of Allah. Revelations descend to you and people received guidance and faith from you. Why are you destroying yourself in this way?" Jacob replied: "Rebuking me will not lessen my grief. Only the return of my sons will comfort me. My sons, go in search of Joseph and his brother; do not despair of Allah's mercy." On reaching Egypt they collected Judah and called on Joseph, they pleaded: "O ruler of the land! Hard times has hit our family, we have brought poor capital, pay us full measure and be charitable to us. Truly, Allah rewards the charitable." At this moment, in the midst of their plight, Joseph spoke to them in their native tongue saying: "Do you know what you did with Joseph and his brother when you were ignorant?" They said: "Are you Joseph?" He said: "I am Joseph, and this is my brother (Benjamin). Allah has indeed been Gracious to us. Verily, he who fears Allah with obedience and abstains from sins and evil deeds, and by performing righteous good deeds, and is patient, then surely, Allah does not make the reward of pious one to be lost." They said: "By Allah! Indeed Allah has preferred you above us, and we certainly have been sinners." The brothers began to tremble with fear, but Joseph comforted them: "there is no disappointment

today, may Allah forgive you, for He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy!" Joseph embraced them, and together they wept with joy. It was not possible for Joseph to leave his responsible office without proper replacement, so he advised his brothers: "Go with this shirt and cast it over fathers face, his sight will become clear and bring the whole family to me. The caravan headed back to Palestine. When the caravan arrived, their father said: "I smell Joseph, don't think of me as weak in the mind because of old age." They said: "By Allah! You are mistaken." Then, they cast the shirt over his face and he became clear sighted. He said: "Did I not say to you, I know from Allah that which you do not." They said: "O father! Ask Allah to forgive our sins, indeed we have been sinners."

Then, they travelled back to Joseph, he betook his parents to himself and said: "Enter Egypt, if Allah will, in security." Joseph arranged an audience with the king for himself and his family, to ask the king's permission for them to settle in Egypt. Joseph was an asset to the kingdom, and the king was happy to have him remain with his household. Joseph prostrated to Allah in gratitude. Before he died, Jacob advised his children to adhere to the teachings of Islam, the religion of all Allah's prophets. Allah the Almighty revealed; Or were you witnesses when death approached Jacob? When he said unto his sons: "What will you worship after me?" they said: "We shall worship your Ilah (God-Allah) the Ilah (God) of your father. Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, One Ilah (God), and to Him we submit in Islam." Joseph, at the moment of his death, asked his brothers to bury him besides his forefathers if they were to leave Egypt. So when Joseph passed away, he was mummified and placed in a coffin until such a time as he could be taken out of Egypt and buried beside his forefathers, as per his request. It was said that he died at the age of one hundred and ten.

Prophet Ayyub (Job)

His name was Job, he was a descendant of Abraham's offspring as Allah Almighty declared: "That was our proof which we gave Abraham against his people. We raise whom we will in degrees. Certainly your Lord is All-Wise, All Knowing. And we bestowed upon him Isaac and Jacob, each of them we guided and before him, we guided Noah, and among his progeny David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses and Aaron. Thus do we reward the good doers.

Allah the Almighty praised His worshipper Job in His Glorious Qur'an: Truly! We found him patient. What an excellent slave! Verily, he was ever oft returning in repentance to us!

Job was repentant, remembering Allah with thankfulness, patience, and steadfastness. This was the cause of his rescue and the secret of Allah praising him. A group of angels were discussing Allah's other human creatures, how those who were humble earned Allah's pleasure, while those who were arrogant incurred His displeasure. One of the angels remarked: "The best creature on earth today is Job, a man of noble character who displays great patience and always remembers his Generous Lord. He is an excellent model for the worshippers of Allah. In return, his Lord blessed him with a long life and plenty of servants, as well as the needy and the poor share his good fortune; he feeds and clothes the poor and buys slaves to set them free. He makes those who receive his charity feel as if they are favouring him so kind and gentle is he." Iblis overhearing all of this, became annoyed. He planned to tempt Job to corruption and disbelief, so he rushed to him. He tried to distract Job from his prayers by whispering to him about the good things in life but Job was a true believer and would not let evil thoughts tempt him. This disturbed Iblis even more; thus he began to hate Job even more. Iblis complained to Allah about Job. He said that although he was continuously glorifying Allah he was not doing so out of sincerity but to satisfy Allah so that his wealth would not be taken away. It was all a show, all out of greed. "If you remove his wealth then you will find that his tongue will no longer mention your name and his praying will stop."

Allah told Iblis that Job was one of His most sincere devotees. He did not worship Him because of favours; his worship stemmed from his heart and had nothing to do with material things. But to prove to Iblis the depth of Job's sincerity and patience, Allah allowed him to do whatever he and his helpers wished with Job's wealth. Iblis was very happy. He gathered his helpers and set about destroying Job's cattle, servants and farms until he was left with no possessions. Rubbing his hands in glee, Iblis appeared before Job, disguised as a wise old man and said to him: "All your wealth is lost, some people say that it is because you gave too much charity and that you are wasting your time with continuous prayers to Allah. Others say that Allah has

brought this upon you in order to please your enemies. If Allah had the capacity to prevent harm, then He would have protected your wealth." True to his belief, Job replied: "What Allah has taken away from me belongs to Him. I was only its trustee for a while. He gives to whom He wills and withholds from whom He wills." With these words, Job again prostrated to his Lord. When Iblis saw this, he felt frustrated, so he again addressed Allah: "I have stripped Job of all his possessions, but he still remains grateful to you. However he is only hiding his disappointment, for he places a great deal of trust in his many children. The real test of a parent is through his children. You will see how Job will reject you." Allah granted Iblis authority but warned him that it would not reduce Job's faith in His Lord nor his patience. Iblis again gathered his helpers and set about his evil deeds. He shook the fountain of the house in which Job's children were living and sent the building crashing, killing all of them. Then he went to Job disguised as a man who had come to sympathize with him. In a comforting tone he said to Job: "The circumstances under which your children died were sad. Surely, your Lord is not rewarding you properly for all your prayers." Having said this, Iblis waited anxiously hoping Job was now ready to reject Allah. But again Job disappointed him by replying: "Allah sometimes gives and sometimes takes. He is sometimes pleased and sometimes displeased with our deeds. Whether a thing is beneficial or harmful to me, I will remain firm in my belief and remain thankful to my Creator." then Job prostrated to his Lord. At this Iblis was extremely annoyed.

Iblis called on Allah. "O my Lord, Job's wealth is gone, his children are dead, and he is still healthy in body, and as long as he enjoys good health he will continue to worship you in the hope of regaining his wealth and producing more children. Grant me authority over his body so that I may weaken it. He will surely neglect worshipping you and he will become disobedient." Allah wanted to teach Iblis a lesson that Job was a devoted servant of his Lord so He granted Iblis his 3rd request but placed a condition: "I give you authority over his body but not over his soul, intellect or heart, for in these places reside the knowledge of me and my religion." Armed with this new authority, Iblis began to take revenge on Job's body and filled it with disease until it was reduced to mere skin and bone, he suffered severe pain. But through all the suffering Job remained strong in his faith, patiently bearing all the hardships without complaining. Allah's righteous servant did not despair or turn to others for help but remained hopeful of Allah's mercy. Even close relatives and friends deserted him. Only his kind, loving wife stayed with him. In his hour of need, she showered her kindness on him and cared for him. She remained his sole companion and comforter through the many years of suffering. Therefore Iblis became desperate. He consulted his helpers, but they could not advise him. They asked: "How is it that your cleverness cannot work against Job, yet you succeeded in misleading Adam the father of man, out of Paradise?" Iblis went to Job's wife in the form of a

man. "Where is your husband?" he asked her. She pointed to an almost lifeless form crumpled on the bed and said: "There he is, suspended between life and death."

Iblis reminded her of the days, when Job had good health, wealth and children. Suddenly, the painful memory of years of hardship overcame her, she burst into tears. She said to Job: "How long are you going to bear this torture from our Lord? Are we to remain without wealth, children or friends forever? Why don't you call upon Allah to remove this suffering?" Job sighed, and in a soft voice replied: "Iblis must have whispered to you and made you dissatisfied. Tell me how long did I enjoy good health and riches?" She replied: "80 years." Then Job replied: "How long am I suffering like this?" She said: "7 years." Job then told her: "In that case I am ashamed to call on my Lord to remove the hardship, for I have not suffered longer than the years of good health with plenty. It seems your faith has weakened and you are dissatisfied with the fate of Allah. If I ever regain health, I swear I will punish you with a hundred strokes! From this day onward, I forbid myself to eat or drink anything from your hands. Leave me alone and let my Lord do with me as He pleases." Crying bitterly and with a heavy heart, she had no choice but to leave him and seek shelter elsewhere. In this helpless state, Job turned to Allah, not complaining but seeking his mercy: "Verily! distress has seized me and You are the Most Merciful of all to those who show mercy." so We answered his call, we removed the distress that was on him, and We restored his family to him and the like thereof along with them as a mercy from Ourselves and a Reminder for all who worship Us." Job obeyed and almost immediately his good health was restored. Meanwhile, his faithful wife could no longer bear to be parted from her husband and returned to him to beg his forgiveness, desiring to serve him. On entering her house, she was amazed at the sudden change: Job was healthy again! She embraced him and thanked Allah for His mercy. Job was not worried, for he had taken an oath to punish her with a hundred strokes if he had regained health but he had no desire to hurt her. He knew if he did not fulfil the oath, he would be guilty of breaking a promise to Allah. Therefore in His wisdom and mercy, Allah came to the assistance of His faithful servant and advised him: "take in your hand a bundle of thin grass and strike therewith your wife, and break not your oath." Truly! We found him patient. How excellent a slave! Verily, he was ever oft returning in repentance to us!"

Prophet Muhammad said: "While Job was taking a bath, a swarm of gold locusts fell on him, he started collecting them in his garment. His Lord called on him: "O Job! Have I not made you rich enough, to need what you see?" He said: "Yes, My Lord! But I cannot shun Your Blessings."

Prophet Shu'aib (Jethro)

Allah the Almighty revealed the story of Shu'aib: "To the people of Madyan (Madian) we sent their brother Shu'aib. He said: "O my people! Worship Allah, you have no other Ilah (God) but Him. Verily! a clear sign from your Lord has come to you; so give full measure and full weight and do not wrong men in things, and do not create mischief on earth after it has been set in order, for that will be better for you, if you are believers. And do not sit on foot paths and threaten or hinder believers from the path of Allah. Remember when you were but few, Allah multiplied you. See what was the end of the Mufsideen (mischief makers, corrupts and liars). And if there is a party of you who believes in that which I have been sent and a party who do not believe, just be patient until Allah judges between us, for he is the best of Judges." The arrogant chiefs among his people said: "We will drive you O Shu'aib and those who believe with you out of our town, unless you all return to our religion." He said: "Even though we hate it! If we return to your religion, then we would be inventing a lie against Allah, after he rescued us from it. We should not return, unless Allah, our Lord, should will. Our Lord comprehends all things in His Knowledge. We put our trust in Allah alone. Our Lord! Judge between us and our people in truth, for you are the Best of to judge." The chiefs said to their people: "If you follow Shu'aib be sure you will be of the losers!" Shu'aib then turned to people and said: "O my people! I have conveyed my Lord's Messages to you, I gave you good advice and I will not feel sorrow for the destruction of people who disbelieve." The people of Madyan were Arabs who lived in Ma'an, which today is greater Syria. They were greedy people who did not believe that Allah existed, they lived wicked lives. They gave short measure, praised their goods beyond their worth and hid their defects. They lied to their customers, thereby cheating them. Prophet Shu'aib was armed with many miracles, gifted to him by Allah. Shu'aib preached his people and begged them to be mindful of Allah's favours and warned them of the consequences of their evil lifestyles. They only mocked him. Shu'aib remained calm as he reminded them of his kinship to them and that what he was doing, was not for personal gain.

They seized the belongings of Shu'aib and his followers and drove them out of the city. The Messenger turned to Allah for help, his plea was answered. Allah sent down scorching heat on the people, they suffered terribly. On seeing a cloud gathering in the sky, they thought it would bring cool, refreshing rain, they rushed outside in the hope of enjoying the rainfall. Instead the clouds burst, hurling thunderbolts and fire. They heard a thunderous sound from above which caused the earth under their feet to tremble. The evil doers perished in this state of horror.

Allah the Exalted stated: "The people of Madyan contradicted the Messengers. When Shu'aib said to them: "Will you not fear Allah and obey Him? I am a trustworthy Messenger to you. So fear Allah, keep your duty to Him and obey me. No reward do I ask of you, my reward is only from the Lord of the Alamin (mankind, jinn and all that exists). Give full measure and cause no loss to others. And weigh with truth and balance. Do not defraud people by reducing their things nor do evil and do not corrupt or create mischief in the land. Fear Him Who created you and the generations a foretime." They said: "You are only one of those bewitched! You are but a human being like us and verily, we think that you are one of the liars! So cause a piece of heaven to fall on us, if you are of the truthful!" He said: "My Lord is the Best Knower of what you do." But, they belied him, so the torment of the day of a gloomy cloud seized them, which was the torment of a Great Day. Verily, in this is a sign, yet most of them are non-believers. And verily! Your Lord, Allah is indeed the All Mighty, the Most Merciful."

Prophet Musa (Moses) & Prophet Harun (Aaron)

In both Judaism and Christianity Moses is a central figure. He is the man from the Old Testament most mentioned in the New Testament, he led the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt, communicated with God and received the Ten Commandments. Moses is known as both a religious leader and a lawgiver. In Islam, Moses is loved and respected; he is both a Prophet and a Messenger. God mentions him more than 120 times, his story ranges across several chapters. It is the longest and most detailed story of a prophet in the Qur'an and is discussed in elaborate detail.

The word Prophet (Nabi in Arabic) is derived from the word Naba, meaning news. God's message is revealed and the Prophet spreads the news amongst his people. A Messenger, on the other hand, comes with a specific mission, usually to convey a new ordainment from God. Every Messenger is a Prophet, but not every Prophet, is a Messenger. Islam teaches that all prophets came to their people with the same proclamation, "O my people, worship God, you have no other God but Him". Moses called the children of Israel to worship God alone and he laid down the laws prescribed in the Torah. "Verily, We did send down the Torah to Moses, therein was guidance and light, by which the Prophets, who submitted themselves to God's Will, judged the Jews. And the rabbis and the priests too judged the Jews by the Torah for to them was entrusted the protection of God's Book and they were witnesses." Qur'an is a book of guidance for all of humankind. It is not a history book; however, it does contain historical information. God asks us to reflect and contemplate on the stories of the Prophets in order that we may learn from their trials, tribulations and triumphs. Moses' story contains many lessons for humankind. God says that the account of Moses and Pharaoh in Qur'an is the truth. It is a story of political intrigue and of oppression that knew no bounds.

We recite to you some of the news of Moses and Pharaoh in truth, for a people who believe. Verily, Pharaoh exalted himself in the land and made its people sects, weakening (oppressing) a group (Children of Israel) among them; killing their sons and letting their females live. Verily, he was of those who commit great sins and crimes.

Moses was born into one of the most politically charged times in history. The Pharaoh of Egypt was the dominant power figure in the land. He was so incredibly powerful that he referred to himself as a god and nobody was inclined or able to dispute this. He said, "I am your lord, most high", Pharaoh effortlessly exerted his authority and influence over all the people in Egypt. He used the strategy of divide and conquer. He set up class distinctions, divided people into groups and tribes, and set them against one another. The Jews, children of Israel, were put at the lowest level of Egyptian society. They were slaves and servants. Moses' family was from amongst the children of Israel. Egypt at the time was the known world's superpower. The

ultimate power rested in the hands of very few. Pharaoh and his trusted ministers directed matters as if lives of the population were of little or no consequence. The political situation was in some ways similar to the political world of the 21st century. In a time when young people of the world are used as cannon fodder for the political and military games of the most powerful, the story of Moses is particularly pertinent.

The people of Egypt were influenced by dreams and interpretation of dreams. Dreams featured prominently in the story of Prophet Joseph and once again, in the story of Moses the fate of the children of Israel is affected by a dream. Pharaoh dreams that a child from the children of Israel grows to manhood and seizes his throne. True to character, Pharaoh reacts arrogantly and gives the order that all male children born to the children of Israel be killed. His ministers however perceive that this would lead to the complete annihilation of the children of Israel and economic ruin for Egypt. They ask, how would the empire function without slaves and servants? The order changed; the male children are killed in one year but spared in the next. Pharaoh becomes so fanatical he sends spies or security agents to seek out pregnant women. If any woman gives birth to a male child, he is immediately put to death. When Moses' mother becomes pregnant with the child destined to lead the children of Israel out of bondage, she conceals her pregnancy. However, God wished to do a favour to those who were weak and oppressed, pharaoh's plans are thwarted.

And We wished to do a favour to those who were weak (and oppressed) in the land, and to make them rulers and to make them the inheritors, And to establish them in the land, and We let Pharaoh and Haman (Egypt's Chief Minister) and their hosts receive from them that which they feared.

Pharaoh of Egypt was a tyrant who oppressed the descendants of Jacob, known as the children of Israel (Bani Israel). He used every means to demean and disgrace them. They were kept in bondage and forced to work for him for small wages or nothing. Under this system the people obeyed and worshipped pharaoh, the ruling class carried out his orders, thereby authorizing his tyranny and crazy whims. Pharaoh wanted people to obey him only, and to believe in the gods of his invention. Pharaoh saw in his vision a fire, which came from Jerusalem and burned the houses of the Egyptians, but not do harm the children of Israel. When he woke up, he was horrified. He gathered his priests and magicians and asked them about his vision. They said: "this means a boy will be born of them and the Egyptian people will perish at his hands.' Pharaoh issued a decree to slay any male child that would be born to the children of Israel. This was carried out until the experts of economics said to Pharaoh: "The elderly children of Israel will die and the young are slaughtered. This will lead to their annihilation. As a result, Pharaoh will lose the manpower of those who work for him, those

whom he enslaves and their women whom he exploits. It is better to regulate this procedure by initiating the following policy: males should be slaughtered one year but spared the next year." Pharaoh found that solution to be safe economically.

Moses's mother was pregnant with Aaron during the year that boys were spared; during the year in which boys were to be slain, she gave birth to Moses; thus his birth caused her terror. She was afraid he would be killed, so she nursed him secretly.

Allah the Almighty revealed: And we wished to do a favour to those who were weak and oppressed in the land, and make them rulers and make them inheritors, and establish them in the land, and we let Pharaoh and Haman and their hosts receive from them that which they feared. And we inspired the mother of Moses, saying: "breastfeed Moses, but when you fear for him, cast him into the river and fear not nor grieve. Verily! We shall bring him back to you, and shall make him one of Our Messengers.

She obeyed the sacred and merciful call. She was commanded to make a basket for Moses. She nursed him, put him into the basket, then went to the shore of the Nile and threw it into the water. Her mother's heart, the most merciful one in the world, grieved as she threw her son into the Nile. However, she was aware that Allah was much more merciful to Moses than her and that He loved him more than her. Allah was his Lord and the Lord of the Nile. Allah issued His command to the waves to be calm and gentle while carrying the child. She instructed her daughter to follow the course of the basket and to report back to her. As the daughter followed the floating basket along the riverbank, she found herself on the palace grounds. The basket came to rest at the riverbank, which skirted the king's palace. The palace servants found the basket with the baby and took it to Pharaoh and his queen (Hamam). When the queen held the infant, Allah instilled in her a strong love for this baby. Pharaoh's wife was very different from Pharaoh. He was a disbeliever; she was a believer. He was cruel; she was merciful. He was a tyrant; she was delicate and goodhearted. She was sad because she was infertile and had hoped to have a son. Hamam kissed the baby. Pharaoh was amazed when he saw his wife hugging the baby. He was astonished because his wife was weeping with joy, something he had never seen her do before. She said: "Let me keep the baby and let him be a son to us."

The queen summoned a few wet nurses to suckle baby Moses, but he would not take any. The queen was distressed and sent for more wet nurses. Moses's sister was also worried, as her baby brother was without milk for a long time. Seeing the queen's anxiety, she blurted that she knew just the mother who would suckle the child affectionately. They asked her why she was following the floating basket. She said she did so out of curiosity. Her excuse sounded

reasonable, so they believed her. They ordered her to rush and fetch the woman she was talking about. Her mother also was waiting with a heavy heart, worried about the fate of her baby. Just then her daughter rushed in with the good news. Her heart lifted and she lost no time in reaching the palace. As the child was put to her breast, he immediately started suckling. Pharaoh was astonished and asked; "Who are you? This child refused to take any other breast but yours." Allah gave her inner strength and she replied: "I am a woman with sweet milk and a sweet smell, no child refuses me." This answer satisfied Pharaoh. She was appointed as Moses's wet nurse. She continued to breast-feed him for a long time. When he grew older, she was allowed to visit him. Moses was raised in the palace as a prince.

One day in the main city, he saw two men fighting. One was an Israelite, he was being beaten by the other, an Egyptian. On seeing Moses, the Israelite begged him for help. Moses got involved in the dispute and, in a state of anger, struck a heavy blow on the Egyptian, who died on the spot. Upon realizing he killed a human being, Moses's heart was filled with deep sorrow, and immediately begged Allah for forgiveness. He had not intended to kill the man. He pleaded with Almighty Allah to forgive him, and he felt a sense of peace filling his whole being. Thereafter Moses began to show more patience and sympathy towards people. The next day he saw the same Israelite involved in another fight. Moses went to him and said: "You seem to be a quarrelsome fellow. You seem to get into trouble every day." Fearing that Moses might strike him, the Israelite said: "are you going to kill me like you killed that wretch yesterday?"

The Egyptian with whom the Israelite was fighting overheard this remark and reported Moses to the authorities. Thereafter, as Moses was passing through the city, a man approached him and said: "O Moses, the chiefs have taken counsel against you. You are to be tried and killed. I advise you to escape." Moses knew that the penalty for killing an Egyptian was death. Moses left Egypt in a hurry without going to Pharaoh's palace or changing his clothes. He travelled in the direction of the country of Median, which was the nearest inhabited land between Syria and Egypt. His only companion in the hot desert was Allah, and his only provision was piety. There was not a single root to pick to lessen his hunger. The hot sand burned the soles of his feet. However, fearing pursuit by Pharaoh's men, he forced himself to continue on. He travelled for eight nights, hiding during the day. After crossing the main desert, he reached a watering hole outside Median where shepherds were watering their flocks. He went to the spring, where he saw two young women preventing their sheep from mixing with the others. Moses sensed that the women were in need of help. Forgetting his thirst, he drew nearer to them and asked if he could help them in any way. The older sister said: "We are waiting until the shepherds finish watering their sheep, then we will water ours." Moses asked again: "Why are you waiting?" The younger one said: "We cannot push men." Moses was surprised that women

were shepherding, as only men were supposed to do it. It is hard and tiresome work, and one needs to be on the alert. Moses asked: "Why are you shepherding?" The younger sister said: "Our father is an old man; his health is too poor for him to go outdoors for pasturing sheep." Moses said: "I will water the sheep for you." When Moses approached the water, he saw that the shepherds had put over the mouth of the spring an immense rock that could only be moved by ten men. Moses embraced the rock and lifted it out of the spring's mouth, the veins of his neck and hands standing out as he did so. Moses was certainly strong. He watered their sheep and put the rock back in its place. He returned to sit in the shade of the tree. At this moment he realized that he had forgotten to drink. His stomach was sunken because of hunger.

The young ladies returned home earlier than usual, which surprised their father. They related the incident at the spring. Their father sent one of his daughters to invite the stranger to his home. Bashfully, the woman approached Moses and delivered the message. "My father is grateful for what you have done for us. He invites you to our home so that he may thank you personally." Moses welcomed this invitation and accompanied the maiden to her father. Moses could see that they lived comfortably as a happy and peaceful household. He introduced himself and told the old man about the misfortune. The old man comforted him: "Fear not, you have escaped from the wrong-doers." Moses's gentle behaviour was noticed by the father and his daughters. The kind man invited him to stay with them. Moses felt at home with this happy household, for they were friendly and feared Allah. One of the daughters suggested to her father that he employ Moses, as he was strong and trustworthy. They needed someone like him, especially at the water hole, which was visited by ruffians. The father asked her how she could be sure of his trustworthiness in such a short time. She replied: "When I bade him to follow me home, he insisted that I walk behind him." The old man was pleased to hear this. He approached Moses and said: "I wish to marry you to one of my daughters on the condition that you agree to work for me for a period of eight years." This offer suited Moses well, for being a stranger in this country, he would soon have to search for shelter and work. Moses married the Midianite's daughter and looked after the old man's animals for ten long years. Time passed, he lived in seclusion far from his family and his people. This period of ten years was important in his life. It was a period of major preparation. Certainly Moses's mind was absorbed in the stars every night. He followed the sunrise and the sunset every day. He wondered about plants, how they split from the soil and appear thereafter. He contemplated water and how the earth is revived by it and flourishes after its death. He was deeply involved in the Glorious Book of God, open to the insight and heart. He was engulfed in the existence of Allah. The religion of Moses was the same as that of Jacob, which was Islamic monotheism. His forefather was Jacob the grandson of Abraham. Moses, therefore, was one of the descendants of Abraham and every prophet who came after Abraham was one of Abraham's

successors. In addition to physical preparation, there was spiritual preparation. It was made in complete seclusion, in the middle of the desert, and in places of pasture. Silence was his way of life, and seclusion was his vehicle. Allah Almighty prepared for His prophet the tools he would need later on to righteously bear the commands of Allah the Exalted.

One day, homesickness' hit the heart of Moses. He wanted to return to Egypt. He went to his wife and said: "Tomorrow we shall leave for Egypt." She, obeyed her husband. Moses left Median with his family and travelled through the desert until he reached Mount Sinai. There Moses discovered that he had lost his way. He sought Allah's direction and was shown the right course. At nightfall they reached Mount Tur. Moses noticed a fire in the distance. He said to his family, "I shall fetch firebrand to warm us." As he got closer to the fire, he heard an impressive voice calling him: "O Moses, I am Allah, the Lord of the Universe." Moses was bewildered and looked around. He again heard the voice. "And what is in you right hand, O Moses?" Shivering, Moses answered: "This is my staff on which I lean, and with which I beat down branches for my sheep." The same voice commanded him: "Throw down your staff!" He did so, and at once the staff became a wriggling snake. Moses turned to run, but the voice again addressed him: "Fear not and grasp it; we shall return it to its former state." The snake changed back into his staff. Moses's fear subsided and was replaced by peace, for he realized that he was witnessing the Truth. Next, Allah commanded him to thrust his hand into his robe at the armpit. When he pulled it out, the hand had a brilliant shine. Allah then commanded Moses; "You have two signs from Your Lord; go to Pharaoh and his chiefs, for they are an evil gang and have transgressed all bounds." However, Moses feared that he would be arrested by Pharaoh, so he turned to Allah saying: "My Lord! I have killed a man among them and I fear that they will kill me." Allah assured him of his safety and set his heart at rest. Moses said: "O my Lord! Open my chest and grant me self-confidence, contentment and boldness. And ease my task; and make loosen the defect from my tongue so that they understand my speech, and appoint for me a helper from my family, Aaron, my brother; increase my strength with his, and let him share my task." Allah said: "Your request is granted, O Moses! Indeed we granted a favour on you before. When we inspired your mother saying: "Put the child into the Tabut (a wooden chest) and put it in the river Nile, the river shall cast it up onto the bank, and there, an enemy of mine and an enemy of his shall take him. I endured you with love from me, in order that you may be brought up under My Eye, when your sister went and said; "shall I show you one who will nurse him?' We restored you to your mother, so that she might cool her eyes and not grieve. You killed a man, but we saved you from distress and tried you with a heavy trial. Then you stayed a number of years with the people of Median. Then you came here according to the term which I ordained for you, O Moses!

Moses and Aaron went together to Pharaoh and delivered their message. Moses spoke to him about Allah, His mercy and His Paradise and about the obligations of monotheism and His worship. Pharaoh listened to Moses with disdain. He thought that Moses was crazy because he dared to question his supreme position. Then he raised his hand and asked: "What do you want?" Moses answered: "I want you to send the children of Israel with us." Pharaoh asked: "Why should I send them, they are my slaves?" Moses replied: "They are slaves of Allah, Lord of the Worlds." Pharaoh then inquired sarcastically if his name was Moses. Moses said "Yes." "Are you not the Moses whom we picked up from the Nile as a helpless baby? Are you not the Moses whom we reared in this palace, who ate and drank from our provisions and whom our wealth showered with charity? Are you not the Moses who is a fugitive, the killer of an Egyptian man, if my memory does not betray me? It is said that killing is an act of disbelief. Therefore, you were a disbeliever when you killed. You are a fugitive from justice and you come to speak to me! What were you talking about Moses, I forgot?" Moses knew that Pharaoh's mentioning his past, his upbringing and his receiving Pharaoh's charity was Pharaoh's way of threatening him. Moses ignored his sarcasm and explained that he was not a disbeliever when he killed the Egyptian, he only went astray and Allah the Almighty had not yet given him the revelation. He made Pharaoh understand that he fled from Egypt because he was afraid of their revenge, even though the killing was an accident. He informed him that Allah had granted him forgiveness and made him one of the messengers. Pharaoh said: "And what is the Lord of Alamin (mankind, jinn and all that exists)?" Moses replied: "Lord of the heavens, the earth and all that is between them." Pharaoh said to those around: "Do you hear what he says?" Moses said: "You're Lord and the Lord of your ancient fathers!" Pharaoh said: "Verily, your Messenger who sent you is a madman!" Moses said: "Lord of the east, the west and all that is between them, if you understand!" Pharaoh said: "If you choose an Ilah (a god) other than me, I will certainly put you among the prisoners." Moses said: "Even if I bring you something obvious and convincing." Pharaoh said: "Bring it on then, if you are truthful!"

Pharaoh's amazement turned to terror. Fearing that his rule was in danger, he addressed his advisors: "These two wizards will strip you of your traditions and drive you out of your country with their magic. What is your advice?" they counselled Pharaoh to detain Moses and his brother while they summoned the best magicians in the country. Pharaoh detained Moses and Aaron. He dispatched couriers all over the land to enlist the best magicians. He offered each successful magician a big reward, including appointment as a royal courtier. On the customary festival day, which attracted citizens from all over the Egyptian empire, Pharaoh arranged for a public contest between Moses and the magicians. The people came when they heard of the greatest contest ever, between Pharaoh's magicians and a single man who claimed to be a prophet. They had also heard of a baby who floated down the river Nile in a basket, landed on

Pharaoh's palace grounds, raised as a prince and who later fled for killing an Egyptian, with a single blow. Moses addressed the magicians. "Woe unto you, if you invent a lie against Allah by calling His miracles magic and by not being honest with Pharaoh. Woe unto you, if you do not know the difference between truth and falsehood. Allah will destroy you with His punishment, for he who lies against Allah fails miserably." Moses had spoken sincerely and made the magicians think. But they were overwhelmed by greed for money and glory. They hoped to impress the people with their magic and to expose Moses as a fraud and a cheat. Moses asked the magicians to perform first. They threw their magical objects down on the ground. Their staffs and ropes took the forms of wriggling serpents while the crowd watched in amazement. Pharaoh and his men applauded loudly. Then Moses threw his staff. It began to wriggle and became an enormous serpent. The people stood up, craning their necks for a better view. Pharaoh and his men sat silently as, one by one, Moses's huge serpent swallowed all the snakes. Moses bent down to pick it up and behold it became his staff again.

The crowd rose like a great wave, shouting and screaming with excitement. A wonder like this had never been seen before! On witnessing the power of Moses, the magicians prostrated themselves to Allah, saying: "We believe in the Lord of Moses and Aaron." Pharaoh got angry and began plotting his next move. He stated that the demonstration had been arranged secretly between Moses and the magicians. He demanded the magicians confess their scheme, threatening them with death. They refused to denounce Allah and stuck to their sincerity to their belief. No longer hiding his cruel nature, Pharaoh threatened to cut off their hands and feet and crucify them on the trunks of palm trees as an example to his subjects.

Verily! Whoever comes to his Lord as a Mujrim (disbeliever), surely, for him is Hell, therein he will neither die nor live.

Moses and Aaron left, Pharaoh returned to his palace. He quarrelled with his ministers and others, criticized them bitterly for no reason, and commanded them to get out of his presence. When he was left alone, he tried to think more calmly. He drank several cups of wine, but his anger did not abate. Then he summoned all the ministers, leaders and responsible men for a serious meeting. Pharaoh entered the meeting with a rigid face. It was obvious that he would never surrender easily. He had established a kingdom on the basis of his being a god, worshipped by the Egyptian people. Now Moses came to destroy what he had built. Moses said that there was no Lord other than Allah in existence. This meant that Pharaoh was a liar. Pharaoh opened the session by throwing a sudden question at Haman: "Am I a liar, O Haman?" Haman fell to his knees in amazement and asked: "Who dared accuse Pharaoh lying?" Pharaoh said: "Has he (Moses) not said that there is a Lord in the heaven?" Haman

answered: "Moses is lying." Pharaoh said: "I know he is a liar." Then he looked towards Haman and cried: "O Haman! Build me a tower, a tower that reaches the heavens, so I may look upon the Ilah (God) of Moses, I think he is a liar." Pharaoh issued his royal command to erect a lofty tower, its height to reach the heavens. Pharaoh's command depended fundamentally upon Egyptian civilization and its fondness for building what Pharaoh wanted. However, he ignored the rules of engineering. In spite of this, Haman assented (hypocritically), knowing that it was impossible to erect such a tower. He said that he would issue a command to build it immediately. "However, your majesty, let me object to Pharaoh for the first time. You will never find anyone in the heavens. There is no god but you."

Pharaoh declared his historic line in the famous meeting: O chiefs! I do not know of any god, other than me.

Pharaoh was consumed with his new problem. A series of serious meetings began in his palace. He summoned those responsible for the army, the police and what we call today his director of intelligence. He also summoned the ministers, princes and priests. He called whoever had a powerful effect on the direction of events.

Pharaoh asked his director of intelligence: "What are people saying?" He said: "My men are saying that Moses won the contest because of a plot and that a major magician had joined him in this plan. A plot had been disclosed and we believe an unknown authority financed it."

Pharaoh asked his director of police: "What about the magicians' corpses?" He said: "My men hung them in public squares and markets to terrify the people. We will spread a rumour that Pharaoh will kill whoever had anything to do with the plot."

Pharaoh asked the commander of the army: "What does the army say?" He said: "The army hopes that commands will be issued to move in whatever direction Pharaoh desires."

Pharaoh said: "The role of the army has not come yet. Its role will come."

Pharaoh fell silent. Haman, the Prime Minister, raised his hand to speak. Pharaoh permitted him and Haman asked: "Should we leave Moses and his people to corrupt the rest of the people so that they leave your worship?"

Pharaoh said: "You read my mind, O Haman. We will kill their sons, rape their women and conquer them." He issued commands, and Pharaoh's men rushed to slay the sons, rape the women and imprison whomever objected to these acts.

Moses stood watching what was happening. He could not interfere nor did he have the power to forbid these acts. All he could do was advise his people to be patient. He ordered them to ask Allah the Almighty for a calamity on the Egyptians. He pointed out to them the model of the Egyptian magicians who endured for Allah's sake without complaint. He helped them understand that Pharaoh's soldiers behaved on earth as if they were its private owners. Pharaoh's terrorism infused the children of Israel with a spirit of defeat. They complained to Moses: "We (children of Israel) suffered before you came to us." He said: "Maybe your Lord will destroy your enemy and make you successors on earth, so that He may see how you act." Moses began to face a difficult situation. He had to confront Pharaoh's anger and his plots, while at the same time he had to deal with the mutiny of his people. In the midst of all this, Korah (Qaroun) moved. Korah was one of Moses's people. He was very rich and lived in a magnificent mansion. He wore only the most expensive clothes. Numerous slaves waited on him and he indulged in every known luxury. His enormous wealth made him arrogant. Korah treated the poor with contempt and told them that their poverty was due to their lack of intelligence. He believed that what he owned was due to his own cleverness and business ability. Moses reminded Korah to pay alms (zakat) on his wealth, a portion of which was rightfully due to the poor. Alms are compulsory upon all the believers. Korah was annoyed by this advice and told Moses that him being wealthy was proof that he was favoured by Allah, Who approved of his life-style and increased his wealth daily. Moses argued with him and warned him of the result of his wicked thoughts. When Korah calculated the alms due on his wealth, he was shocked at the large amount he had to part with. He not only refused to give alms, but spread rumours that Moses had invented the law of zakat for his own gain. He even bribed the people to oppose Moses and to spread wicked rumours about him. Allah warned Moses of Korah's plot. Moses appealed to Allah to punish him for his stinginess and for defying His laws. Allah's anger fell on Korah. The earth opened up and swallowed him, his mansion and all his wealth, as if he had never existed.

When the Egyptians and children of Israel examined the miracle, the conflict between Moses and Pharaoh again reached a crisis because Pharaoh believed that Moses was threatening his kingdom. Pharaoh was afraid that the people would be misled by Moses. He suggested to his ministers and notable men that Moses must be killed. We believe Haman supported the idea along with the disbelievers. It was on the verge of approval, except for the vote of one of the notable men of the state, whose name is not mentioned in the Qur'an. The Qur'an says only that this man was a believer. This believer spoke in the assembly where the idea of killing Moses had been introduced. He proved that it was not a good idea: "Moses did not say more than that Allah is his Lord. Later, he came with clear evidence that he is a messenger. There are two possibilities; either Moses is righteous or a liar. If he lies, he will be responsible for his

lie. If he is righteous and we slay him, where is the guarantee that we will be rescued from the torment of Allah? Neither way, he says nor does anything that merits our killing him." This angered Pharaoh and his counsellors and they threatened to harm the man, but he refused to budge from his statement. Then they tried to woo him back, but he still warned them that they were inviting their doom. This angered Pharaoh more, and now threatened to kill the man. However, Allah protected His believer. A believing man from Pharaoh's family, who hid his faith said: "Would you kill a man because he says: My Lord is Allah, and he has come to you with clear signs from your Lord? And if he is a liar, upon him be the sin of his lie; but if he is telling the truth, then some of that calamity wherewith he threatens you befall on you. Verily, Allah guides not one who is a Musrif, O my people! Who will save us from the Torment of Allah, should it befall us?" Pharaoh said: "I show you only that which I see as correct and I guide you only to the path that is the right policy!" He who believed said: "O my people! Verily, I fear for you a fate like that day of disaster of the confederate of the past! Like the fate of the people of Noah, 'Ad, Thamud and those who came after them. Allah wills no injustice on His slaves. And, O my people! Verily! I fear for you the Day when there will be mutual calling between the people of Hell and Paradise." A Day when you will turn your backs and flee having no protector from Allah, and whomsoever Allah sends astray, for him there is no guide. And indeed Joseph did come to you, in times gone by, with clear signs, but you doubted him, till he died, then you said: "No Messenger will Allah send after him." Thus Allah leaves astray those who are Musrif (polytheist, oppressor and sinners) and Murtab (one who doubts Allah's warning and His Oneness). Those who dispute the signs (verses, revelations) of Allah, without any authority, it is greatly hateful in the Sight of Allah and in the sight of those who believe. Thus Allah seals the heart of every arrogant, tyrant.

Pharaoh said: "O Haman! Build me a tower so I may go up to the heavens, and I may look upon the Allah (God) of Moses but verily, I think he is a liar." The believing man said: "O people! Follow me, I will guide you to a way that is right (Islamic Monotheism). O people! Truly, this life in this world is nothing but a quick by pass, for the Hereafter is the home that will remain forever. Whoever does evil deeds, will not be requited and whoever does righteous deeds, will enter Paradise, where they will be provided without limits. I call you to salvation while you call me to the Fire! You invite me to disbelieve in Allah and to join partners in worship with Him, of which I have no knowledge, I invite you to the All-Mighty, the Oft-Forgiving and our return will be to Allah. Transgressors shall be the dwellers of the Fire! You will remember what I am telling you, I leave it to Allah. Verily, Allah sees all that His slaves do." Allah saved him from the evils that they plotted, while an evil torment encompassed Pharaoh's people. Moses repeated his demand that Pharaoh release the children of Israel from slavery. In response, Pharaoh called his subjects, including the children of Israel, to a huge gathering where he

reminded them that he was their lord, he provided all their needs and that Moses had no gold amulet nor angels followed him; he was just a poor man. Being a people who had been oppressed for a so long, they lacked vision. Their judgment was limited to what they could see in the material world. They regarded their ruler to be wealthy and able to provide all their worldly needs. In ignorance they obeyed Pharaoh and ignored Moses's call. Allah commanded Moses to warn Pharaoh of a punishment in this world for his faithlessness and his persecution of the children of Israel. As a portent of the punishment, the Nile did not flood its banks to soak the dry land as it normally did. As a result, crops failed, leading to famine. However Pharaoh remained arrogant, so Allah caused a huge flood, which devastated the land. As often as they were troubled grievously, they appealed to Moses thus: "O Moses! Invoke your Lord for us because of His Promise to you. For If you remove the punishment, we shall believe in you and we shall let the children of Israel go with you." Moses prayed to his Lord and He relived their suffering. The surging water withdrew from the land, it became cultivatable. But when Moses asked them to fulfil their promise and release the children of Israel, they did not respond. Then Allah sent swarms of locusts which ate whatever corps they had grown. The people rushed to Moses requesting him to invoke Allah to remove the affliction and promised they would send the children of Israel with him this time. The locusts departed, yet again they did not fulfil their promise. Another sign came, the sign of lice, which spread amongst the Egyptians, carrying diseases. Their refuge to Moses and their promise to him was repeated. His prayer to Allah was repeated and so, too, their breach of promise, as usual. A sign of frogs was revealed. The land suddenly filled up with frogs. They jumped on the food of the Egyptians, shared their houses, distressing them greatly. The Egyptians went to Moses again, promising the release the children of Israel. He prayed to his Lord, Allah relieved them of the problem but again they broke their promise. Then the last sign was revealed, the sign of blood. The Nile water changed into blood. When Moses and his people drank the water, it was, for them, ordinary water. However, if any Egyptian filled his cup with the water, he discovered his cup full of blood. They rushed to Moses as usual, but as soon as everything returned to normal, they turned their backs on Allah.

It appeared that Pharaoh would never believe in Moses's message, nor would he stop the torture of the children of Israel. Therefore, Moses and his brother prayed to his Lord thus: "Our Lord! You have indeed bestowed on Pharaoh and his chief's splendour and wealth in the life of this world, our Lord! They may lead men astray from Your Path. Our Lord! Destroy their wealth and harden their hearts so they will not believe until they see the painful torment." Allah said: "Verily, the invocation of you both is accepted. So stay on the right path and do not follow those who do not know." Allah inspired Moses as to how to conduct his people, but only a few of his people believed in his message. Allah revealed: But none believed in Moses except the

offspring of his people, because they feared Pharaoh and his chiefs lest they should persecute them; Pharaoh was an arrogant tyrant on the earth, he was indeed a transgressor. Moses said: "O my people! If you believe in Allah, then put your trust in Him."

They said: "In Allah we put our trust. Our Lord! Make us not a trial for the folk who are Zalimun (polytheists and wrong-doing) and save us by Your Mercy from the disbelieving folks." Almighty Allah decided to put an end to Pharaoh's crimes after He had given him several chances. Allah commanded Moses to depart with the children of Israel. They prepared themselves to leave Egypt. This later became known as Exodus. They carried with them their jewels and borrowed a lot of jewels from the Egyptians. In the darkness of night, Moses led his people towards the Red Sea, and in the morning they reached the beach. By then Pharaoh was aware of their departure, so he mobilized a huge army to pursue them. The impatient children of Israel soon became agitated and Joshua (Yusha), Ibn Nun, exclaimed: "In front of us is this impassable barrier, the sea, and behind us the enemy; surely death cannot be avoided!" Moses replied that he would wait for further guidance from Allah. These words filled them with some hope, but man is always impatient for results: they were willing to surrender themselves back into slavery. At that moment Allah revealed to Moses: "Strike the sea with your staff!" Moses did as he was commanded. A fierce wind blew, the sun shone brighter and in a flash the sea parted, the crests of the waves standing like mountains on each side. Moses led his people across. This miracle proved Moses's oft-repeated claim. "Verily! My Lord is with me!" As they looked back, they saw Pharaoh and his army approaching, about to take the very path which had been opened for them. In great fear and panic, they pleaded with Moses to ask Allah to close the sea. However, Allah commanded Moses not to strike the sea with his staff again, for Allah's decree was already in action. Pharaoh and his army had seen the miracle, how the sea had parted, but being the pretender that he was, Pharaoh turned to his men and proclaimed: "Look! The sea has opened at my command so that I may follow those rebels and arrest them!" They rushed across the parted waters, and when they were midway, Allah commanded the sea to return to its former state. Terror-stricken Pharaoh, realizing his end had come, declared out of fear: "I believe that there is no god worthy of worship except Allah in Whom the children of Israel believe, and I am of those who surrender to Him." But Allah did not accept his declaration and the water closed, drowning him and his entire army.

The curtain fell on Pharaoh's tyranny, the waves threw his corpse up onto the western seashore. The Egyptians saw him and knew that their god whom they worshipped and obeyed and that they were mere slaves, could not keep death away from their own necks. In spite of Pharaoh's death, he left a bad influence on the souls of the children of Israel. It was difficult for the years of oppression and intense humility to pass easily. He had made them accustomed

to humbling themselves and submitting to someone other than Allah. He had suppressed their souls and spoiled their nature so much so that they began to torture Moses out of ignorance and obstinacy. The miracle of the parting of the sea was still fresh in their minds, damp sea sand was still stuck on their soles, when they passed by a people worshipping idols. Instead of celebrating the praises of Allah for His guidance, they looked to Moses for him to specify a god for them to worship. They were jealous of the people and their idols, they desired the same. They missed the ancient idolatry which they had lived with during the reign of Pharaoh. Moses said: "Verily, these people will be destroyed for engaging in idol-worship. And all that they are doing is in vain." Then he said: "Do not want me to seek a god other than Allah for you, while He has given you superiority over the Alamin (mankind and jinn of your time). Remember we rescued you from Pharaoh's people, who afflicted you with the worst torment, killing your sons and letting your women live. In that was a great trial from your Lord. The children of Israel were favoured with Allah's grace and bounty. They were saved from oppression and had witnessed the drowning of their cruel ruler Pharaoh. When they needed water in the dry land, Allah commanded Moses to strike a rock, which parted and sent forth twelve springs of water for the twelve different tribes so that they did not dispute over a shortage of water. Allah also kept the skies cloudy to protect them from the scorching sun. To relieve their hunger, Allah provided them with manna (dried exudate plants) and quail. In spite of Allah's generosity, the mean spirited ones began to stir Moses's people and that they were disgusted with this food; they desired onions, garlic, beans and lentils, which were the traditional Egyptian foods. That is why the children of Israel asked Prophet Moses to pray to Allah to make the earth produce these foods. Moses again reminded them for oppressing themselves and for their desire to return to a life of humiliation in Egypt. He also pointed out that they were ungrateful for the best and most abundant food. They wanted the worst instead of the best. Allah had also directed Moses to lead them to the Promised Land (Palestine) which had been promised to Abraham as a land in which the pious and Allah-fearing of his offspring would live and uphold Allah's law. The children of Israel were ungrateful people. In spite of all of Allah's favours, they could not stay away from evil and continued to reject Allah's Laws. When Moses ordered them to conquer the town of the Canaanites, the Hittites (their enemies who had hounded them) lived there, the children of Israel were cowards and made excuses: "O Moses, a great people live there, we will not go unless they leave." Ancient books say that there were six hundred thousand men. Moses found only two men ready to fight. These two said to the people: "Once we enter through the door, Allah will make us victorious." However, all the children of Israel were an incarnation of cowardice and quivered from within. Moses knew that his people were fit for nothing. Pharaoh was dead, his effect upon their souls still remained. Their recovery needed a long period of time. Moses returned to his Lord and said: "O my Lord! I have power only over myself and my brother, so separate us from people who are rebellious and

disobedient to Allah!" Allah said: "This holy land is forbidden to them for forty years; they will wander through the land in distraction. So do not feel sorry for people who are Fasiqeen (rebellious and disobedient to Allah)."

The days of restless wandering began. Each day ended where it began and began where it ended. They started walking to no destination, day and night, morning and evening. They entered Sinai. Moses came to the same place where he had spoken to Allah for the first time. He appealed to Allah for guidance in judging his people. Allah instructed him to purify himself by fasting for thirty days, after which he was to go to Mount Sinai, where he would be given the law by which he would govern his people. The ancients said that after Moses fasted thirty days, he hated to speak to his Lord because of the odour of his mouth. He ate a plant of the earth and then his Lord said to him: "Why did you break your fast?" Moses said: "O my Lord, I disliked to speak to you with my mouth not having a pleasant smell." Allah said: "Do you not know, Moses, the odour of the faster's mouth is more fragrant to me than the rose. Go back and fast ten days; then come back to me." Moses did what Allah commanded. Moses went back to the place which was appointed by Allah, he said: "O my Lord! Show me yourself so I may look at you." Allah said: "You cannot see me, but look upon the mountain if it stands still in its place then you shall see me." So when his Lord appeared on the mountain, He made it collapse to dust, Moses fell down unconscious. When he regained consciousness he said: "Glory be to You, I turn to you in repentance and I am the first of the believers." Allah said: "O Moses, I have chosen you above men, with my message and by speaking to you. So hold on to what I have given you and be." We wrote on the Tablets, lessons to be drawn from all things and explanations of all things, we said: "hold onto these with firmness, and enjoin your people to take the better of them, I will show you the home of the Al Fasiqeen (disbelievers). I shall turn away those who behave arrogantly on earth from My Ayats (verses from the Qur'an), if they see all the Ayats (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) they will not believe in them. And if they see the way of righteousness, they will not adopt it as the Way, but if they see the way of error, they will adopt that way, this because they rejected Our Ayats and were heedless to learn a lesson from them. Those who deny Our Ayats and the Meeting in the Hereafter (Day of Resurrection), their deeds are in vain. Do they expect to be rewarded for what they did?"

Moses had been gone for forty days, his people were becoming restless, for they did not know that Allah had extended his time by a further ten days. A man among the people called "Samiri", who was inclined towards evil, he suggested they find themselves another guide, as Moses had broken his promise. He said to them: "In order to find true guidance, you need a god, I shall provide one for you." So he collected all their gold jewellery, dug a hole and lit a

huge fire to melt it down. During the casting, he threw a handful of dust, making actions like magician's to impress the ignorant. From the molten metal he fashioned a golden calf. It was hollow, the wind passing through it produced a sound. Since superstition was imbedded in their past, they quickly linked the strange sound to something supernatural, as if it were a living god. Some of them accept the golden calf as their god. Moses's brother Aaron, who was their leader in Moses's absence, was grieved and spoke up: "O my people! You have been deceived. Your Lord is the Most Beneficent. Follow and obey me." They replied: "We shall stop worshipping this god only if Moses returns." Those who had remained steadfast in belief separated themselves from the pagans. On his return Moses saw his people singing and dancing around the calf statue. Furious at their paganistic ritual, he threw the Tablet of Law down. He tugged Aaron's beard and hair, crying: "What held you back when you saw them going astray? Why did you not fight this corruption?" Aaron replied: "O son of my mother, let go of my beard! They considered me weak and were about to kill me. Do not make the enemy rejoice nor put me among the people who are wrong-doers." Moses's anger subsided when he understood Aaron's helplessness and he began to handle the situation calmly and wisely. Moses said to Samiri: "What is the matter with you, why did you do this" Samiri said: "I saw what you did not see, so I took a handful of dust from the hoof print of the Messenger (Gabriel's horse) and threw it into the fire along with the ornaments of Pharaoh's people. Thus my inner-self suggested it to me." Moses said: "go away, your punishment in this life will be that you will live alone exiled away from mankind; and for a future torment, you have a promise that will not fail. Look at your god, which you were devoted to, we will certainly burn it and scatter its particles in the sea." However, the punishment which was imposed upon the calf worshippers was severe, death. Remember when Moses said to his people: "O my people! Verily, you have wronged yourselves by worshipping the calf. So turn in repentance to your Creator and kill yourselves (the innocent kill the wrong doers among you), that will be better for you in the Sight of your Creator." Then He accepted your repentance. Truly, He is the One who accepts repentance, the Most Merciful. Therefore, the crime of worshipping the calf did not pass unpunished. Moses commanded the elite of the children of Israel to pray to Allah for forgiveness and demonstrate their repentance. He chose seventy out of them and ordered them: "Rush towards Allah and repent for what you did and ask His forgiveness for what you left." Moses returned to Mount Sinai with the seventy elders and there he communicated with Allah. The elders heard Moses speaking with his Lord. This was, perhaps, the last miracle that they would see, it was hoped that it would be sufficient enough to convey the religion to their hearts forever. However, the seventy elite who heard the miracles were dissatisfied. They said to Moses: "O Moses! We shall never believe in you till we see Allah plainly." This was a tragedy that amazes one. It was a tragedy that indicated those who were hard-hearted and who continued to hold onto sensual and material concerns. Their stubborn demand was rewarded

with punishing lightning bolts and a violent quaking that overwhelmed their souls and bodies at once, leaving them dead. Moses knew what had happened to the seventy elite and was filled with sorrow. He prayed to his Lord, entreating Him to forgive them, for they were fools. Foolishness is only expiated by death. Allah forgave the elders and revived them after their death.

One day Moses delivered such an impressive sermon that all who heard were deeply moved. Someone in the congregation asked: "O Messenger of Allah, is there another man on earth more learned than you?" Moses replied: "No!" believing so, since Allah had given him the power of miracles and honoured him with the Torah. However, Allah revealed to Moses that no man could know all there is to know nor would one messenger alone be the custodian of all knowledge. There would always be another who knew what others did not. Moses asked Allah: "O Allah, where is this man? I would like to meet him and learn from him." He also asked for a sign of the person's identity. Allah instructed him to take a live fish in a water bowl. When the fish disappeared, he would find the man. Moses set out on his journey, accompanied by a young man who carried the fish bowl. They reached a place where two rivers met and decided to rest there. Instantly, Moses fell asleep. While he was asleep, his companion saw the fish wriggle out of the bowl and fall into the river. However, he forgot to relate the incident to Moses. When he awoke, they continued their journey until they were exhausted and hungry. Moses asked for his morning meal. Only then did his companion remember the fish and told Moses, Moses exclaimed: "This is exactly what we are seeking!" They retraced their steps back to the place where the rivers met. There they found a man, his face partly covered with a hood. His bearing showed he was a saintly man. He was Al-Khidr, the guide. Moses said to Khidr "May I follow you so I can learn some knowledge which Allah has taught you?" Khidr said: "You will not have patience with me! How can you have patience about a thing that you don't know?" Moses said; "If Allah wills, you will find me to have patience, I will not disobey you." Khidr said: "Follow me and do not ask me anything unless I mention it myself." So they proceeded, till, they embarked on a ship which Khidr punctured a hole in. Moses said: "did you puncture a hole in order to drown the people? You have done an evil deed." Khidr said: "Did I not tell you, that you would not be able to have patience with me?" Moses said: "I forgot, please don't be hard on me." They proceeded, till they met a boy, Khidr killed him. Moses said: "you killed an innocent person who had not killed anyone? Verily, you have done a dreadful thing!" Khidr said: "Did I not tell you that you can have no patience with me?" Moses said: "If I ask you anything after this, don't keep me in your company." Both proceeded, till, when they reached a town, they asked for food but were refused. They saw a wall which was about to collapse and Khidr set it up straight. Moses said: "If you had wished, you could have taken wages for it!" Khidr said: "This is where we part company, now I will tell you the interpretation of those

things over which you were unable to hold patience. The ship, it belonged to the poor. I damaged it because of a king who seizes all ships by force. The boy, his parents were believers, and we feared he would oppress them by rebellion and disbelief. We expect their Lord would replace him with a righteous and merciful son. As for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys, under the wall there was treasure, put there by their father: he was a righteous man, and your Lord intended that they should attain their age of full strength and take their treasure as a mercy from your Lord. I did not re-erect the wall on my own accord. That is the interpretation of those things, over which you could not hold patience.

Prophet Muhammad said: "Prophet Moses was a shy person and used to cover his body completely. One of the children of Israel hurt him by saying: 'He covers his body in this way only because of some defect in his skin, either leprosy or scrotal hernia etc. Allah wished to clear Moses from the hurtful saying, so one day while Moses was in seclusion, he took his clothes and put them on a stone and started taking a bath. After bathing he approached the stone to get his cloths, behold the stone took off with his cloths. Moses picked up his stick and ran after the stone saying: 'O stone! Give me my cloths!' he passed by a group of children of Israel who saw him naked and found him in the best shape. Allah cleared him of what they had accused him of. The stone stopped and Moses took his cloths, put them on and then started hitting the stone with his stick. By Allah, the stone still has some traces of the hitting, three, four or five marks. This was what Allah the Almighty refers to in His saying: O you who believe! Be not like those who annoyed Moses, Allah cleared him of that which they alleged and he was honourable in Allah's sight!"

The Angel of Death was sent to Moses. When he came, Moses hit him on the eye. The Angel returned to his Lord and said: 'You sent me to a slave who does not want to die.' Allah said: 'Return to him and tell him to put his hand on the back of an ox and for every hair that will come under it, he will be granted one year of life.' Moses said: 'O Lord! What will happen after that?' Allah replied: 'then death.' Moses said: 'Let it come now!' Moses then requested Allah to let him die close to the Holy Land so he could be at a distance of a stone's throw from it.

Aaron died shortly before Moses. His people were still wandering in the wilderness when he died.

Prophet Dhul-Kifl (Ezekiel)

Allah said in Surah Anbiya, Ayyub, Ismael, Idris and Dhul-Kifl all were among the patient ones. And we admitted them to our mercy, verily they were among the righteous. The fact that his name is mentioned alongside the names of other great Prophets shows that he too was a Prophet. May the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him. Once Satan said his fellow devils, 'Go after that man.' However, the devils were unable to mislead him. Satan said, 'Leave him to me.' Satan went to Dhul-Kifl disguised as a poor old man at the time of siesta. Dhul-Kifl was a judge. Satan knocked on his door, he asked, 'Who is it?' Satan replied, 'An oppressed old man.' So he got up and opened the door, he invited the old man in, then, Satan started telling him a story, saying, 'There is a problem between me and my people, for they have wronged me.' He intentionally prolonged his story to such an extent that time for siesta passed by. Dhul-Kifl said, 'I will take your rights, so come and see me tomorrow in court. The next day, after court he waited for the old man, but he never came. Then again when it was time for siesta, he went home and just when he was about to have his afternoon nap, the same man turned up. Dhul-Kifl said, 'Did I not tell you to come to my court yesterday?' The old man said, 'My people are the worst. When they came to know that you are sitting in the court to judge between us, they said to me, 'We will give you your rights. But when you left, they refused me my rights.'" Dhul-Kifl said, 'Go now and come to court tomorrow, he was again unable to have his siesta. The following day, He went to court and waited for the old man but he did not show up again. Dhul-Kifl went home and said to his household, 'Do not let anyone come to this door, I need to get some sleep.' Then when that time of the day came, the old man came. The watchman at the door said to him, 'Go away.' The old man said, 'I came yesterday and informed Dhul-Kifl of my story.' The man at the door replied, 'By Allah we have been ordered not to let anyone come close.' Satan felt then realized that he could not pass by the watchman, he looked up and found an opening from which he could get inside the house. Thus he did that and then knocked the door from the inside, waking Dhul-Kifl up. Dhul-Kifl got up and said to the watchman, 'Didn't I tell you not to let anyone in?' The watchman replied, 'He did not enter the house from here. Dhul-Kifl recognized the old man, who was inside by that time. He asked him, 'Are you an enemy of Allah?' He replied, 'Yes and you outwitted me in everything, so I did this to make you angry.' Thus Allah named him Dhul-Kifl because he took responsibility and fulfilled it."

Prophet Dawud / David

When the two armies faced each other, Goliath challenged any soldier from King Saul's army to a single combat, as it was the custom of battles in those days. Goliath also wanted to show off his strength. The men were terrorized, no one had enough courage to volunteer. The king offered the hand of his pretty daughter in marriage to the man who would fight Goliath, but even this tempting offer did not change the deadly silence among his soldiers. Then, to everyone's surprise, a youth stepped forward. The young man was David (Dawud), from the city of Bethlehem. His elderly father had chosen three of his sons to join Saul's army. He had instructed the youngest one, David, not to take part in the fighting but to help the army in other ways and to report to his father daily on what was happening on the war front. Although Saul was very impressed by the youth's courage, he said: "I admire your courage, but you are no match for that mighty warrior. Let strong men come forward." David, however, had already decided and was willing to meet the challenge. Proudly, he told the king that only the other day he had killed a lion which had threatened his father's sheep, and on another occasion he had killed a bear. He asked Saul not to judge him by his appearance, for he feared no man or wild beast. Saul was very surprised by young David's brave stance and agreed: Saul said: "My brave soldier, if you are willing, then May Allah guard you and grant you strength!" The king dressed David in battle armour and handed him a sword, but David was not used to wearing battle dress. He felt uncomfortable in it, it obstructed his movements. He removed the armour, collected a few pebbles and filled his leather pouch with them. He slung it over his shoulder next to his sling. With a wooden staff in his hand, he began to walk towards the enemy. Saul was worried and asked him how on earth, with a sling and a couple of stones was he going to defend himself against the giant? David replied: "Allah Who protected me from the claws of the bear and the fangs of the lion will certainly protect me from this brute!" When Goliath set eyes on the lean young man who looked like a little boy, laughed loudly and roared: "Are you out to play war with one of your playmates or are you tired of your life? I will simply cut off your head with one swipe of my sword!" David shouted back: "You may have armour, shields and swords, but I face you in the name of Allah, the Lord of the Israelites, Whose laws you have mocked. Today you will see that it is not the sword that kills but the will and power of Allah!" David took his sling and placed a pebble from his pouch. He swung and aimed it at Goliath. The pebble shot from the whirling sling with the speed of an arrow and hit Goliath's head with great force. Blood gushed out and Goliath thumped to the ground, lifeless, before he had a chance to draw his sword. When the rest of his men saw their mighty hero slain, they took to their heels. The Israelites followed in hot pursuit, taking revenge for their years of suffering at the hands of their enemy, killing every soldier they could lay their hands on. In this battle the Israelites regained glory and honour that had been lost for a long time.

David became a hero overnight. Saul kept his word and married his daughter Michal (Miqel) to the young warrior and took him under his wing as one of his chief advisors.

Almighty Allah declared: they routed them by Allah's Leave and David killed Goliath, and Allah gave David the kingdom after the death of Saul and Samuel, Allah gave him wisdom and taught him of that which He willed. And if Allah did not check one set of people by means of another, the earth would indeed be full of mischief. But Allah is full of Bounty to the Alamin (mankind, Jinns and all that exist).

David became the most famous man among the Israelites. However, he was not flattered by this; he was not a prisoner of fame or craved leadership, he was a prisoner of Allah's love. David's sincerity was not the only factor responsible for the birds and beasts joining him in glorifying Allah nor was the sweetness of his voice. It was a miracle from Allah. This was not his only miracle, for Allah also endowed him with the faculty of understanding the languages of birds and animals.

Allah's Apostle said: The most beloved fasting to Allah was the fasting of the Prophet David, who used to fast alternate days. And the most beloved prayer to Allah was the prayer of David, who used to sleep the first half of the night and pray one third and again sleep for a sixth.

Allah granted David great influence. His people had a great number of wars in their time, but they had a problem, the iron armour was too heavy for the fighters. David was sitting one day, contemplating this problem while toying with a piece of iron. Suddenly, he found his hand sinking in the iron. Almighty Allah had made it flexible for him: "We made the iron soft for him". The people praised and loved David. However, the hearts of men are fickle and their memories short. Even great men can feel insecure and become petty-minded. One day David found Saul in a worried state. He sensed something strange in Saul's attitude towards him. That night, when he shared his feeling with his wife, she started to weep bitterly and said: "O David, I will never keep any secrets from you." She told him that her father had become jealous of his popularity and feared that he would lose his kingdom to him. She advised him to be on his guard. This information shocked David very much. He prayed and hoped that Saul's good nature would overcome the darker side of his character. The following day, Saul summoned David to inform him that Canaan had gathered its forces and would march on to the kingdom. He ordered David to advance on them with the army and not to return unless victory was gained. David sensed that this was an excuse to get rid of him; either the enemy would kill him, or in the thick of battle, Saul's henchmen might stab him in the back. Yet he rushed with his troops to meet the army of Canaan. They fought the Canaanites bravely and without thinking of their own safety. Allah granted them victory and David lived to return to Saul.

Unfortunately, this only increased Saul's fear, so he plotted to kill David. Such is jealousy that not even a daughter's well-being mattered. Michal learned of her father's plan and rushed to warn her husband. David gathered some food and things, mounted his camel and fled. He found a cave in which he remained hidden for many days. After a while, David's brothers and some citizens joined forces with him. Saul's position became very weak, for he began to rule with a heavy hand. He ill-treated the scholars, tortured the reciters of the Talmud and terrorized his soldiers. This worsened his position and his subjects began to turn against him. He decided to go to war against David. Hearing this news, David marched to confront Saul's army. The king's army had travelled a great distance and was overcome by fatigue, so they decided to rest in a valley, where they fell asleep. Quietly, David crept up to the sleeping Saul, removed his spear, and cut off a piece of his garment with the sword. David then awakened the king and told him: "Oh king, you come out seeking me, but I do not hate you and I do not want to kill you. If I did, I would have killed you when you were asleep. Here is a piece of your garment. I could have hacked your neck instead, but I did not. My mission is that of love not malice." The king realized his mistake and begged for forgiveness. Time passed and Saul was killed in a battle in which David did not take part. David succeeded Saul, people remembered what he had done for them and elected him king. Allah strengthened the dominion of David and made him victorious. His kingdom was strong and great; his enemies feared him without engaging in war with him.

David had a son named Solomon (Suleiman), who was intelligent and wise since childhood. When the following story took place, Solomon was eleven years old. One day two men came to David, One of them was the owner of a field. The field owner said: "O dear Prophet! This man's sheep came to my field during the night and ate all the grapes, I have come to ask for compensation." David asked the owner of the sheep: "Is this true?" He said: "Yes, sir." David said: "I have decided that you should give him your sheep in exchange for the field." Solomon, spoke up: "I have another opinion. The owner of the sheep should use the field to cultivate until the grapes grow again, while the other man should take the sheep and make use of its wool and milk, until his field is repaired. If the grapes grow, the field should be handed back to its former state, then the field owner should take his field and give back the sheep to their owner." David responded: "This is sound judgment. Praise be to Allah for gifting you with wisdom. You are truly Solomon the Wise." Prophet David was a just and righteous ruler who brought peace and prosperity to his people, and whom Allah honoured as a messenger. He delivered Allah's message to the people through the precious gift of his melodious voice. When he recited the Psalms (Zaboor), it was as if the rest of creation chanted with him; people listened as if they were in a trance. The messages David delivered are famous and well-remembered. They are known in the Bible as the Psalms or Songs of David. David divided his

working day into four parts: one to earn a living and to rest, one to pray to his Lord, one to listen to the complaints of his people, and the last part to deliver his sermons. He also appointed deputies to listen to his subjects' complaints so that in his absence people's problems were not be neglected. Although a king, he did not live on the income of his kingdom. Being well-experienced in the craft of weapon-making, he made and sold weapons and lived on that income.

One day, as David was praying in his prayer niche, he ordered his guards not to allow anyone interrupt him, but two men managed to enter and disturb him. "Who are you?" he asked. One of the men said: "Do not be frightened. We have a dispute and have come for your judgment." David said: "What is it?" The first man said: "This is my brother, he has ninety nine sheep and I have one. He gave it to me but took it back." David, without hearing from the other party said: "He did wrong by taking the sheep back, many partners oppress one another, except for those who are believers." The two men vanished like a cloud, David realized that they were angels sent to him to teach him a lesson. He should not have passed judgment without hearing from the opposing party. David worshipped Allah, glorified Him and sang His praise until he died. According to traditions, David died suddenly and was mourned by four thousand priests as well as thousands of people. It was so hot that people suffered from the intensity of the sun. Solomon called the birds to protect David and the people from the sun, they did so until he was buried. This was the first sign of his dominion to be witnessed by the people.

Prophet Suleiman (Solomon)

And indeed we gave knowledge to David and Solomon, they both said: All praises and thanks are for Allah, Who has preferred us above many of His believing slaves!

And Solomon inherited the knowledge of David. He said: O mankind! We have been taught the language of birds, and all things have been bestowed on us. This, verily, is evident grace from Allah.

Gathered before Solomon were his hosts of Jinns, men and birds, they were all set in battle, ordered to march forward.

After his father's death, Solomon became king. He begged Allah for a kingdom such as none after him would have and Allah granted his wish. Besides wisdom, Allah blessed Solomon with many abilities. He commanded the winds and understood the language of birds and animals. Allah directed him to teach both men and Jinns to mine the earth and extract its minerals to make tools and weapons. He also favoured him with a mine of copper, which was a rare metal in those days. During his time horses were the common mode of transportation. They were very essential for defence, to carry soldiers and cart provisions and weapons of war. The animals were well cared for and well trained. One day Solomon was reviewing a parade of his stable. The fitness, beauty and posture of the horses fascinated him so much that he kept on stroking and admiring them. The sun was near to setting and the time for the middle prayer was passing by. When he realized this, he exclaimed: "I surely love the finer things of life than the service of my Lord! Return them to me."

Almighty Allah revealed: And to David We gave Solomon. What an excellent slave! Verily, he was ever oft returning in repentance to us!

One day Solomon gathered his army, which had different battalions of men, Jinns, birds and animals. He marched them to the country of Askalon (Israel). While they were passing through a valley, an ant saw the approaching army and cried out to warn the other ants: "Run to your homes! Otherwise, unaware, Solomon and his army might crush you!" Solomon, hearing the cry of the ant, smiled. He was glad that the ant knew him to be a prophet who would not intentionally harm Allah's creation. He thanked Allah for saving the ants' lives. On a huge rock in n Jerusalem, Solomon built a beautiful temple to draw people to worship Allah. Today this building is known as "The Dome of the Rock." From there, a large band of followers joined Solomon on pilgrimage to the Holy Mosque in Mecca. After Hajj, they travelled to Yemen and arrived in the city of Sana. Solomon was impressed by their clever method of channelling

water all over their cities. He was keen to build similar water systems in his own country but did not have enough springs. He set out to find the hoopoe bird, which could detect water underground. He sent signals all over the land so that the hoopoe would call on him, but it was nowhere to be found. In anger, he declared that unless the bird had a good reason for its absence, he would punish it severely. The hoopoe eventually came to Solomon and said. "I have discovered something of which you are not aware. I have come from Sheba (Sab'a) with important news." Solomon became curious, so his anger subsided. The bird continued: "Sab'a is ruled by a queen named Bilqis, who has plenty of everything, including a splendid throne. But in spite of all this wealth, Satan has entered her heart and the hearts of her people. She rules their minds completely. I was shocked to learn that they worship the sun instead of Allah the Almighty." To check the hoopoe's information, Solomon sent a letter to the queen with the bird. He instructed the bird to remain hidden and to watch everything.

The queen was very disturbed and hurriedly summoned her advisors. They reacted as to a challenge, for they felt that there was someone challenging them, hinting at war and defeat, and asking them to submit to his conditions. They told her that they could only offer advice, but it was her right to command action. She sensed that they wanted to meet Solomon's invasion threat with a battle. However, she told them: "Peace and friendship are better and wiser; war only brings humiliation, enslaves people and destroys the good things. I have decided to send gifts to Solomon, selected from our most precious treasure. The courtiers who deliver the gifts and will also have an opportunity to learn about Solomon and his military mighty." Solomon's team brought him the gifts and message from Bilqis. He immediately realized that the queen had sent her men on a probing mission thus, he gave orders to rally the army. The envoys of Bilqis, entering amidst the well-equipped army, realized that their wealth was nothing in comparison to that of the kingdom of Solomon's palace floors, which were made of sandalwood and inlaid with gold. They noticed Solomon surveying his army, they were surprised at the number and variety of soldiers, which included lions, tigers and birds. The messengers stood in amazement, realizing that they were in front of an irresistible army. The envoys marvelled at the splendour surrounding them. They eagerly presented their queen's precious gifts and told Solomon that the queen wished that he accept them as an act of friendship. They were shocked by his reaction: he did not even ask to open the covers of the containers! He told them: "Allah has given me plenty wealth, a large kingdom and Prophethood. I am, therefore, beyond bribery. My only objective is to spread the belief in Tawheed, the Oneness of Allah." He directed them to take the gifts back to the queen and tell her that if she did not stop her kind of worship he would uproot her kingdom and drive its people out of the land.

The queen's envoys returned with the gifts and delivered the message. They also told her of the wonderful things they had seen. Instead of taking offense, she decided to visit Solomon. Accompanied by her royal officials and servants, she left Sheba, sending a messenger ahead to inform Solomon that she was on her way to meet him. Solomon asked the Jinns whether anyone among them could bring her throne to his palace before she arrived. One of them named Ifrit said: "I will bring it to you in the twinkling of an eye!" This Jinn also had knowledge of the Book. Within a heartbeat, the throne stood before Solomon. The mission had, indeed, been completed in the blinking of an eye. Solomon's seat was in Palestine and the throne of Bilqis had been in Yemen, two thousand miles away. This was a great miracle performed by one of those sitting with Solomon. When Bilqis arrived at Solomon's palace, she was welcomed with pomp and ceremony. Then, pointing to the altered throne, Solomon asked her whether her throne looked like that one. She looked at it again and again. In her mind she was convinced that her throne could not possibly be the one she was looking at, as hers was in her palace; suddenly she detected a striking similarity and replied: "It is as if it were the very one, it resembles mine in every respect." Solomon knew that she was intelligent and diplomatic. He then invited her into the great hall, the floor of which was laid in glass and shimmering. Thinking it was water, as she stepped on the floor, she lifted her skirt slightly above her heels, for fear of wetting it. Solomon pointed out to her that it was made of solid glass. She was amazed. She had never seen such things before. Bilqis realized that she was in the company of a very knowledgeable person who was not only a ruler of a great kingdom but a messenger of Allah, as well. She repented, gave up sun worship, accepted the faith of Allah and asked her people to do the same. It was finished; Bilqis saw her people's creed fall apart before Solomon. She realized that the sun which her people worshipped was nothing but one of Allah's creations.

Solomon lived amidst glory and all creatures were subjected to him. Then Allah the Exalted ordained for him to die. His life and death were full of wonders and miracles; thus, his death harmonized with his life and glory. His death, like his life, was unique. The people had to learn that the future is known neither by the Jinns, nor by prophets, but by Allah alone. Solomon's effort in this direction did not end with his life, for even his death became an example. He was sitting holding his staff, overseeing the Jinns at work in a mine. He died sitting in this position. For a long time no one was aware of his death, for he was seen sitting erect. The Jinns continued with their sand toil, thinking that Solomon was watching over them. Many days later, a hungry ant began nibbling Solomon's staff. It continued to do so, eating the lower part of the staff, until it fell out of Solomon's hand and his body fell to the ground. People hurried to him, realizing that he had died a long time ago and that the Jinns did not perceive the unseen, for

had the Jinns known the unseen, they would not have kept on working, thinking that Solomon was alive.

Allah the Exalted revealed: And we caused a fount of molten brass to flow for him, there were Jinns that worked in front of him by the will of his Lord, and if any of them turned aside from our command, we shall cause him to taste the torment of the blazing Fire. Then when we decreed death for him (Solomon), nothing informed them (Jinns) of his death except a little worm of the earth, which kept slowly gnawing away at his stick, so when he fell down, the Jinns saw clearly that if they had known the unseen, they would not have stayed in the humiliating torment.

Prophet Ilyas (Elijah)

Prophet Ilyas, son of Infaad Haroon is among the messengers who was sent on a mission. For 22 years Ilyas invited people towards Tawheed and religious laws of Moses. His appearance was in the year 1079 BC and ascension to heaven was in 1056 BC. Prophet Ilyas warned Bani Israel to discontinue their disobedience towards God. Ahab the king of Bani Israel perceived and felt that Prophet Ilyas is against his rule and ill-treated him. They continued to disobey Allah, even after several warnings. Allah stopped the rain and people suffered from draught and death. Life of the people became very difficult Ahab got frustrated and decided to kill Prophet Ilyas. With the will and wish of Allah, the angel Gabriel informed Prophet Ilyas to depart from his people and travel to Jordan. Prophet Ilyas moved to Jordan and lived there for the period of time. People of Amman welcomed him with a worthy hospitality. Later on, he travelled to a town where he saw a woman gathering firewood. Ilyas asked the woman for something to eat and drink. The woman made the dough and prepared three loafs of breads. As time passed by, the woman's son, Yunus died. The mother was devastated and requested Ilyas to bring her son back. Ilyas took the dead body aside and prayed to God, the almighty accepted his prayer and her son was given a new life. The mother was so happy, then she said: "Ilyas, you are a prophet of God, who else could perform such a miracle". Ahab, the king and his wife Isabel felt insecure and threatened by Ilyas, so they plotted to kill him. Ilyas was commanded by God to emigrate to Be'arsaba (In Israel). He travelled for forty days, he rested in a cave, and suddenly was addressed by Allah "O Ilyas get up and witness our demonstration, by the grace and glory of God. Ilyas stood up and observed the greatness of nature when all of a sudden, an earthquake shook the ground and shattered the stones. He was addressed "O Ilyas be in peace, we afflicted Bani Israel with a painful punishment for their disobedience, we order you to go to Damascus and meet 'Khazal', choose him as a sovereign power and meet Alyasa, he will be your successor and tell him to kill the transgressors". Ilyas hit the river with his turban and the river split into two. While speaking with Alyasa, they entered the river. Later on, a means of riding descended from heaven. Prophet Ilyas rode it and ascended to heaven. Alyasa and his other companions watched the ascension of Prophet Ilyas till he disappeared from their sight.

Prophet Alyasa (Elisha)

Prophet Alyasa was a one of the messengers sent to Bani Israel, he invited the people to the religious laws of Moses. He cured the sick, gave life to the dead and also solved many other problems. In Hebrew he is called Alyasha or Elisha. He appeared as a prophet in the year 1056 B.C. He was among the students of Prophet Ilyas who granted him the trusteeship of messengers. They passed the river of Jordan together. Later he witnessed the ascension of Prophet Ilyas to heaven. The students of Prophet Ilyas saw the miracles of Prophet Alyasa and comprehended that he be his successor. At the time of his death the king of Bani Israel known as Yahavash visited him to get advice about his successor. Alyasa ordered him to bring some arrows and a bow. He put the arrow on the bow string and told Yahavash to put hands on his hands and shoot the arrow and to follow wherever it proceeded through which he would overcome his hardships and rule as the king of Damascus. Yahavash shot the arrow three times. Alyasa said that this sign represents that three times he would dominate them. Saying this he died.

Prophet Yunus (Jonah)

In the name of Allah, We praise Him, seek His help and ask for His forgiveness. Whoever Allah guides none can misguide, and whoever He allows to fall astray, none can guide them aright. We bear witness that there is none worthy of worship but Allah Alone, and we bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and the seal of His Messengers.

According to historical records, Prophet Yunus (Bible: Jonah), the son of Matta was sent by Allah to warn the inhabitants of a town called Nineveh. Its site is believed to be marked by the two mounds on the left bank of the river Tigris, opposite the city of present day Mosul (Iraq) on the right bank, about 230 miles north-north-west of the city of Baghdad.

Allah Says in the Holy Qur'an: Why was there not a single town among those we warned, for if they believed and had faith, it would have profited them, but only the people of Yunus believed, so we removed the Penalty of Ignominy in the life of the present world for them and permitted them to enjoy their life for a while.

The inhabitants of the town of Nineveh were idolaters who lived a life of disobedience and transgression. Prophet Yunus was sent to guide them to the worship of the One Lord Who Created and warned them of the impending Wrath of the Lord if they disobeyed him. The people disliked, denied and rebuked his interference in the way of worship of the idols which they had followed from their ancestors. He tried to convince them of the foolishness of idolatry and of the goodness in Allah's Laws, they not only rejected Prophet Yunus and His Mission, but made him a constant target of their abuse and jest. For a long period of time the Noble Prophet Yunus strove to guide them to the Truth and in all sincerity he warned them that if they kept on with their foolishness and idolatry, Allah's punishment would soon follow. Instead of accepting guidance and fearing their Lord and Creator Allah, they told Prophet Yunus that they absolutely rejected the Message and were not afraid of his empty threats which he had posed to them for a long time. They constantly mocked him and challenged him to bring upon the torment of Allah, which he had time and time again warned of. Prophet Yunus had no hope in his heart that these people would ever turn to guidance and the fear and worship Allah. In an utter state of helplessness and desperation and anger he decided to leave the rebellious disbelievers to their misery and leave the town of Nineveh before the inevitable punishment of Allah befall on them. Hardly had he left the city, the skies began to change color and looked as if they were on fire; the inhabitants of Nineveh were filled with fear by this sight. They recalled the destruction of the 'Ad, Thamud and Noah people. Were they to have a similar

fate? Slowly faith penetrated their hearts. They all gathered on the mountain and started to sincerely implore and beseech the One Lord, The Mountains echoed with their cries. It was a momentous hour, filled with sincere repentance. The Lord Most Merciful removed His wrath and showered His blessings and His mercy upon them once again. When the threatening storm was lifted, they prayed for the return of their departed well-wisher and Prophet Yunus, so that he could guide them to the Straight Path.

Meanwhile, Prophet Yunus had boarded a small ship. It sailed all day in calm waters with a good wind blowing at the sails. When night came, the sea suddenly changed. A horrible storm blew. The waves looked wild. They rose up as high as mountains then plunged down like valleys, tossing the ship and sweeping over the deck. Behind the ship, a large whale was splitting the water and opening its mouth. A command had been issued from Almighty Allah to one of the greatest whales of the sea to surface. The whale hurried to the surface of the sea and followed the ship as it had been commanded. The tempest continued and the captain of the ship asked the crew to lighten the ship's heavy load. They threw their baggage overboard, but this was not enough. Their safety lay in reducing the weight further, so they decided among themselves to lighten their load by removing one person at a time, until their ship reached the point of safety. The captain of the ship, as was the norm during those times, decided to cast lots, in the name of all the passengers. Whoever's name was drawn, would be thrown into the sea. Prophet Yunus knew this was one of the seamen's traditions when facing a tempest. Thus began the severe trial and affliction of the Noble Prophet for leaving the inhabitants of the city he was sent to by the Lord without waiting for the precise permission and Command of His Lord. The lot was drawn and the name of Prophet Yunus appeared. Since they knew him to be the most honorable among them, they did not wish to throw him. So they decided to draw a second lot and as Allah had willed, again Prophet Yunus's name was drawn! They gave him a final chance and drew a third lot. But his name was drawn again! The matter was over, it was decided that Prophet Yunus should be thrown into the raging sea. The whale saw Yunus floating on the waves before it and swallowed him, then the whale dived to the bottom of the sea. Three layers of darkness enveloped Prophet Yunus, one above the other; the darkness of the whale's stomach, the darkness of the bottom of the sea and the darkness of the night. Yunus imagined himself to be dead, but his senses became alert when he found he could move. He knew that he was alive and imprisoned in the midst of darkness and his heart was moved by the Remembrance of Allah.

Allah Says in the Holy Qur'an: But he (Prophet Yunus) cried through the depths of darkness, There is no god but Thou: Glory to Thee: I was indeed wrong!

Yunus continued imploring his Lord and Creator, constantly repeating the above beautiful invocation.

Allah Says in the Holy Qur'an: So We listened to him (Prophet Yunus) and secured him from distress: and thus do we deliver those who have faith.

The Lord Most Merciful accepted the sincere repentance His beloved servant and Prophet made from the darkness of the whales stomach from the depths of the ocean. Allah inspired the whale to surface and eject Yunus onto an island at the farthest side of the ocean. Prophet Yunus's body was inflamed because of the acids inside the whale's stomach. He was severely ill, and when the sun rose, its rays burned his inflamed body so that he was on the verge of screaming in severe pain. However, he endured the pain with patience befitting only to the Noble Prophets of Allah, he continued to repeat his invocation to Allah. Almighty Allah caused a gourd plant vine to grow to considerable length over him for protection. Then Allah Exalted caused Yunus to recover from his illness and forgave him. Allah made it known that had it not been for Yunus's sincere repentance and his invocations to Him, he would have stayed in the whale's stomach till the Day of Judgment! Gradually Prophet Yunus regained his strength and found his way to his people. He was pleasantly surprised to notice the change that had taken place. The entire population turned out to welcome their beloved well-wisher and Prophet. They recounted to Yunus in detail what had transpired after his departure and how they had now left their unlawful and idolatrous ways and turned to the worship of their One and Only Lord Who Created. Prophet Yunus lived peacefully amongst the people of Nineveh, he continued to guide them until his appointment of death.

Prophet Muhammad absolutely forbade the believers to ever say that Mohamed is better than Prophet Yunus.

Prophet Zakariya (Zachariah) & Prophet Yahya (John)

The years had taken their toll on Prophet Zakariya. He was now old, in his nineties. Despite his feebleness, he went to the temple daily to deliver his sermons. Zakariya was not a rich man, but he was always ready to help those in need. His one disappointment in life was that he had no children, for his wife was barren. This worried him, for he feared there was no one after him to carry out his work. The people needed a strong leader and if left on their own, they would move away from Allah's teachings and change the Holy Laws to suit themselves. During one of his visits to the temple, he went to check on Mary, who was living in a secluded room of the temple. He was surprised to find fresh out of season fruit in her room. Besides him, no one ever entered her room. When he inquired, she told him that the fruits were from Allah, she found them in her room every morning. She asked him, why are you surprised, do you not know that Allah provides without measure for whom He wills? This noble girl had opened his eyes to a startling idea. Could he not ask his Lord to bless him with a child in his old age? Even if his wife was past childbearing age, nothing was impossible for his Gracious Lord!

Allah the Almighty revealed: When Zakariya called out his Lord in a secret call, saying: My Lord! Indeed my bones have grown feeble, and grey hair has spread on my head, and I have never been unblessed in my invocation to You, O my Lord! Verily! I fear my relatives after me, since my wife is barren. So give me from yourself an heir, who shall inherit me, and inherit also the posterity of Jacob (religious knowledge) and make him, my Lord, one with whom you are Well-pleased!

Allah said: "O Zakariya! Verily, "we give you glad tidings of a son. His name will be Yahya (John). We did not give that name to anyone before him". He said: "My Lord! How can I have a son, when my wife is barren and I have reached the extreme old age?" Allah said: "it will be. Your Lord says, It is easy for Me. Certainly I have created you before, when you were nothing." Zakariya said: "My Lord! Appoint a sign for me." Allah said: "The sign will be that you shall not speak to mankind for three nights, though you have no bodily defects." Zakariya came out, and using sign language to told his people to glorify Allah's Praises in the morning and in the afternoon. It was said to his son: "O John! Hold fast to the Scripture (The Torah)." In childhood we gave him wisdom and made him sympathetic to men as a mercy from us, and pure from sins, he was righteous and dutiful towards his parents, he was neither arrogant nor disobedient to Allah or his parents. Peace was on him, when he was born, when he dies and when he is raised up to life again. John was born a stranger to the world of children, they used to amuse themselves whilst John was serious all the time. Most children took delight in torturing animals whereas, he was merciful to them. He fed the animals from his food until there was nothing

left for himself, he just ate fruit or leaves from trees. John loved reading books. Allah guided him to read the Book of Jurisprudence closely; thus, he became the wisest and most knowledgeable man of that time. Therefore, Allah the Almighty endowed him with the faculties of passing judgment on people's affairs, interpreting the secrets of religion, guiding people to the right path and warning them against the wrong doers. John reached maturity. His compassion for his parents, as well as for all people and all creatures, increased greatly. He called people to repent for their sins.

There are quite a number of traditions told about John. Ibn Asaker related that one time his parents were looking for him and found him at the Jordan River. When they met him, they wept sorely, seeing his devotion to Allah, Great and Majestic. Zakariyah did not see his son for three days. He found him weeping inside a grave which he had dug and in which he resided. "My son, I have been searching for you, why are you crying in this grave!" "O father, you told me that between Paradise and Hell, there is only a span, and it will not be crossed except by tears of weepers?" He said to him: "Weep then, my son." They both, then wept together. John said: "The dwellers of Paradise are sleepless out of the sweetness of Allah's bounty; that is why the faithful must be sleepless because of Allah's love in their hearts. How far between the two luxuries, how far between them?" They say John wept so much that tears marked his cheeks. He never cared about food. He ate leaves, herbs and sometimes locusts. He slept anywhere on a mountain or in a cave. He would sometimes find a lion or a bear as he entered a cave, but being deeply absorbed in praising Allah, he never noticed them. The beasts easily recognized John as the prophet who cared for all the creatures, so they would leave the cave, bowing their heads. John sometimes fed those beasts, out of mercy, from his food and was satisfied with prayers as food for his soul. He would spend the night crying and praising Allah for His blessings. When John called people to worship Allah, he made them cry out of love and submission, arresting their hearts with the truthfulness of his words.

A conflict took place between John and the authorities at that time. A tyrant king, Herod Antipas, the ruler of Palestine, was in love with Salome, his brother's daughter. He was planning to marry his beautiful niece. The marriage was encouraged by her mother and by some of the learned men of Zion, either out of fear or to gain favours with the ruler. On hearing the ruler's plan, John pronounced that such a marriage would be incestuous. He would not approve it under any circumstance, as it was against the Law of the Torah.

John's pronouncement spread like wildfire. Salome was angry, for it was her ambition to rule the kingdom with her uncle. She plotted to achieve her aim. Dressing attractively, she sang and danced before her uncle. Arousing Herod's lust. Embracing her, he offered to fulfil

whatever she desired. At once she said: "I would love to have the head of John, because he has defiled your honour and mine throughout the land. If you grant me this wish, I shall be very happy and will offer myself to you." Bewitched by her charm, he submitted to her monstrous request. John was executed and his head was brought to Salome. The cruel woman gloated with delight. But the death of Allah's beloved prophet was avenged. Not only she, but all the children of Israel were severely punished by invading armies which destroyed their kingdom.

Prophet Isa / Jesus

In many verses of the Glorious Qur'an, Allah the Exalted denies the Christians claim that He has a son. A delegation from Nagran came to the Prophet Muhammad. They began to talk about the Trinity, in which they say, Allah is three in one, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, with some disagreement among their sects. That is why Allah affirmed in many verses of the Qur'an that Jesus is a slave of Allah, whom He moulded in the womb of his mother like any other of His creatures, and that He created him without a father, as He created Adam without a father or a mother.

Allah the Almighty said: Allah chose Adam, Noah, the family of Abraham and the family of Imran above the Alamin (mankind and Jinns).

Zachariah's wife's sister had a daughter named Hannah. She was married to Imran, a leader of the Israelites. For many years, the couple remained childless. Whenever Hannah saw another woman with a child, her longing for a baby increased. Although years had passed, she never lost hope. She believed that one day Allah would bless her with a child, on whom she would shower all her motherly love. She turned to the Lord of the heavens and the earth and pleaded with Him for a child. She would offer the child in the service of Allah's house, in the temple of Jerusalem. Allah granted her request. When she learned that she was pregnant, she was the happiest woman alive, and thanked Allah for His gift. Her overjoyed husband Imran also thanked Allah for His mercy. However, while she was pregnant her husband passed away. Hannah wept bitterly. Alas, Imran did not live to see their child for whom they had so longed. She gave birth to a girl, and again turned to Allah in prayer: "O my Lord, I have delivered a female child, I have named her Mary, and I seek refuge with You, Allah for her and her offspring from Satan, the outcast." Hannah had a big problem in reference to her promise to Allah, for females were not accepted into the temple, and she was very worried. Her sister's husband Zakariyah, comforted her, saying that Allah knew best what she had delivered and appreciated fully what she had offered in His service. She wrapped the baby in a shawl and handed it over to the temple elders. As the baby was a girl, the question of her guardianship posed a problem for the elders. This was a child of their late and beloved leader, everyone was eager to take care of her. Zakariyah said to the elders: "I am the husband of her maternal aunt and her nearest relative in the temple; therefore, I will be more mindful of her than all of you." To ensure that no one had access to Mary, Zakariyah built a separate room for her in the temple. As she grew up, she spent her time in devotion to Allah. Zakariyah visited her daily to see to her needs, this method continued for many years. One day, he was surprised to find fresh fruit, which was out of season in her room. As he was the only person who could enter

her room, he asked her how the fruit got there. She replied that these provisions were from Allah, for He gives to whom He wills. Zakariyah understood by this that Allah had raised Mary's status above that of other women. Thereafter, Zakariyah spent more time with her, teaching and guiding her. Mary grew to be a devotee of Allah, glorifying Him day and night. One day while Mary was praying, an angel in the form of a man appeared before her. Filled with terror, she tried to flee, praying: "I seek refuge with Allah from you, if you do fear Allah." The angel said: "I am only a Messenger from your Lord, to announce to you the gift of a righteous son." She said: "How can I have a son, when no man has touched me nor am I unchaste?" He said: "It will be, your Lord said: "that is easy for me (Allah): And we wish to appoint him as a sign to mankind and a mercy from Us (Allah), it is a matter already decreed, by Allah."

The angel's visit caused Mary great anxiety, which increased as the months went by. How could she face giving birth to a child without having a husband? Later, she felt life kicking inside her. With a heavy heart, she left the temple and went to Nazareth, the city in which she had been born where she settled in a simple farm house to avoid the public. But fear and anxiety did not leave her. She was from a noble and pious family. Her father had not been an evil man nor was her mother an impure woman. How could she prevent tongues from wagging about her honour? After some months, she could not bear the mental strain any longer. Burdened with a heavy womb, she left Nazareth. She had not gone far, when she was overtaken by the pains of childbirth. She saw down against a dry palm tree, and there she gave birth to a baby boy. Looking at her beautiful baby, she was hurt that she had brought him into the world without a father. She exclaimed: "I wish I had died before this happened and had vanished into nothingness!" Suddenly, she heard a voice nearby: "Grieve not, your Lord has placed a small stream below, shake the trunk of this tree, ripe dates will fall. So eat and drink and regain your strength; see the power of Allah, He made the dry palm tree regain life, in order to provide food for you." For a while she was comforted by Allah's miracle, for it was a sign of her innocence and purity. She decided to return to the city. However, her fears also returned. What was she going to tell the people? Her baby all of a sudden began to speak: "If you meet any person say: 'I vowed to fast for Allah, and may not speak to any human today.'" With this miracle, Mary felt at ease. As she had expected, her arrival in the city with a new-born baby in her arms aroused the curiosity of the people. They scolded her: "This is a terrible sin that you have committed." She put her finger to her lips and pointed to the child. They asked: "How can we speak to a new-born baby?" To their total amazement, the child began to speak clearly: "I am Allah's servant. Allah has given me the Book, and has made me a prophet, and has blessed me wherever I may be, and has enjoined on me prayers and almsgiving as long as I live. Allah has made me dutiful towards her, who had borne me. He has not made me arrogant nor unblessed. Peace will be with me at birth, at death and at the

resurrection." Most of the people realized that the baby was unique, for if Allah wills something, He merely says "Be" and it happens. Of course, there were some who regarded the baby's speech as a trick, but at least Mary could now stay in Nazareth without being harassed.

Jesus said: "I am a slave of Allah. He has given me the Scripture and made me a Prophet; and He has made me blessed whosoever I be, and has enjoined me prayers and Zakat, as long as I live, and dutiful to my mother, and made me not arrogant, unblessed. And Salam (peace) be upon me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive!"

Such is Jesus, son of Mary. It is a statement of truth, about which they doubt. It befits not the Majesty of Allah that He should beget a son (slander of Christians against Allah, by saying that Jesus is the son of Allah). Glorified and exalted be He above all that they associate with Him. When He decrees a thing, He only says to it, "Be!" - And it is.

Jesus said: "And verily Allah is my Lord and your Lord. So worship Him, Alone. That is the Straight Path. (Allah's Religion of Islamic Monotheism which He ordained for all His Prophets)."

Then the Christian sects differed, so woe unto the disbelievers from the meeting of a great Day (the Day of Resurrection, when they will be thrown into the blazing Fire). How clearly will the polytheists and disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah see and hear, the Day when they will appear before us! The polytheists and wrong-doers today are in plain error. Warn them O Muhammad of a Day of grief and regrets, when their case will be decided, while now they are in a state of carelessness and disbelief.

It was said that Joseph the Carpenter was greatly surprised when he knew the story, so he asked Mary: "Can a tree come to grow without a seed?" She said: "Yes, the one which Allah created for the first time." He asked her again: "Is it possible to bear a child without a male partner?" She said: "Yes, Allah, created Adam without male or female!"

It was also said that, while pregnant, Mary went one day to her aunt, who reported that she felt as if she was pregnant. Mary in turn, said that she, too, was feeling as if she was pregnant. Then her aunt said: "I can see what is in my womb prostrating to what is in your womb."

The Jewish priests felt this child Jesus was dangerous, for they felt that the people would turn their worship to Allah the Almighty Alone, displacing the existing Jewish tenets. Consequently, they would lose their authority over the people. Therefore, they kept the miracle of Jesus's speech in infancy as a secret and accused Mary of a great misdeed.

As Jesus grew, the signs of Prophethood began to increase. He could tell his friends what kind of supper waited for them at home and what they had hidden and where. When he was twelve years old, he accompanied his mother to Jerusalem. There he wandered into the temple and joined a crowd listening to the lecture of the Rabbis (Jewish priests). The audience were all adults, but he was not afraid to sit with them. After listening intently, he asked questions and expressed his opinion. The learned rabbis were disturbed by the boy's boldness and puzzled by the questions he asked, for they were unable to answer him. They tried to silence him, but he ignored their attempts and continued to express his views. Jesus became so involved in this exchange that he forgot, he was expected back home. In the meantime, his mother went home, thinking that he might have gone to see his relatives or friends. When she arrived, she discovered that he was not there, so she returned to the city to look for him. She found him in the temple, sitting among the learned, conversing with them. He appeared to be quite at ease, as if he had been doing this all his life. Mary got angry with him for causing her worry. He tried to assure her that all the arguing and debating with the learned had made him forget the time.

Jesus grew up to manhood. It was Sabbath, a day of complete rest: no fire could be lit or extinguished nor could females plait their hair. Moses had commanded that Saturday be dedicated to the worship of Allah. However, the wisdom behind the Sabbath and its spirit had gone, only the letter remained in the Jews' hearts. Also, they thought that Sabbath was kept in heaven, and that the People of Israel had been chosen by Allah only to observe the Sabbath. They made a hundred things unlawful on Saturday even self-defence or calling a doctor to save a patient who was in bad condition. This is how their life was branded by such hypocrisy. Although the Pharisees were guardians of the law, they were ready to sell it when their interests were involved so as to obtain personal gains. There was, for example, a rule which prohibited a journey of more than one thousand yards on Sabbath day. What do we expect of the Pharisees in this case? The day before, they transferred their food and drink from their homes two thousand yards away and erected a temporary house so that from there could travel a further thousand yards on the Sabbath day. Jesus was on his way to the temple. Although it was the Sabbath, he reached out his hand to pick two pieces of fruit to feed a hungry child. This was considered to be a violation of the Sabbath law. He made a fire for old women to keep them warm from the freezing air. Another violation. He went to the temple and looked around. There were twenty thousand Jewish priests registered there who earned their living from the temple. Jesus observed that the visitors were much fewer than the priests. Yet the temple was full of sheep and doves which were sold to the people to be offered as sacrifices. Every step in the temple cost the visitor money. They worshipped nothing but money. In the temple, the Pharisees and Sadducees acted as if it were a market place, these

two groups always disagreed on everything. Jesus followed the scene with his eyes and observed that the poor people who could not afford the price of the sheep or doves were swept away like flies by the Pharisees and Sadducees. Jesus was astonished. Why did the priests burn a lot of offerings inside the temple, while thousands of poor people were hungry outside it?

On this blessed night, the two noble prophets John and Zakariyah died, killed by the ruling authorities. On the same night, the revelation descended upon Jesus. Allah the Exalted commanded him to begin his call to the children of Israel. To Jesus, the life of ease was closed, and the page of worship and struggle was opened. Like an opposing force, the message of Jesus came to denounce the practices of the Pharisees and to reinforce the Law of Moses. In the face of a materialistic age of luxury and worship of gold, Jesus called his people to a nobler life by word and deed. This exemplary life was the only way out of the wretchedness and diseases of his age. Jesus's call, from the beginning, was marked by its complete uprightness and piety. It appealed to the soul, the inner being and not to a closed system of rules laid down by society. Jesus continued inviting the people to Almighty Allah. His call was based on the principle that there is no mediation between the Creator and His creatures. However, Jesus was in conflict with the Jews' superficial interpretation of the Torah. He said that he did not come to abrogate the Torah, but to complete it by going to the spirit of its substance to arrive at its essence. He made the Jews understand that the Ten Commandments had more value than they imagined. For instance, the fifth commandment does not only prohibit physical killing, but all forms of killing; physical, psychological and spiritual. And the sixth commandment does not prohibit adultery only in the sense of unlawful physical contact between a man and a woman, but also prohibits all forms of unlawful relations or acts that might lead to adultery. The eye commits adultery when it looks at anything with passion. Jesus was therefore in confrontation with the materialistic people. He told them to abandon hypocrisy, show and false praise. There was no need to hoard wealth in this life. They should not preoccupy themselves with the goods of this passing world; rather they must preoccupy themselves with the affairs of the coming world because it would be everlasting. Jesus told them that caring for this world is a sin, not fit for pious worshippers. The disbelievers care for it because they do not know a better way. As for the believers, they know that their sustenance is with Allah, so they trust in Him and scorn this world. Jesus continued to invite people to worship the Only Lord, Who is without partner, just as he invited them to purify the heart and soul. His teaching annoyed the priests, for every word of Jesus was a threat to them and their position, exposing their misdeeds.

The Roman occupiers had, at first, no intention of being involved in this religious discord of the Jews because it was an internal affair, and they saw that this dispute would distract the Jews from the question of occupation. However, the priests started to plot against Jesus. They wanted to embarrass him and to prove that he had come to destroy the Mosaic Law. The Mosaic Law provides that an adulteress be stoned to death. They brought him a Jewish adulteress and asked Jesus: "Does not the law stipulate the stoning of the adulteress?" Jesus answered: "Yes." They said: "This woman is an adulteress." Jesus looked at the woman and then at the priests. He knew that they were more sinful than she. They agreed that she should be killed according to the Mosaic Law, and they understood that if he was going to apply Mosaic Law, he would be destroying his own rules of forgiveness and mercy. Jesus understood their plan. He smiled and assented: "Whoever among you is sinless can stone her." His voice rose in the middle of the Temple, making a new law on adultery, for the sinless to judge sin. There was none eligible; no mortal can judge sin, only Allah the Most Merciful. As Jesus left the temple, the woman followed him. She took out a bottle of perfume from her garments, knelt before his feet and washed them with her perfume and tears, and then dried his feet with her hair. Jesus turned to the woman and told her to stand up, adding: "O Lord, forgive her sins." He let the priests understand that those who call people to Almighty Allah are not executioners. His call was based on mercy for the people, the aim of all divine calls. Jesus continued to pray to Allah for mercy on his people and to teach his people to have mercy on one another and to believe in Allah.

Jesus continued his mission, aided by divine miracles. Some Qur'anic commentators said that Jesus brought four people back from the dead: a friend of his named Al-Azam, an old woman's son, and a woman's only daughter. These three had died during his lifetime. When the Jews saw this, they said: "You only resurrect those who have died recently; perhaps they only fainted." They asked him to bring back to life Sam the Ibn Noah. When he asked them to show him his grave, the people accompanied him. Jesus invoked Allah the Exalted to bring him back to life and behold, Sam the Ibn Noah came out from the grave grey-haired. Jesus asked: "how did you get grey hair, when there was no aging in your time?" He answered: "O Spirit of Allah, I thought that the Day of Resurrection had come; from the fear of that day my hair turned grey."

Allah the Almighty said: Remember when Allah will say on the Day of Resurrection: "O Jesus, son of Mary! Remember My Favour to you and to your mother when I supported you with Ruh-ul-Qudus (Gabriel) so that you spoke to the people in the cradle and in maturity; and when I taught you writing, Al Hikmah, the Torah and the Gospel; and made you out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, by My Permission, and you breathed into it, and it became a bird by My Permission, and you healed those born blind, and the lepers by My Permission, and when you

brought forth the dead by My Permission; and when I restrained the Children of Israel from you (they planned to kill you) since you came to them with clear proofs, and the disbelievers among them said: 'This is nothing but evident magic. And when I (Allah) put in their hearts of the disciples (of Jesus) to believe in me and My Messenger, they said: "We believe. And bear witness that we are Muslims."

When Jesus came to know of their disbelief, he said: "Who will be my helpers in Allah's Cause?" The disciples said: "We are the helpers of Allah; we believe in Allah, and bear witness that we are Muslims." Jesus continued calling people to Almighty Allah and laying down for them what might be called "the law of the Spirit." Once when standing on a mountain surrounded by his disciples, Jesus saw that those who believed in him were from among the poor, the wretched and their number was small. Some of the miracles which Jesus performed had been requested by his disciples, such as their wish for a "holy table" to be sent down from heaven.

Allah the Exalted said: Remember when the disciples said: "O Jesus, son of Mary! Can your Lord send down to us a table spread with food from heaven?" Jesus said: "Fear Allah, if you are indeed believers." They said: "We wish to eat thereof and to be stronger in Faith and to know that you have indeed told us the truth and that we ourselves be its witnesses."

Jesus, son of Mary, said: "O Allah, our Lord! Send us from heaven a table spread with food, a festival and a sign from you; and provide us sustenance, for you are the best of sustainers." Allah said: "I am going to send it down to you, but if any of you after that disbelieves, I will punish him with a torment such as I have not inflicted on anyone among all the Alamin (mankind and jinn)." It was related that Jesus commanded his disciples too fast for thirty days; at the end of it, they asked Jesus to bring food from heaven to break their fast. Jesus prayed to Allah after his disciples had doubted Allah's power. The great table came down between two clouds, one above and one below, while the people watched. Jesus said: "O Lord, make it a mercy and not a cause of distress." So it fell between Jesus's hands, covered with a napkin. Jesus suddenly prostrated and his disciples with him. They sensed a fragrance, which they had never smelled before. Jesus said: "The one who is the most devout and most righteous may uncover the table, so we might eat and thank Allah for it." They said: "O Spirit of Allah, you are the most deserving."

Jesus stood up, performed ablution and prayed before uncovering the table, and behold, there was a roasted fish. The disciples said: "O Spirit of Allah, is this the food of this world or of Paradise?" Jesus said to his disciples: "Did not Allah forbid you to ask questions? It is the divine power of Allah the Almighty Who said: 'Be,' and it was. It is a sign from Almighty Allah

warning of a great punishment for unbelieving mortals of the world. This is the core of the matter." It is said that thousands of people ate and yet there was still plenty. A further miracle was that the blind and lepers were cured. The Day of the Table became one of the holy days for the disciples and followers of Jesus. Later on, the disciples and followers forgot the real essence of the miracles, and they worshipped Jesus as a god, instead of Allah.

Almighty Allah asserted: And remember when Allah will say (on the Day of Resurrection): "O Jesus, son of Mary! Did you say to men: 'Worship me and my mother as two gods besides Allah? He will say: "Glory be to you! It was not for me to say what I had no right to say. Had I said such a thing, you would surely have known it. You know what is in my inner self though I do not know what is in yours, truly, you, only you, are the All Knower of all that is hidden and unseen. Never did I say to them aught except what You (Allah) did command me to say: 'Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord', And I was a witness over them while I dwelt amongst them, but when You took me up, You were the Watcher over them, and You are a Witness to all things. (This is a great admonition and warning to the Christians of the whole world). If you punish them, they are your slaves, and if you forgive them, Verily You, only you are the All Mighty, the All Wise."

Allah will say: "This is a Day on which the truthful will profit from their truth: theirs are Gardens under which rivers flow (in Paradise) - they shall abide therein forever. Allah is pleased with them and they with Him. That is the great success (Paradise). To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and all that is therein, and He is Able to do all things."

Jesus went on his mission until vice knew that its throne was threatening to fall. So the forces of evil accused him of magic, infringement of the Mosaic Law, allegiance with the devil; and when they saw that the poor people followed him, they began to scheme against him. The heads of families and the highest judicial council of the Jews, began to meet to plot against Jesus. The plan took a new turn. When the Jews failed to stop Jesus's call, they decided to kill him. The chief priests held secret meetings to agree on the best way of getting rid of Jesus. While they were in a meeting, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus, Judas Iscariot, went to them and asked: "What will you give me if I deliver him to you?" Judas bargained with them until they agreed to give him thirty pieces of silver known as shekels. The plot was laid for the capture and murder of Jesus. It was said that the high priest of the Jews tore his garment at the meeting, claiming that Jesus had denied Judaism. The tearing of clothes at that time was a sign of disgust. The priests had no authority to pass the death sentence at that time, so they convinced the Roman governor that Jesus was plotting against the security of the Roman Empire and urged them to take immediate action against him. The governor ordered that

Jesus be arrested. It was the Roman custom for the condemned to be flogged before they were executed. So Pilate, the Roman governor, ordered that Jesus be flogged. The Mosaic Law stipulates forty lashes, but the Romans had no limit, and they were brutal lashes. After that, Jesus was handed to the soldiers for crucifixion. They took off his clothes, and kept them. They put a crown of thorns on his head to mock him. According to custom he carried his cross on his back to increase his suffering. Finally, they reached a place called Golgotha, meaning the Place of Skulls, outside the walls of Jerusalem. Instead of giving him a cup of wine diluted with scent to help lessen the pain on the cross, the soldiers gave Jesus a cup of vinegar diluted with gall. Then they crucified him and, as a further mockery, two thieves with him. As it is written in the Bible.

But the faith of Islam came with views quite different from the gospels, with regards to both the end of Jesus and his nature. The Glorious Qur'an affirms that Allah the Exalted did not permit the people of Israel to kill Jesus or crucify him. What happened was that Allah saved him from his enemies and raised him to heaven. They never killed Jesus, they killed someone else.

Allah the Almighty declared: And because of their saying (boasting), "We killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah," but they did not kill him nor crucified him, but the resemblance of Jesus was put over another man and those who differ therein are full of doubts. They have no certain knowledge, they follow nothing but conjecture. For surely; they did not kill: But Allah raised him up, his body and soul to Himself. And Allah is Ever All Powerful, All Wise.

None of the people of the Scriptures (Jews & Christians), believed in him as a Messenger of Allah, and a human being, before his death. And on the Day of Resurrection, Jesus will be a witness against them. Almighty Allah also revealed: And remember when Allah said: "O Jesus! I will take you and raise you to myself and clear you of the forged statement that Jesus is Allah's son, from those who disbelieve, and I will make those who follow you (Monotheists, who worship none but Allah) superior to those who disbelieve in the Oneness of Allah.

Almighty Allah refuted the claims of the Jews and the Christians in many verses of the Glorious Qur'an.

And they say: "The Most Beneficent (Allah) has begotten a child, the Jews say: Ezra is the son of Allah, and the Christians say that He has begotten a son (Christ), and the pagan Arabs say that he has begotten daughters, angels, etc."

Indeed you have said a terrible evil thing. Whereby the heavens are almost torn, and the earth is split apart and the mountains fall in ruins, for they ascribe a child to the Most Beneficent (Allah).

Allah the Exalted also declared: Yet, they join the Jinns as partners in worship with Allah, though He has created the Jinns, and they attribute falsely without knowledge sons and daughters to Him. Glorified be he! And exalted above all that they attribute to Him. He is the Originator of the heavens and the earth. How can He have children when He has no wife? He created all things and He is the All-Knower of everything.

Such is Allah, your Lord! La ilaha illa Huwa (none has the right to be worshipped but He), the Creator of all things. So worship Him (Alone), and He is the Wakil (Trustee, Disposer of affairs, Guardian etc.) over all things. No vision can grasp Him, but His Grasp is over all vision. He is the Most Subtle and Courteous, Well-Acquainted with all things.

Almighty Allah commanded: O people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians)! Do not exceed the limits in your religion, nor say of Allah nothing but the truth. The Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, was no more than a Messenger of Allah and His Word, "Be" - and he was, which He bestowed on Mary and a spirit (Ruh) created by Him; so believe in Allah and His Messengers. Say not: "Three (trinity)!" Cease! It is better for you. For Allah is the only One Ilah (God), Glory be to Him, Far Exalted is He above having a son. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And Allah is All Sufficient as a Disposer of affairs.

The Messiah will never be proud to reject to be a slave to Allah, nor the angels who are near to Allah. And whosoever rejects His worship and is proud, then He will gather them all together unto Himself. So, as for those who believed (in the Oneness of Allah - Islamic Monotheism) and did deeds of righteousness, He will give them their due rewards, and more out of His Bounty. But as for those who refuse His worship and were proud, He will punish them with a painful torment. And they will not find for themselves besides Allah any protector or helper. The Jews and Christians took their rabbis and their monks to be their lords besides Allah, by obeying them in things which they made lawful or unlawful according to their own desires without being ordered by Allah and they also took as their lord Messiah, son of Mary, while the Jews and Christians were commanded in the Torah and the Gospel to worship none but the One Ilah (God - Allah) La ilaha illa Huwa (none has the right to be worshipped but He). Praise and glory be to Him, far above is He from having the partners they associate with Him.

Allah the Almighty also revealed: Now ask them O Muhammad: "Are there only daughters for your Lord and sons for them?" Or did we create the angels females while they were witnesses? Verily, they are liars!

They have invented a relationship between Allah and the Jinns, but the Jinns know very well that they have to indeed appear before Allah. Glory be for Allah! He is free from what they attribute to Him! Except the slaves of Allah, whom He chooses for His Mercy.

Jesus, son of Mary, was no more than a Messenger; many were Messengers who passed away before him. His mother, Mary believed in the Words of Allah, and His Books. They both used to eat food just like other humans, while Allah does not eat. Look how we made the signs clear to them, yet they are deluded away from the truth.

It is also reported that the Jews said: "We worship Ezra, the Son of Allah," and the Christians said: "Jesus is the Son of Allah," and the Magians said: "We worship the sun and the moon, and the Pagans said: "We worship idols."

Prophet Muhammad

Muhammad was born in Mecca, Arabia, on Monday, 2 August A.D. 570. His mother, Amina, was the daughter of Wahb Ibn Abdu Manaf of the Zahrah family. His father, Abdullah, was the son of Abdul Muttalib. His genealogy has been traced to the noble house of Ishmael, the son of Prophet Abraham in about the fortieth descend. Muhammad's father died before his birth. Before he was six years old his mother died, the orphaned Muhammad was put under the charge of his grandfather Abdul Muttalib who took care of him. But the old chief died two years afterwards. On his deathbed he confided to his son Abu Talib the take charge of the little orphan. When Muhammad was twelve years old, he accompanied his uncle Abu Talib on a mercantile journey to Syria, and they proceeded as far as Busra. The journey lasted for some months. It was at Busra that the Christian monk Bahira met Muhammad. He is related to have said to Abu Talib: 'Return with this boy and guard him against the hatred of the Jews, for a great career awaits your nephew.' After this journey, the youth of Muhammad seems to have been passed uneventfully, but all authorities agree in ascribing to him such correctness of manners and purity of morals as were rare among the people of Mecca. The fair character and the honourable bearing of the unobtrusive youth won the approbation of the citizens of Mecca, and by common consent he received the title of "Al Amin," The Faithful.

In his early years, Muhammad watched the sheep of his uncle, who, like the rest of the Bani Hashim, had lost a great part of his wealth. From youth to manhood he led an almost solitary life. The lawlessness rife among the Meccans, the frequent quarrels among the tribes and the immorality and scepticism of the Quraish, naturally caused feelings of pity and sorrow in the heart of the sensitive youth. Such scenes of social misery and religious degradation were characteristic of a corrupt age. When Muhammad was twenty five years old, he travelled to Syria as a noble and rich Qureshi, with a widow named Khadijah; and, having proved himself faithful in the commercial interests of Khadijah, he was soon rewarded with her hand in marriage. This marriage proved fortunate and happy. Khadijah was much older than her husband, but in spite of the age difference, the tenderest devotion on both sides existed. This marriage gave him the loving heart of a woman who was always ready to console him in his despair, and kept hope alive within him when no man believed in him and the world appeared gloomy in his eyes. He reached thirty years of age and still, Muhammad was almost a stranger to the outside world. Since the death of his grandfather, authority in Mecca was divided among ten senators who constituted the governing body of the Arabian Commonwealth. There was no such law among them to ensure the safety of individual's rights and property. Though family relations afforded some degree of protection to citizens, yet strangers were frequently exposed to persecution and oppression. In many cases they were robbed, not only of their goods, but

even of their wives and daughters. At the instigation of the faithful Muhammad, an old league called the Federation of Fudul (protection for all), was revived within the territories of Mecca. When Muhammad reached thirty-five years, he settled a dispute, which threatened to plunge the whole of Arabia into a fresh series of wars. In rebuilding the Sacred House, the Kaabah in 605, A.D. the question arose as to who should have the honour of raising the black stone into its proper place. Each tribe claimed that honour. The seniors advised the disputants to accept for their arbitrator the first man to enter from a certain gate. The proposal was agreed upon, and the first man who entered the gate was Muhammad. His advice satisfied all the contending parties. He ordered the stone to be placed on a piece of cloth and each tribe to share the honour of lifting it up by taking hold of a part of the cloth. The stone was thus deposited in its place, and the rebuilding of the House was completed without further interruption.

Muhammad is described to have been very helpful to the poor. His uncle Abu Talib had fallen into distress through his attempt to maintain the old position of his family. Muhammad, being rather rich at this time, by his alliance with Khadijah, tried to clear part of the debt of gratitude and obligation which he owed to his uncle by undertaking the bringing up and education of his son, Ali. A year later he adopted Akil, another of his uncle's sons. Khadijah bore Muhammad three sons and four daughters. All the males died in childhood, but in loving Ali he found much consolation. About this time, Muhammad set a good example of kindness, which created a salutary effect upon his people. His wife Khadijah had given him a young slave named Zaid Ibn Haritha, as a present, he had been brought as a captive to Mecca and sold to Khadijah. Muhammad treated Zaid as if he was his only son. One day, Muhammad took Zaid by the hand and led him to the black stone of the Kaabah, where he publicly adopted him as his son. Henceforward Zaid was called the son of Muhammad. Muhammad was now approaching his fortieth year, and his mind was ever-engaged in profound contemplation and reflection. Before him lay his country, bleeding and torn by wars and intolerable disunity; his people sunk into barbarism, addicted to rituals and superstitions. His two visits to Syria, had opened up a scene of unutterable moral and social desolation, rival creeds and sects tearing each other to pieces, carrying their hatred to the valleys and deserts of Hijaz, and rending the townships of Arabia with their quarrels and bitterness. For years after his marriage, Muhammad had been accustomed to secluding himself in a cave in Mount Hira, a few miles from Mecca. He used to go to this cave for prayer and meditation, sometimes alone and sometimes with his family. There, he often spent the whole night in deep thought and profound communion with the Unseen. It was during one of those nights, an angel (Gabriel) came and told him that he was a Messenger of Allah, sent to reclaim a fallen people to the knowledge and service of their Lord. Angel Gabriel appeared and said: "Read!" But as Muhammad was illiterate, he said to the angel: "I am cannot read." The angel took hold of him and again said: "Read!" Then

Prophet said: "I cannot read." The Angel again seized against and said: "Read! In the Name of Your Lord, Who created all that exists, he has created man from a clot (coagulated blood). Read! Your Lord is the Most Generous, Who taught with the pen, he taught man that which he knew not."

Then the Prophet repeated the words with a trembling heart. He returned to Khadijah from Mount Hira and said: "Wrap me up! Wrap me up!" She wrapped him in a blanket until his fear passed. He told Khadijah what had occurred and that he was becoming either a soothsayer or one smitten with madness. She replied: "Allah forbid! He will surely not let such a thing happen, for you speak the truth, you are faithful in trust, you bear the afflictions of the people, you spend for good causes from what you gain in trade, you are hospitable and you assist your fellow men. Muhammad told her what he had seen. Whereupon, Khadijah said: "Rejoice, O dear husband and be cheerful. Khadijah bears witness to the truth, that you will be a prophet to these people. Then she got up and went to her cousin Waraqa Ibn Naufal, he was an old and blind man, who knew the Scriptures of the Jews and Christians, it has been stated, he translated them into Arabic. When she told him of what she had heard, he cried out: "Holy! Holy! Verily, this is the Namus (The Holy Spirit) who came to Moses. Muhammad will be the prophet of his people. Tell him this and bid him to be brave at heart." When Muhammad and Waraqa met subsequently in the street, he spoke of his faith and trust: "I swear by Him in whose hand Waraqa's life is, Allah has chosen you to be the prophet of these people. They will call you a liar, they will persecute you, they will banish you and they will fight you. Oh, how I wish I could live to see those days. I would fight them." Then Waraqa kissed Muhammad on the forehead.

The first vision was followed by a considerable period, during which Muhammad suffered much mental depression. The angel spoke to the grieved heart of hope and trust and of the bright future when he would see the people of the earth crowding into the one true faith. His destiny was unfolded to him, when, wrapped in profound meditation, melancholy and sad, he felt himself called by a voice from heaven to arise and preach. **O you Muhammad, who covers himself with a garment! Arise and warn! And glorify your Lord!** He arose and engaged himself in the work to which he was called. Khadijah was the first to accept his mission. She was on to believe in the revelations, she abandoned the idolatry of her people and joined Muhammad in purity of heart and in offering prayers to Allah the Almighty. At the beginning of his mission, Muhammad - hereinafter called the Prophet - opened his soul only to those who were attached to him and tried to free them from the gross practices of their forefathers. After Khadijah, his cousin, Ali was the next companion. The Prophet used to go into the desert around Mecca with his wife and young cousin, so that they might together offer their heartfelt thanks to the

Lord of all nations and for His manifold blessings. Once they were surprised by Abu Talib, the father of Ali. He said to the Prophet: "O son of my brother, what is this religion you are following?" "It is the religion of Allah, His Angels and His Messengers and of our ancestor Abraham," answered the Prophet. "Allah has sent me to His servants, to direct them towards the truth, and you, O my uncle, are the most worthy of all. It is important that I call upon you and it is important that you accept the truth and help spread the news." Abu Talib replied: "Son of my brother, I cannot renounce the religion of my fathers; but by the Supreme Lord, while I am alive, none shall dare injure you." Then turning towards Ali, the venerable chief asked what religion was his. Ali answered: "O father, I believe in Allah and His Prophet, I am with him." Abu Talib replied: "Well my son, he will not call you to anything except what is good, therefore you are free to go with him." After Ali, Muhammad's adopted son Zaid became a convert to the new faith. He was followed by Abu Bakr, a leading member of the Quraish tribe and an honest, wealthy merchant who enjoyed great consideration among his compatriots. He was two years younger than the Prophet. His adoption of the new faith was of great moral effect. Soon after, five notables presented themselves before the Prophet and accepted Islam. Several converts also came from lower classes of the Arabs to adopt the new religion.

The Prophet very quietly saved his people from the worship of idols. Polytheism was deeply rooted among the people. It offered attractions, which the new faith in its purity did not possess. The Quraish had personal material interests in the old worship, and their prestige was dependent upon its maintenance. The Prophet had to contend with the idolatrous worship of its followers and to oppose the ruling government, which governed its destinies. After three years of constant struggle, only thirty followers were secured. An important change now occurred in the relations of the Prophet with the citizens of Mecca. His compatriots had begun to doubt his sanity, thinking he was crazy or possessed by an evil spirit. Until now he preached quietly and unobtrusively. He now decided to speak publicly to the Meccans, requesting them to abandon their idolatry. For this, he arranged a gathering on a neighbouring hill, he spoke of their foolishness in the sight of Allah in worshipping pieces of stone which they called their gods. He invited them to abandon their old impious worship and adopt the faith of love, truth and purity. He warned them of the fate of past generations who had not followed the preaching of former prophets. But the people departed without listening to his warning. Having failed to induce his fellow citizens to listen to him, he turned his attention to strangers arriving in the city on commerce or pilgrimage. But the Quraish made attempts to frustrate his efforts. The Quraish rushed to meet the strangers first by different routes, to warn them against holding any communication with the Prophet, whom they presented as a dangerous magician. When the pilgrims or traders returned to their homes, they carried the news of the bold preacher, who was inviting Arabs loudly at the risk of his own life, telling people to abandon the worship

of their dear idols. Now the Prophet and his followers became subject to some persecution and indignity. The hostile Quraish prevented the Prophet from offering his prayers at the Sacred House of the Kaabah; they pursued him wherever he went; they threw dirt at him and his disciples when engaged in their devotions; they scattered thorns in the places which he frequented for devotion and meditation. Amidst all these trials the Prophet did not waver. He was full of confidence in his mission, even when on several occasions he was put in imminent danger of losing his life.

At this time Hamza, the youngest son of Abdul Muttalib, adopted Islam. Hamza was a man of distinguished bravery, an intrepid warrior, generous and true, whose heroism earned him the title of "Lion of Allah." He became a devoted follower of Islam and was willing to give his life for the cause. The Prophet continued preaching to the Arabs in a most gentle and reasonable manner. He called the people, who were accustomed to iniquity and wrong doings, to abandon their hatred. In burning words which excited the hearts of his hearers, he warned them of the punishment which Allah had inflicted upon the ancient tribes of 'Ad and Thamud who had obstinately disobeyed the teachings of Allah's messengers. He urged them by the wonderful sights of nature, by the brightness of noon, by the veil spread at night, by the day when it appears in glory to listen to his warning before a similar destruction befell on them. He spoke to them about the Day of Reckoning, when their worldly deeds will be weighed before the Eternal Judge, when the children who had been buried alive ask, for what crime they were put to death. As the number of believers increased and the cause of the Prophet was strengthened by the conversions of many powerful citizens, the Prophet's preaching alarmed the Quraish. Their power and prestige were at stake. They were the custodians of the idols, which the Prophet had threatened to destroy; they were the ministers of the worship, which he denounced; in fact their existence and living wholly depended upon the maintenance of the old institutions. The Prophet taught that in the sight of his Lord all humans were equal, the only distinction recognized among them being the weight of their piety.

Allah the Exalted said: O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, so you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you in the Sight of Allah is that believer who has At Taqwa (oneness of Allah), pious and righteous persons who fear Allah, abstain from all kinds of sins which He has forbidden. Verily! Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.

The Quraish would have none of this levelling of distinctions, as it reflected upon their long inherited privileges. Accordingly, they organized a system of persecution in order to suppress the movement before it became firmly established. They decided that each family should take

upon itself the task of stamping out the new faith on the spot. Each household tortured its own members or slaves who were supposed to have connected themselves with the new religion. With the exception of the Prophet, who was protected by Abu Talib and his kinsmen, and Abu Bakr, and a few others who were either distinguished by their rank or possessed some influence among the Quraish, all other converts were subjected to different sorts of torture. Some of them were thrown into prison, starved and then flogged. The hill of Ramada and the place called Bata thus became scenes of cruel torture.

One day the Quraish tried to induce the Prophet to discontinue his teachings of the new religion, which had sown discord among their people. A man called, Utba Ibn Rabi'a, was delegated to see the Prophet and speak to him. Utba said: "O son of my brother, you are distinguished by your qualities; yet you have sown discord among our people and cast dissension in our families; you denounced our gods and goddesses and you charge our ancestors with impiety. Now we come to make a proposition to you, I ask you to think before you reject it." "I am listening to you, O father of Walid," said the Prophet. "O son of my brother, if you are looking for riches, honour and dignity, we are willing to give it, a fortune larger than what we have; we shall make you our chief and will do nothing without you. If you desire dominion, we shall make you our king; and if the demon which possesses you cannot be subdued, we will bring you doctors and give them riches until they cure you." When 'Utba had finished his discourse, the Prophet said: "Now listen to me, O father of Walid." "I heard you." The Prophet, recited to him the first thirteen verses of Surah Fussilat, which is interpreted as follows:

In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful - A revelation from Allah the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful. A Book whereof the Verses are explained in detail; - a Qur'an in Arabic for people who know. Giving glad tidings to the one who believes in the Oneness of Allah and fears Allah and loves Allah, and warning, but most of them turn away, they do not listen. And they say: "Our hearts are under covered from that to which you invite us, and in our ears is deafness, and between us and you is a screen, so go your way; verily we are go our way. Say O Muhammad: "I am only a human being like you. It is inspired in me that your Ilah (God) is One Ilah (God - Allah), therefore take to the Straight Path to Him and have obedience to Him, and seek forgiveness of Him. And woe to Al-Mushrikeen; those who do not give Zakat and they are disbelievers in the Hereafter. Truly, those who believe and do righteous good deeds for them will be an endless reward that will never stop. Say O Muhammad: "Do you verily disbelieve in Him Who created the earth in two Days, and you set up rivals with Him? That is the Lord of the Alamin (mankind, jinn and all that exists). He placed on earth, firm mountains and He blessed it, and measured therein its sustenance in four Days

equal, for all those who ask about its creation. Then He rose over towards the heaven when it was smoke, and said to it and to the earth: "Come both of you willingly or unwillingly." They both said: "We come, willingly." Then He completed and finished from their creation as seven heavens in two days, he made in each heaven lamps (stars) to be an adornment as well as to guard from the devils. Such is the Decree of Him the All Mighty, The All Knower. But if they turn away, then say O Muhammad: "I have warned you of a destruction like the destruction which overtook the 'Ad and Thamud people."

When the Prophet had finished his recitation, he said to Utba: "This is my reply to your proposition; now take what course you find best." Persecution by the Quraish grew fiercer every day and the sufferings of the Prophet's disciples became unbearable. He had heard of the righteousness, tolerance and hospitality of the neighbouring Christian king of Abyssinia. He suggested to his companions who were without protection to seek refuge in the kingdom of that pious king, Al Najashi (Negus). Some fifteen promptly availed themselves of the advice and sailed to Abyssinia. They were met with a very kind reception. This is called the first Hijra (migration) in the history of Islam and occurred in the fifth year of Prophet Muhammad's mission, A.D. 615. These emigrants were soon followed by many of their fellow sufferers, until the number reached eighty-three men and eighteen women. The hostile Quraish, furious at the escape of their victims, sent deputies to the king of Abyssinia to request him return the refugees, so they be put to death for adjuring their old religion and embracing a new one. The king summoned the poor fugitives and inquired about their religion. Jafar, son of Abu Talib and brother of Ali, acted as spokesman for the exiles. He spoke thus: "O king, we were plunged into the depths of ignorance and barbarism, we adored idols, we lived unchastely, and we ate dead bodies, and we spoke disgracefully, we disregarded every feeling of humanity and sense of duty towards our neighbours, we knew no law but that of the strong, when Allah raised among us a man, of whose birth, truthfulness, honesty and purity we became aware. He called us to profess the Unity of Allah and taught us to associate nothing with Him; he forbade us the worship of idols and enjoined us to speak the truth, to be faithful to our trusts, to be merciful, and to regard the rights of neighbours; he forbade us to speak evil of the worship of Allah and not to return to the worship of idols and to abstain from evil, to offer prayers, to give alms, to observe the fast. We believe in him, we have accepted his teachings and his injunctions to worship Allah alone and to associate nothing with Him. Hence our people have persecuted us, trying to make us forget the worship of Allah and return to the worship of idols of wood and stones. They tortured us and injured us, finding no safety among them, we have come to your kingdom, trusting you will give us protection against their persecution." After hearing them, the hospitable king ordered the deputies to return to their people in safety and not to interfere with the fugitives. Thus the emigrants passed the period of exile in peace and comfort.

While the followers of the Prophet sought safety in foreign lands against the persecution of their people, he continued his warnings to the Quraish more strenuously than ever. Again they came to him with offers of riches and honour, which he firmly and utterly refused. But they mocked him and urged him for miracles to prove his mission. He used to answer: "Allah has not sent me to work wonders; He has sent me to preach to you." Despite all the exhortation of the Prophet, the Quraish persisted in asking him for a sign. They insisted that unless some sign be sent down to him from his Lord, they would not believe. The disbelievers used to ask: "Why has Muhammad not been sent with miracles like previous prophets?" The Prophet replied: "Because miracles had proved inadequate to convince. Noah was sent with signs, with what effect? Where was the lost tribe of Thamud? They refused to receive the preaching of the Prophet Salih, unless he showed them a sign and caused the rock to bring forth a living camel. He did what they asked. In scorn they cut the camel's feet and then daring the prophet to fulfil his threats of judgment, then they were found dead in their beds the next morning, stricken by the angel of the Lord." The prophet continued his preaching and the new faith gained ground. The national fair at Okadh near Mecca attracted many desert Bedouins and trading citizens from distant towns. They listened to the teachings of the Prophet, to his reminders and to his denunciations of their sacred idols and of their superstitions. They carried back all that they had heard to their homes, and thus the advent of the Prophet was made known to almost all parts of the peninsula. The Meccans, however, became more furious at the Prophet's increasing preaching against their religion. They asked his uncle Abu Talib to stop him, but he could not do anything. As the prophet persisted in his ardent denunciations against their ungodliness and impiety, they turned him out from the Kaabah where he used to sit and preach, subsequently went back to Abu Talib. They urged the venerable chief to prevent his nephew from abusing their gods any longer or uttering any ill words against their ancestors. They warned Abu Talib that if he would not do that, he would be excluded from the communion of his people and driven to side with Muhammad; the matter would then be settled by a fight until one of the two parties were exterminated. Abu Talib neither wished to separate himself from his people, nor forsake his nephew for the idolaters to revenge themselves upon. He spoke to the Prophet very softly and begged him to abandon his affair. To this suggestion the Prophet firmly replied: "O my uncle, if they placed the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left hand to cause me to renounce my task, verily I would not until Allah made manifest His cause or I perished in the attempt." The Prophet, overcome by the thought that his uncle and protector was willing to desert him, turned to depart. Abu Talib called him loudly to come back and said. "Say whatever you please; for by the Lord I shall not desert you ever."

The Quraish again attempted in vain to cause Abu Talib to abandon his nephew. The venerable chief declared his intention to protect his nephew against any menace or violence.

He appealed to the two families, Bani Hashim and Bani Muttalib, to protect their family member from falling victim to the hatred of rival parties. All the members of the two families nobly responded to the appeal of Abu Talib except Abu Lahab, one of the Prophet's uncles, who took part with the persecutors. During this period, Umar Al-Khattab adopted Islam. In him the new faith gained a valuable follower and an important factor in the future development and propagation of Islam. Before he had been a violent opposer of the Prophet and a bitter enemy of Islam. His conversion is said to be the work of the miraculous effect on his mind of a Surah of the Qur'an which his sister was reading in her house, he had gone with the intention of killing her for adopting Islam. Thus the party of the Prophet became strong with his uncle Hamza, a man of great bravery and merit; along with Abu Bakr and Umar, both men of great energy and reputation. The Muslims now ventured to perform their devotions in public. Alarmed by the return of the deputies from Abyssinia, the Quraish became determined to blow any further progress of Islam. Towards this end, in the seventh year of the mission, they made a solemn agreement against the descendants of Hashim and Muttalib, they forbade any contracts of marriage with any of them and to have no communication with them. Upon this, the Quraish became divided into two factions, the families of Hashim and Muttalib claimed Abu Talib as their chief. Abu Lahab, the Prophet's uncle, however, out deep hatred for his nephew and his doctrine, went to the opposite party, whose chief was Abu Sufyan (Muhammad's first cousin), from the Umayya family. Muslims as well as idolaters lived on the eastern skirts of Mecca. They lived in this defensive position for three years. The provisions, which they carried, were running short. They would have perished if the fellow countrymen had not had sympathy and helped them. Towards the beginning of the tenth year of the mission, reconciliation was concluded between the Quraish and the two families (Hashim and Abdul Muttalib) through the intermediation of Hisham Ibn Umar and Zobeir Ibn Umayya. Thus, they were able to return to Mecca.

During this period, Islam made no progress outside; but in the sacred months, when violence was considered sacrilege, the Prophet used to preach Islam to the pilgrims. In the following year, both Abu Talib and Khadijah died. The Prophet, weighed down by the loss of his protector and his beloved wife, without hope of turning the Quraish away from idolatry, with a saddened heart, yet full of trust, he decided to continue his ministry in her field. He chose Taif, a town about sixty miles east of Mecca, he was accompanied with his faithful servant Zaid. The tribe of Thakif who were the inhabitants of Taif received Muhammad very coldly. However, he stayed there for one month. Though the more considerate and better sort of men treated him with a little respect, the slaves and common people refused to listen to his teachings; they were outrageously indignant at his invitation to abandon the gods they worshipped, they rose against him, bringing him to the wall of the city, obliged him to depart and return to Mecca.

The repulse greatly discouraged his followers; however, the Prophet boldly continued to preach to the public assemblies at the pilgrimage and gained several new converts, among them, six were from a city called, Yathrib (Medina), from a Jewish tribe called Khazraj. When these Yathribites returned home, they spread the news among their people that a prophet had arisen among the Arabs, who was calling them to Allah and put an end to their inquiries. In the twelfth year of his mission, the Prophet made his night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, and thence to heaven. His journey, known in history as Miraj (Ascension) was a real bodily one and not only a vision. It was at this time Allah ordered the Muslims to pray five daily prayers.

Almighty Allah had said: Glorified and exalted be He, Allah above all the evil they associate with Him, Who took His slave Muhammad for a journey by night from Al Masjid al Haram to Al Masjid al Aqsa, the neighbourhood we have blessed, in order that we might show Muhammad our signs. Verily, Allah, Hears all and Sees all.

Allah's Messenger described his Night Journey saying: "While I was lying down, suddenly someone came to me and cut my chest open. He took out my heart. Then a gold tray of Belief was brought to me and my heart was washed and filled with Belief, then returned to its original place. Then a white animal which was smaller than a mule and bigger than a donkey was brought to me. The animal's step was so wide that it reached the farthest point within the reach of the animals' sight. I was carried on it, Gabriel set out with me till we reached the nearest heaven. Gabriel asked for the gate to be opened, it was asked, 'Who is it?' Gabriel answered, 'Gabriel.' It was asked, 'Who is with you?' Gabriel replied, 'Muhammad.' It was asked, 'Has Muhammad been called?' Gabriel replied in the affirmative. Then it was said, 'Welcome. The gate opened and when I went over the first heaven, I saw Adam. Gabriel said to me: 'This is your father, Adam; pay your respects.' So I greeted him and he returned the greeting to me and said: 'You are welcome, O pious son and pious Prophet.' Then Gabriel ascended with me till we reached the second heaven. Gabriel asked for the gate to be opened. It was asked: 'Who is it?' Gabriel answered: 'Gabriel.' It was asked: 'Who is with you?' Gabriel replied, 'Muhammad.' It was asked: 'Has he been called?' Gabriel answered in the affirmative. Then it was said: 'welcome. The gate was opened. "When I went over the second heaven, I saw John (Yahya) and Jesus (Isa), they were cousins. Gabriel said to me: "this is John and Jesus; pay greet them.' So I greeted them and both of them returned my greeting, 'You are welcome, O pious brother and pious Prophet.' Then Gabriel ascended with me to the third heaven and asked for its gate to be opened. It was asked 'Who is it?' Gabriel replied: 'Gabriel.' It was asked, 'Who is with you?' Gabriel replied, 'Muhammad.' It was asked, 'Has he been called?' Gabriel replied in the affirmative. Then it was said: 'welcome. I saw Joseph (Yusuf), Gabriel

said to me: 'This is Joseph, greet him.' So I greeted him and he returned the greeting: 'You're welcome, O pious brother and pious Prophet.' Then Gabriel ascended with me to the fourth heaven and asked for its gate to be opened. It was asked 'Who is it?' Gabriel replied, 'Gabriel' It was asked: 'Who is with you?' Gabriel replied: 'Muhammad.' It was asked: 'Has he been called?' Gabriel replied in the affirmative. Then it was said: 'He is welcome!' "The gate was opened, and when I went over the fourth heaven, I saw Enoch (Idris), Gabriel said to me: 'This is Enoch; greet him.' So I greeted him and he returned the greeting: 'welcome O pious brother and pious Prophet.' Then Gabriel ascended with me to the fifth heaven and asked for its gate to be opened. It was asked: 'Who is it?' Gabriel replied: 'Gabriel.' It was asked: 'Who is with you?' Gabriel replied 'Muhammad.' It was asked: 'Has he been called?' Gabriel replied in the affirmative. Then it was said: 'He is welcomed, when I went over the fifth heaven, I saw Aaron (Harun), Gabriel said to me: "This is Aaron; greet him.' So I greeted him and he returned the greeting: "You are welcomed, O pious brother and pious Prophet." Then Gabriel ascended with me to the sixth heaven and asked for its gate to be opened. It was asked: 'Who is it?' Gabriel replied: 'Gabriel.' It was asked: 'Who is with you?' Gabriel replied: 'Muhammad.' It was said: 'Has he been called?' Gabriel replied in the affirmative. It was said: 'He is welcomed. "When I went over the sixth heaven, I saw Moses (Musa). Gabriel said to me: "This is Moses; greet him. So I greeted him and he returned the greeting: "You are welcomed, O pious brother and pious Prophet." When I left Moses he wept. Someone asked him: 'Why are you crying?' Moses said: 'I weep because after me there has been another Prophet, and his followers will enter Paradise in greater numbers than my followers.' Then Gabriel ascended with me to the seventh heaven and asked for its gate to be opened. It was asked: 'Who is it?' Gabriel replied: 'Gabriel.' It was asked: 'Who is with you?' Gabriel replied: 'Muhammad.' It was asked: 'Has he been called?' Gabriel replied in the affirmative. Then it said: 'He is welcome. When I went over the seventh heaven, I saw Abraham (Ibrahim). Gabriel said to me: 'This is your father; greet him.' So I greeted him and he returned the greeting: 'You are welcome, O pious son and pious Prophet.' Then I was made to ascend to Sidrat-ul-Muntaha (the Lote Tree of the utmost boundary). Behold! Its fruits were like the jars of Hajr (a place near Medina) and its leaves were as big as the ears of elephants. Gabriel said: "this is the Lote Tree of the utmost boundary.' Behold! There ran four rivers, two were hidden and two were visible, I asked: 'What are these two kinds of rivers, O Gabriel?' He replied: 'As for the hidden rivers, they are two rivers in Paradise and the visible rivers are the Nile and the Euphrates. Then Al-Bait-ul-Ma'mur (the Sacred House) was shown to me. A container full of wine, another full of milk and a third full of honey were brought to me. I took the milk. Gabriel remarked: 'This is the Islamic religion which you and your followers are following.' Then the prayers were enjoined on me: they were fifty prayers a day. When I returned, I passed by Moses, who asked me; 'What have you been ordered to do?' I replied: 'I have been ordered to offer fifty prayers a day.' Moses said: 'Your

followers cannot bear fifty prayers a day, and by Allah I have tested people before you, and I have tried my level best with Bani Israel in vain. Go back to your Lord and ask for reduction to lessen your followers' burden.' So I went back, and Allah reduced ten prayers for me. Then again I came to Moses, he repeated the same as he had said before. Again I went back to Allah, and He reduced ten more prayers. When I came to Moses he said the same. I went back to Allah, and He ordered me to observe ten prayers a day. When I came back to Moses, he repeated the same advice, so I went back to Allah and was ordered to observe five prayers a day. "When I came back to Moses, he said: 'What have you been ordered?' I replied: 'I have been ordered to observe five prayers a day.' He said: 'Your followers cannot bear five prayers a day, and no doubt, I have experience with people before you, and I have tried my level best with Bani Israel, so go back to your Lord and ask for reduction to lessen your followers' burden.' I said: 'I have requested so much of my Lord that I feel ashamed, but I am satisfied now and surrender to Allah's Order.' When I left, I heard a voice saying: 'I have passed my order and have lessened the burden of my worshippers.'"

Islam started to spread rapidly, there was hardly any house that did not have a Muslim in it. The next year, being the thirteenth of the mission (A.D. 622) Mus'ab returned from Yathrib accompanied by seventy-three men and two women who had adopted Islam. On their arrival, these Yathribites invited the prophet to their city. His opponents had by this time grown so powerful in Mecca that he could not stay there much longer without imminent danger. He therefore accepted their proposal, The prophet's uncle, Al Abbas, wished his nephew well and said to the Yathribites, to defend him and not betray him, Upon their professing their sincerity, the Prophet swore to be faithful to them, on condition that they should worship none but Allah and they observe the precepts of Islam, obey the Prophet in all that was right, and protect him against all insults as heartily as they would their wives and families. They then asked him what would be their return, if they should be killed in the cause of Allah; he answered: "Paradise," whereupon they pledged their faith to him and his cause. The Prophet then selected twelve men out of their number to act as his delegates. Thus was concluded the second agreement of Al Aqaba. The Yathribites returned home leaving the Prophet to arrange for the journey to their city. The Prophet directed his followers to seek immediate safety in Yathrib. About one hundred families silently disappeared from Mecca and proceeded to Yathrib, where they were received with enthusiasm and much hospitality. Finally, all the disciples had gone to Yathrib. The Prophet alone remained in Mecca, keeping with him his young cousin, Ali, and his devoted friend Abu Bakr. The Meccans, fearing the consequence of this new alliance, so they began to think of preventing Muhammad from escaping to Yathrib. They all met. After several milder expedients had been rejected, they decided that he should be killed. They agreed that one man should be chosen out of every tribe and that each man should strike a blow at him with

his sword so the responsibility of the guilt would rest equally on all tribes. Bani Hashim, Muhammad's own tribe, were much inferior and therefore would not be able to revenge their kinsman's death.

A number of noble youths were selected for the deed. As night advanced, the assassins posted themselves around the Prophet's house. They watched all night long, waiting to murder Muhammad when he would leave his house at dawn. The Prophet had warned of the danger, so he directed Ali to lie in his place and wrap himself up in his green cloak, which he did. The Prophet miraculously escaped through the window to Abu Bakr's house. The noble youths, looked through a window and saw Ali, asleep, however they continued watching the house till morning. When Ali arose, they found themselves deceived. The fury of the Quraish was now unbounded. The news that "the would be assassins" had returned unsuccessfully and that Muhammad had escaped aroused their whole energy. A price of a hundred camels was set upon Muhammad's head.

Abu Bakr set out to the land of Abyssinia (Ethiopia), where he met Ibn Ad-Daghina, the chief of a tribe called, Qara, he asked Abu Bakr! Where are you going?' Abu Bakr replied: 'My people have turned me out, so I want to wander on the earth and worship my Lord. Ibn Ad-Daghina said: 'O Abu Bakr! A man like you should not leave his homeland, I am your protector. Go back and worship your Lord in your town. So they both returned. In the evening Ibn Ad-Daghina visited the nobles of Quraish and said to them. 'A man like Abu Bakr should not leave his homeland, nor should he be driven out. Do you (Quraish) drive out a man who helps the destitute, earns their living, keeps good relations with his kith and kin, helps the weak and poor, entertain guests generously and helps the calamity-stricken persons?' So the people of Quraish could not refuse Ibn Ad-Dhagina's protection, they said: 'Let Abu Bakr worship his Lord in his house. He can pray and recite there, but he should not hurt us with it and should not do it publicly, because we are afraid that he may affect our women and children.'" Ibn Ad-Daghina told Abu Bakr all of that. Abu Bakr stayed in that state, worshipping his Lord in his house. He did not pray publicly nor did he recite the Qur'an outside his house. "Then a thought occurred to Abu Bakr to build a mosque in front of his house, he did, he prayed and recited the Qur'an there. The pagan's women and children began to gather around him in great numbers. They looked and wondered. Abu Bakr was a man who used to cry a lot, he could not help weeping when reciting the Qur'an. That situation scared the nobles, so they sent for Ibn Ad-Daghina. When he came to them, they said: 'We accepted your protection of Abu Bakr on the condition that he should worship his Lord in his house, but he has violated the conditions and has built a mosque in front of his house where he prays and recites the Qur'an publicly. We are afraid that he may affect our women and children unfavourably. So, prevent him. If he

likes to confine the worship of his Lord to his house, he may do so, but if he insists on doing it openly, ask him to release you from your obligation to protect him, for we dislike to break our pact with you, but we deny Abu Bakr the right to announce his act publicly. Ibn Ad-Dhagina went to Abu Bakr and said: 'O Abu Bakr! You know very well what contract I made on your behalf; now, you are either to abide by it, or else release me from my obligation of protecting you, because I do not want the Arabs to hear that my people have dishonoured a contract. Abu Bakr replied: I release you as I am pleased with the protection from Allah.

One day, the prophet came to Abu Bakr and said: 'I have been given permission to migrate.' Abu Bakr said: 'I shall accompany you?' So they left Mecca. They reached a cave on the mountain of Thaur and stayed there for three nights. Abdullah Bakr who was an intelligent youth, used to stay with them overnight. He used to leave and return to Mecca, He kept his ears open to hear if any were plotting against the prophet, then as soon as darkness fell, he would go and inform the prophet of it. Fuhaira, a freed slave of Abu Bakr, used to bring his milch sheep to them a little after nightfall in order to rest the sheep. So they always had fresh milk at night, the milk of their sheep, and the milk which they warmed by throwing heated stones in it. Fuhaira would then call the herd away when it was still dark. He did this for continuously for those three nights. Allah's Messenger and Abu Bakr had hired a man as a guide, he was of the religion of the infidels of Quraish. The Prophet and Abu Bakr trusted him and gave him their two she-camels and took his promise to bring their two she-camels to the cave of the mountain of Thaur three nights later.

Suraqa Ibn Jusham said: "The messengers of the pagans of Quraish came to us declaring that they were looking for someone who would kill or arrest Allah's Messenger and Abu Bakr, I took my spear and left by the back door of my house. When I approached Muhammad and Abu Bakr, I said to them: 'Your people have assigned a reward equal to blood money for your head. Then I told them all the plans the people of Mecca had made. Then I offered them some journey food and goods, but they refused to take anything, but the Prophet said: 'Do not tell others about us. Then I requested him to write for me a statement of security and peace. He ordered Fuhaira, who wrote it for me on a parchment and then Allah's Messenger left. Allah's Messenger met Zubair in a caravan of Muslim merchants who were returning from Sham. Zubair provided Allah's Messenger and Abu Bakr with white clothes to wear. When the Muslims of Medina heard the news of the departure of Allah's Messenger from Mecca to Medina, they would wait for him till the heat of noon forced them to return. One day, after waiting for a long while, they returned home, and when they went into their houses, a Jew climbed up to the roof of one of the forts of his people to look for something, and he saw Allah's Messenger and his companions, dressed in white clothes, emerging out of the desert mirage.

The Jew could not help shouting at the top of his voice: O you Arabs! Here is your great man whom you have been waiting for!' So all the Muslims rushed and received Allah's Messenger on the summit of Harra. The Prophet turned with them to the right and alighted at the quarters of Bani Amr Ibn Auf, this was on Monday in the month of Rabi ul Awal. Abu Bakr stood up, while Allah's Messenger sat down and kept silent. Some of the Ansar who came and had not seen Allah's Messenger before and began greeting Abu Bakr, but when the sunshine fell on Allah's Messenger, Abu Bakr came forward and shaded him with his sheet, only then the people came to know Allah's Messenger. Allah's Messenger stayed with Bani Amr Ibn Auf for ten nights and established the mosque (Mosque of Quba) which was founded on piety. Allah's Messenger prayed in it and then mounted his she-camel and proceeded on, accompanied by the people till his she-camel knelt down at the place of the Mosque of Allah's Messenger at Medina. Some Muslims used to pray there in those days, and that place was a yard for drying dates belonging to Suhail and Sahl, the orphan boys who were under the guardianship of Asad in Zurara. When his she-camel knelt down, Allah's Messenger said: 'This place, Allah willing, will be our home.' Allah's Messenger then called the two boys and told them to suggest a price for the yard so he might take it as a mosque. The two boys said: 'No, but we will give it as a gift, O Allah's Messenger!' Allah's Messenger then built a mosque there. The Prophet himself started carrying unburned bricks for its building and while doing so, he was saying: 'This load is better than the load of Khaibar, for it is more pious in the Sight of Allah and purer and better rewarded.' He was also saying: 'O Allah! The actual reward is the reward in the Hereafter, so bestow Your Mercy on the Ansar and the Emigrants. Thus the hijrah was accomplished and from which the Islamic calendar dates. When Prophet Muhammad and his companions settled at Yathrib, the city changed its name, to, Al-Medina, Al-Munawara, Medina, the City. It is situated about eleven-day's journey to the north of Mecca. At that time it was ruled by two Kahtanite tribes, Aws and Khazraj. These two tribes, however, were constantly quarrelling. But when the Prophet settled in Medina, the tribes of Aws and Khazraj forgot their old feuds and united together in the bond of Islam. Their old divisions were soon effaced and the Ansar, the Helpers of the Prophet, became the common designation of all Medinites who had helped the Prophet in his cause. Those who emigrated with him from Mecca received the title of: Muhajereen, Emigrants. The Prophet, in order to unite both classes in closer bonds, established between them a brotherhood, which linked them together as children of the same parents, with the Prophet as their guardian. The first step the Prophet took, after his settlement in Medina, was to build a mosque for the worship of Allah according to the principles of Islam. Also, houses for the emigrants. Medina and its suburb were at this time inhabited by three distinct parties, the Emigrants, the Helpers, and the Jews. In order to weld them together into an orderly federation, the Prophet granted a charter to the people, clearly defining their rights and obligations. This charter represented the framework of the first commonwealth, organized

by the Prophet. It started thus: 'In the name of Allah, Most Merciful and Compassionate Lord, this charter is given by Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah to all believers, whether of Quraish or Medina, and all individuals of whatever origin who have made common cause with them, who shall all constitute one nation.'

The following are some extracts from the charter: The state of peace and war shall be common to all Muslims; no one among them shall have the right of concluding peace with, or declaring war against, the enemies of his co-religionists. The Jews who attach themselves to our commonwealth shall be protected from all insults and vexations; they shall have an equal right with our people to our assistance and good offices. The Jews of the various branches and all others domiciled in Medina shall form with the Muslims one composite nation; they shall practice their religion as freely as the Muslims. The allies of the Jews shall enjoy the same security and freedom. The guilty shall be pursued and punished. The Jews shall join the Muslims in defending Medina against all enemies. The interior of Medina shall be a sacred place for all who accept this charter. All true Muslims shall hold every man guilty of crime, injustice or disorder; no one shall uphold the culpable, even if he be his nearest kin. After dealing with the interior management of the State, the charter concluded as follows: "All future disputes arising among those who accept this charter shall be referred, under Allah to the Prophet." Thus this charter put an end to the state of anarchy that prevailed among the Arabs. It constituted, Prophet Muhammad as chief magistrate of the nation. The party of the Ansars, or Helpers, included some lukewarm converts who retained an ill-concealed predilection for idolatry. These were headed by Abdullah Ibn Ubai, a man with some claims to distinction. They ostensibly joined Islam, but in secret were disaffected. They often were a source of considerable danger to the new-born commonwealth and required unceasing watchfulness on the part of the Prophet. Towards them he always showed the greatest patience and forbearance, hoping in the end to win them over to the faith, which expectations were fully justified by the result. While the death of Abdullah Ibn Ubai, his party which were known as the party of the "Munafiqeen" (the Hypocrites) disappeared. The Jews who constituted the third party of the Medinites were, however, the most serious element of danger. No kindness or generous treatment on the part of the Prophet would satisfy them. They soon broke off and ranged themselves with the enemies of the new faith. They did not hesitate to declare openly that they preferred idolatry, with its attendant evils to the faith of Islam. Thus, the Prophet had to keep an eye on his enemies outside Medina, on the one hand, and those within the city on the other. The Meccans who had sworn Muhammad's death were well acquainted, thanks to the party of the Hypocrites and of the Jews in Medina, with the real forces of the Muslims. They also knew that the Jews had accepted Muhammad's alliance only from motives of temporary expedience and that they would break away from him to join the idolaters as

soon as the latter showed themselves in the vicinity of Medina. The safety of the state required the proscription of the traitors who were secretly giving information to the common enemy. About six men were executed for high treason of this nature.

Towards the second year of the hijrah, the idolaters of Mecca began a series of hostile acts against the Muslims of Medina. They sent men in parties to commit depredations on the fruit trees of the Muslims of Medina and to take their flocks. Now came the moment of severest trial to Islam. It became the duty of the Prophet to take serious measures. He put Medina in a state of military discipline. He had to send frequent military observers to guard against any sudden onslaught. A force constituting of one thousand men marched under Abu Jahl, a great enemy of Islam, towards Medina to attack the city. The Muslims received timely notice of their enemy's intention. A body of three hundred followers, of whom two thirds were citizens of Medina, was gathered to forestall the idolaters by occupying the valley of Badr, situated near the sea between Mecca and Medina. When the Prophet saw the army of the infidels approaching the valley, he prayed that the little band of Muslims not be destroyed. The army of the Meccans advanced into the open space which separated the Muslims from the idolaters. According to Arab usage, the battle began by simple combats. The result of the battle was that the Meccans were driven back with great loss. Several of their chiefs were killed, including Abu Jahl. A large number of idolaters remained prisoners in the hands of the Muslims. They were, treated with the greatest humanity. The Prophet gave strict orders that sympathy should be shown to them in their misfortune and that they should be treated with kindness. These instructions were faithfully obeyed by the Muslims to whose care the prisoners were confided. Dealing with this event, Sir William Muir, in his book *Life of Muhammad*, quotes one of the prisoners saying: "Blessing be on the men of Medina; they made us ride, while they themselves walked; they gave us wheaten bread to eat, when there was little of it, contenting themselves with dates." The remarkable circumstances, which led to the victory of Badr, and results, which followed from it, made a deep impression on the minds of the Muslims; the angels of the heaven had battled on their side against their enemies. The division of the spoils created some dissension between the Muslim warriors. For the moment, the Prophet divided it equally among all. Subsequently, a Qur'an revelation laid down a rule for future division of the spoils. According to this rule, a fifth was reserved for the public treasury for the support of the poor and indigent, while the distribution of the remaining four fifths was left to the discretion of the Chief of the State.

The next battle between the Quraish and the Muslims was the battle of Uhud, a hill about four miles to the north of Medina. The idolaters, to revenge their loss at Badr, made tremendous preparations for a new attack upon the Muslims. They collected an army of three thousand

strong men, of whom seven hundred were armed with coats of mail, and two hundred horses. These forces advanced under the conduct of Abu Sufyan and encamped at a village six miles from Medina, where they began to spoil the fields and flocks of the Medinites. The Prophet, being much inferior to his enemies in number, at first determined to keep himself within the town and to receive them there; but after advice from his companions, he marched out against them at the head of one thousand men, but he only had one horse, besides his own. With these forces he halted at Mount Uhud. He was soon abandoned by Abdullah Ibn Ubai, the leader of the Hypocrites, with three hundred of his followers. Thus, the small force of the Prophet was reduced to seven hundred. At Mount Uhud the Muslim troops passed the night, and in the morning, after offering their prayers, they advanced. The Prophet contrived to have the hill at his back, as it was better to secure his men from being surrounded, he placed fifty archers on the height in the rear, behind the troops, and gave them strict orders not to leave their posts, no matter what happened. When they came to engage, the Prophet had superiority at first. But afterward, his archers left their position by mistake, thus allowing the enemy to attack the Muslims. The Prophet lost the day and very nearly lost his life. He was struck down by a shower of stones and wounded in the face by two arrows, one of his front teeth broke. Of the Muslims, seventy men were killed, among whom was the Prophet's uncle Hamza. Of the infidels, twenty-two men were lost. The Quraish were too exhausted to follow up their advantage. They retreated from the territories after barbarously mutilating the corpses of their dead enemies. The moral effect of this disastrous battle was such, it encouraged some neighbouring tribes to attack the Medina territories, but most were forced back.

The Jews did not waste time getting involved in the Prophet and his followers troubles. They slandered him and his followers, creating frustration among them. They mispronounced the words of the Qur'an, to give them an offensive meaning. They also caused their poets, who were superior in culture and intelligence, to use their influence to sow provocation among the Muslims. One of their distinguished poets, called Ka'b, of the Bani An-Nadir, spared no efforts in publicly deploring the ill success of the idolaters after their defeat at Badr. He then returned to Medina, where he continued to attack the Prophet and the Muslims. Though he belonged to the tribe of Bani Nadir, which had entered an agreement with the Muslims and pledged itself both for the internal and external safety of the State, he openly directed his acts against the commonwealth of which he was a member. Another Jew, Sallam, behaved equally fiercely and bitterly against the Muslims. He lived in Khaibar, a village five days journey northwest of Medina. He made every effort to excite the neighbouring Arab tribes against the Muslims. The Muslim commonwealth with the object of securing safety among the community, passed a sentence of outlawry Ka'b and Sallam. The members of another Jewish tribe, called, Bani Qainuqa, were sentenced to expulsion from Medina for having openly and knowingly infringed

the terms of the contract. It was necessary to put an end to their hostile actions for the sake of maintaining peace and security. The Prophet had to go to their headquarters, where he required them to enter definitively into the Muslim commonwealth by embracing Islam or to leave Medina. To this they replied in the most offensive terms: "You have had a quarrel with men ignorant of the art of war. If you are desirous of having any dealings with us, we shall show you that we are men." They then shut themselves up in their fortress and set the Prophet and his authority with defiance. The Muslims decided to reduce them and laid siege to their fortress without loss of time. After fifteen days, they surrendered. Though the Muslims at first intended to inflict punishment on them, they contented themselves by banishing the Bani Qainuqa. The Bani An-Nadir had now behaved in the same way as Bani Qainuqa'. Likewise, knowingly and publicly, disregarded the terms of the Charter. The Prophet sent them a message similar to that which was sent to their brothers, the Qainuqa. Then, relying on the assistance of the Hypocrites' party, returned for a defiant reply. After a siege of fifteen days, they sued for terms. The Muslims renewed their previous offer, and the Jews of An Nadir chose to leave Medina. They were allowed to take with them all their movable property, with the exception of their arms. Before leaving Medina, they destroyed all homes and arms. A principle was henceforth adopted that any acquisition not made in actual warfare should belong to that state and that its disposal should be left to the discretion of the ruling authorities.

The expulsion of Bani Nadir took place in the fourth year of the hijrah. The remaining portion of this year and the early part of the next were passed in repressing the hostile attempts of the nomadic tribes against the Muslims and inflicting punishment for various murderous attacks on the Medina territories. Of this nature was the expedition against the Christian Arabs of Dumat Al Jandal (seven day journey to the south of Damascus), who had stopped the Medinites traffic with Syria and even threatened a raid upon Medina. They, however, fled on the approach of the Muslims, and the Prophet returned to Medina after concluding a treaty with a neighbouring chief, to whom he granted permission of pasturage in the Medinites territories. In the same year, the enemies of Islam made every possible attempt to stir up the tribes against the Muslims. The Jews also took an active, if hidden, part in those intrigues. An army of ten thousand well-equipped men, marched towards Medina under the command of Abu Sufyan. They encamped near Mount Uhud, a few miles from the city. The Muslims could gather only an army of three thousand men. Seeing their inferiority in numbers on the one hand, and the turbulence of the Hypocrites within the town on the other, they preferred to remain on the defensive. They dug a deep moat around the unprotected quarters of Medina and encamped outside the city with a trench in front of them. The Quaraiza, who possessed several fortresses at a short distance towards the south and were bound by the contract to assist Muslims against any raiders. These Jews, however, were induced by the idolaters to

violate their pledge and join the Quraish. As these Jews were acquainted with the Hypocrites within the walls of the city, they waited for an opportunity to play their part, the situation of the Muslims was most dangerous. The siege had already lasted for twenty days. The enemy made great efforts to cross the trench, but every attempt was fiercely repulsed by the small Muslim force. Disunion was now rife in the midst of the besieging army. Their horses were perishing fast, and provisions were becoming less every day. During the night, a storm of wind and rain caused their tents to be overthrown and their lights extinguished. Abu Sufyan and the majority of his army fled. The Muslims were satisfied with the failure of their enemies, but they could not help thinking that the victory was unsatisfactory as long as the Quaraiza, who had violated their sworn pledge, remained so near. The Muslims felt it their duty to demand an explanation of the violation of the pledge. This was utterly refused. Consequently, the Jews were besieged and compelled to surrender at discretion. They only asked that their punishment should be left to the judgment of Sa'd Ibn Mu'adh, the prince of the tribe of Aws. This chief, who was a fierce soldier, had been wounded in the attack, and, indeed, died of his wounds the following day. Infuriated by the treacherous conduct of Bani Quaraiza, he gave judgment that the fighting men should be put to death and the women and children should become the slaves of Muslims. The sentence was carried.

It was about this time that the Prophet granted the monks of the Monastery of St. Catherine, near Mount Sinai, his liberal charter by which they secured the Christians noble and generous privileges and immunities. He himself undertook and enjoined on his followers, to protect the Christians, to defend their churches and the residences of their priests and guard them from all injuries. They were not to be unfairly taxed; no bishop was to be driven out of his diocese; nor force a Christian to reject his religion; no monk was to be expelled from his Monastery; no pilgrim was to be stopped from his pilgrimage; nor were the Christian churches to be pulled down for the sake of building mosques or houses for Muslims. Christian women who were married to Muslims were to enjoy their own religion and not to be subject to compulsion or annoyance of any kind. If the Christians should need assistance for the repair of their churches or monasteries, or any other matter pertaining to their religion, the Muslims were to assist them. This was not to be considered as supporting their religion, but as simply rendering them assistance in special circumstances. Should the Muslims be engaged in hostilities with outside Christians, no Christian resident among the Muslims should be treated with contempt on account of his creed. The Prophet declared that any Muslim violating any clause of the charter should be regarded as a transgressor of Allah's commandments, a violator of His testament and neglectful of His faith. Six years had passed since the Prophet and his followers, fled their birthplace, Mecca. Their hearts began to yearn for their homes and for their Sacred House the Kaabah. As the season of the pilgrimage approached, the Prophet announced his intention to

visit the holy city, and numerous voices of his disciples responded to the call. Preparations were soon made for the journey to Mecca. The Prophet, accompanied by seven or eight hundred Muslims, Emigrants and Ansars, all totally unarmed, set out on the pilgrimage. The Quraish, who were still full of animosity towards the Muslims, gathered a large army to prevent them from entering Mecca and maltreated the envoy whom the Prophet had sent to ask permission to visit the holy place. After much difficulty, a treaty was concluded by which it was agreed that all hostilities should cease for ten years; that anyone coming from the Quraish to the Prophet without the permission of the guardian or chief should be given back to the idolaters; that any Muslim going over to the Meccans should not be surrendered; that any tribe desirous of entering into alliance, either with the Quraish or with the Muslims, should be at liberty to do so without disputes; that the Muslims should go back to Medina on the present occasion and stop advancing further; that they should be permitted in the following year to visit Mecca and to remain there for three days with the arms they used on journeys, namely, their scimitars in sheaths. The Treaty of Hudaibiyyah thus ended, the Prophet returned with his people to Medina.

At this time it was revealed to the Prophet that his mission should be universal. He dispatched several envoys to invite neighbouring sovereigns to Islam. The embassy to the king of Persia, Chosroes Parvis, was received with disrespect and abuse. He was haughtily amazed at the boldness of the Mecca fugitive in addressing him on terms of equality. He was so enraged that he tore up the Prophet's letter and dismissed the envoy. When the Prophet received information on this treatment, he calmly observed: "The Empire of Chosroes will be torn to pieces." The embassy to Heraclitus, the Emperor of the Romans, was received much more politely. He treated the ambassador with great respect and sent the Prophet a gracious reply to his message. Another envoy was sent to an Arab prince of the Ghassanite tribe. This prince, instead of receiving the envoy with any respect, cruelly murdered them. This act caused great distress among the Muslims, who considered it an outrage of international obligations. In the same year the Jews of Khaibar, a strongly fortified territory at a distance of four days' journey from Medina, showed implacable hatred towards the Muslims. United by alliance with the tribe of Ghatfan, as well as with other cognate tribes, the Jews of Khaibar made serious attempts to form a coalition against the Muslims. The Prophet and his followers were apprised of this movement and immediate measures were taken in order to repress any new attack upon Medina. An expedition of fourteen hundred men was soon prepared to march against Khaibar. The allies of the Jews left them to face the war with the Muslims all alone. The Jews firmly resisted the attacks of the Muslims, but eventually all their fortress had to surrender, one after the other to their enemies. They prayed for forgiveness, which was granted on certain conditions. Their lands and immovable property were secured to them, together with the free

practice of their religion. After subduing Khaibar, the Muslims returned to Medina in safety. Before the end of the year, it being the seventh year of the hijrah, the Prophet and his followers relieved themselves of their peace with the Quraish to visit the Kaabah. The Prophet, accompanied by two hundred Muslims, went to Mecca to perform the rites of pilgrimage. On this occasion the Quraish evacuated the city during the three days which the ceremonies lasted. In accordance with the terms of the treaty, the Muslims left Mecca at the end of three day's visit. This peaceful visit was followed by important conversions among the Quraish. Khalid Ibn Al-Walid, known as the Sword of Allah, who, before this, had been a bitter enemy of Islam and who commanded the Quraish cavalry at Uhud; and Amr Ibn Al' As, another important character and warrior, adopted the new faith.

When the Prophet and his followers returned to Medina, they arranged an expedition to retrieve retribution from the Ghassanite prince who had killed the Muslim envoy. A force of three thousand men, under the Prophet's adopted son Zaid, was sent to take reparation from the offending tribe. Khalid Ibn Al-Walid was one of the generals chosen for the expedition. When they reached the neighbourhood of Muta, a village to the southeast of the Dead Sea, they were met by an overwhelming force of Arabs and Romans who were assembled to oppose them. The Muslims were determined to push forward. Their courage was of no avail and they suffered great losses. In this battle Zaid and Jafar, a cousin of the Prophet, and several others were killed. Khalid Ibn Al-Walid, by a series of manoeuvres, succeeded in drawing off the army, conducting it without further loses to Medina. A month later, however, Amr Ibn Al-As marched unopposed through the lands of the hostile tribes, received their submission and restored the prestige of Islam on the Syrian frontier. About the end of the seventh year of the hijrah, the Quraish and their allies, Bani Bakr, violated the terms of the peace concluded at Hdaybiyyah by attacking Bani Khuzaah, who were in alliance with the Muslims. Bani Khuzaah appealed to the Prophet for help and protection. The Prophet was determined to stop the reign of injustice and oppression, which had lasted so long in Mecca. He immediately gathered ten thousand men to march against the idolaters and set out in January, 630. After eight days the Muslim army halted and arrived at Marr Az-Zahran, a day's journey from Mecca. On the night of their arrival, Abu Sufyan, who was delegated by the Quraish to ask the Prophet to abandon his project, presented himself and besought an interview. In the morning it was granted. "Has the time not come, O Abu Sufyan," said the Prophet, "for you to acknowledge that there is no deity except Allah and I am His Messenger?" Abu Sufyan, after hesitating for a while, pronounced the prescribed formula of belief and adopted Islam. He was then sent back to prepare the city for the Prophet's approach. Now great multitudes came to adopt Islam and take the oath of allegiance from the Prophet. For this purpose an assembly was held at As-Safa Mountain. Umar, acting as the Prophet's deputy

administered the oath, whereby the people bound themselves not to join any deity to Allah, and to obey the Prophet, abstain from theft, adultery, infanticide, lying and backbiting. Thus the prophecy embodied in the Surah Al Fatiha in the Quran, was fulfilled. During his stay in Mecca, the Prophet dispatched his principal disciples in every direction to preach Islam among the wild tribes of the desert and call them to the true religion of Allah. He sent his troops into the suburbs who destroyed the temples of Al Uzza, Suwaa and Manat, the three famous idols in the temples of the neighbouring tribes. The Prophet gave strict orders that these expeditions should be carried out in a peaceable manner. These injunctions were obeyed in all cases, with one exception. The troops under Khalid Ibn Al-Walid, the fierce newly-converted warrior, killed a few of the Bani Jazima. When the news of this bloodshed reached the Prophet, he was deeply grieved and exclaimed: "Oh, my Lord, I am innocent of what Khalid has done." He dispatched a large sum of money for the widows and orphans of the slain and severely rebuked Khalid.

At this time the tribes of Hawazin and Thakif showed unwillingness to render obedience to the Muslims without resistance. They formed a league with the intention of attacking the Prophet, but he was vigilant enough to frustrate their plan. A big battle was fought with this new enemy of Islam near Hunain, a deep and narrow valley, nine miles northeast of Mecca. The idolaters were defeated. One body of the enemy, consisting chiefly of the Thakif tribe, took refuge in their fortified city of Taif, which eight or nine years before had dismissed the Prophet from within its walls with injuries and insults. The remainder of the defeated forces, consisting principally of the Hawazin, took refuge at a camp in the valley of Autas. This camp was raided by the Muslim troops. The families of the Hawazin, their flocks, herds and all other effects, were captured by the troops of the Prophet. Taif was then besieged for a few days, after which the Prophet raised the siege, well knowing that the people of Taif would soon be forced by circumstances to submit without bloodshed. Returning to his camp where the prisoners of Hawazin were left safely, the Prophet found a deputation from this hostile tribe who begged him to set their families free. The Prophet replied that he was willing to give back his own share of those captives and that of the children of Abdul Muttalib, but could not force his followers to abandon the fruits of their victory. The disciples followed the generous example of their teacher. The hearts of several members of the Thakir tribe were so influenced by this that they offered their allegiance and soon became earnest Muslims. The Prophet now returned to Medina fully satisfied with the achievements of his mission.

The ninth year of the hijrah is known as the Year of Embassies, as being the year in which the various tribes of Arabia submitted to the claim of the Prophet and sent embassies to render homage to him. These tribes had been waiting for a war between Muhammad and the Quraish;

but the tribes, the whole nation and descendants of Ishmael, submitted, they were satisfied that it was not in their power to oppose Muhammad. The conquest of Mecca decided the fate of idolatry in Arabia. Now deputations began to arrive from all sides to render to follow Islam. The idolaters of Taif, the very people who had driven the Messenger of Islam from their midst with violence and contempt, now sent a deputation to pray for forgiveness and ask to be numbered among his followers. They begged, however, for temporary preservation of their idols. As a last appeal they begged for one month of grace only. But even that was not granted. The Prophet said, Islam and idols could not exist together. They then begged for exemption from the daily prayers. The Prophet replied that without devotion, religion would be nothing. At last they submitted to all that was required of them. They, however, asked to be exempted from destroying the idols with their own hands. This was granted. The Prophet selected Abu Sufyan and Mughira to destroy the idols of Ta'if, the chief of which was the notorious idol of Al-Lat. This was carried out amidst cries of despair and grief from the women of Taif.

Nevertheless, no restrictions were enforced against the idolaters from entering the Kaabah or performing their cursed rites within the sacred precincts. Towards the end of the ninth year of the hijrah, during the month of pilgrimage, Ali was delegated by the Prophet to read a proclamation that ran as follows: "No idolater shall after this year perform the pilgrimage; no one shall make the circuit of the Kaabah naked (such a disgraceful custom was practiced by the pagan Arabs); and treaty with the Prophet shall continue to be in force but four months are allowed for every man to return to his territories; after that there will be no obligation on the Prophet, except towards those with whom treaties have been concluded." The vast multitude who had listened to the above declaration returned to their homes, and before the following year was over, majority of them became Muslims. During the tenth year of the hijrah, as in the preceding one, numerous embassies continued to pour into Medina from all parts of Arabia, to testify to the allegiance of their chiefs and their tribes. Teachers were sent by the Prophet to different provinces to teach the new converts the principles and precepts of Islam. These teachers were given the following rules: "Deal gently with the people, and do not be harsh; cheer them, and do not look down upon them with contempt. You will meet with many believers in the Holy Scriptures, who will ask you: 'What is the key to heaven?' Answer them: The key to heaven is to bear witness to the divine truth and do well."

Thus, the mission of Prophet Muhammad was now accomplished; Idolatry was entirely destroyed. The people who were sunk in superstition, cruelty and vice in regions where spiritual life was utterly unknown, were now united in one bond of faith, hope and charity. The tribes which had been from the beginning of time engaged in perpetual wars were now united together by the ties of brotherhood, love and harmony. Henceforth, their aims were not

confined to this earth alone; but there was something beyond the grave, much higher, purer, and diviner, calling them to the practice of charity, goodness, justice and universal love. They could now perceive that Allah was not that which they had carved out of wood and stone, instead Allah, the Almighty, the most Loving and Merciful, was the Creator of the Universe.

On the return of the sacred month of pilgrimage, the Prophet, feeling his approaching end, determined to make a farewell pilgrimage to Mecca. In February 632, he left Medina with a very large crowd of Muslims. It is stated from ninety thousand to one hundred and forty thousand people accompanied the Prophet. Before completing all rites of the pilgrimage, he addressed the assembled multitude from the top of Mount Arafat in the following words:

"O people! Listen to my words, for I do not know whether another year will be granted to me after this year, and find myself among you. Your lives and property are sacred among you, until you appear before the Lord, just as this day and this month are sacred for all; and remember, you will have to appear before your Lord Who will demand from you an account for all your actions. O people, you have rights over your wives, and your wives have a right over you. Verily you have taken them on the security of Allah and have made their people lawful unto you by the words of Allah. And your slaves, see that you feed them with such food as you eat yourselves, and cloth them with what you wear, and if they commit a fault which you are not inclined to forgive, then part from them; for they are the servants of the Lord and are not to be harshly treated. O people, listen to my words and understand them. Know that all Muslims are brothers. You are one brotherhood; and no man should take from his brother, unless he consents. Keep yourselves from injustice. Let him who is present tell this to him who is absent. It maybe that he who is told this afterward may remember this better than he who has now heard it.

The Prophet concluded his sermon by exclaiming: "O Lord, I have fulfilled my message and accomplished my work." The assembled multitude, all in one voice, cried: "Yes, you have." The Prophet again exclaimed: "O Lord, I beg you, bear witness to it."

Having rigorously performed all ceremonies of the pilgrimage, so his example be followed by all Muslims for all succeeding ages, the Prophet returned with his followers to Medina. The eleventh year of the hijrah, being the last year of Muhammad's life, was spent in Medina. There he settled the organization of the provincial and tribal communities which had adopted Islam and become the component parts of the Muslims federation. More officers had to be deputed to the interior provinces for the purpose of teaching their inhabitants the precepts of the religion, administering justice and collecting Zakat. Muadh Ibn Jabal was sent to Yemen. On his departure, the Prophet enjoined him to use his own discretion in the event of him being

unable to find express authority in the Qur'an. Ali was deputed to Yamama in the southeast of the peninsula. To him the Prophet said: "Never decide between any two parties who come to you for justice unless you first hear both of them." The health of the Prophet grew worse. His last days were remarkable for the calmness and serenity of his mind. He was able, though weak and feeble, to lead the public prayers until within three days of his death. He requested to stay at Aisha's house close to the mosque during his illness, an arrangement which his other wives agreed. As long as his strength lasted, he took part in the public prayers. The last time he appeared in the mosque he addressed the congregation, after the prayer, in the following words, he said: "O Muslims, if I have wronged anyone of you, here I am to answer for it; if I owe anything to anyone, all I may happen to possess belongs to you." A man in the crowd rose and claimed three Dirhams which he had given to a poor man at the request of the Prophet. They were immediately paid back with these words: "Better to blush in this world than in the next."

The Prophet then prayed and implored Allah's mercy for those who had fallen in the persecution of their enemies. He recommended to all his followers, the importance to observe all religious duties and to lead a life of peace and goodwill. Then he spoke with emotion and with a voice still so powerful as to reach beyond the outer doors of the mosque: "By the Lord in Whose hand lies the soul of Muhammad as to myself, no man can lay hold on me in any matter; I have not made lawful anything except what Allah has made lawful nor have I prohibited anything that Allah in His Book has prohibited."

Then turning to the women who sat close by, he exclaimed: "O Fatimah, my daughter and Safia, my aunt, both of you, find acceptance with the Lord, for verily I have no power to save you in any way." He then rose and re-entered the house of Aisha. After this, the Prophet never appeared for public prayers. A few hours after he returned from the mosque, the Prophet died while laying his head on the bosom of Aisha. As soon as the Prophet's death was announced, a crowd of people gathered at the door of the house of Aisha, exclaiming: "How can our messenger be dead?" Umar said: "No, he is not dead; he will be restored to us, those are traitors to Islam, say he is dead." Abu Bakr entered the house at this moment, and after he touched the body of the Prophet with a demonstration of profound affection, he appear at the door and addressed the crowd with the following speech: "O Muslims, if anyone of you has been worshipping Muhammad, then let me tell you that Muhammad is dead. But if you really worship Allah then know that Allah is living and will never die. Have you forgotten the verse of the Qur'an: Muhammad is nothing more than a Messenger, and indeed (many) Messengers have passed away before him. If he dies or is killed, will you then turn your back on your heels as disbelievers? And he who turns back on his heels, not the least harm will he do to Allah,

and Allah will give reward to those who are grateful." Upon hearing Abu Bakr, Umar acknowledged his error, the crowd dispersed with satisfaction.

Al-Abbas, the Prophet's uncle, presided at the preparation for the burial, the body was washed and perfumed. There was some dispute between the Quraish and the Ansars as to the place of burial; however, Abu Bakr settled the dispute by affirming that he heard the Prophet say that a prophet should be buried at the very spot where he dies. A grave was dug within the house of Aisha, under the bed on which the Prophet died. The rites were performed by those who were present and the Prophet's body was buried. *May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.*