13043 - Ibraaheem (peace be upon him)

the question

Could you give us some information about the Prophet Ibraaheem (peace be upon him)?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Allah sent His Prophet Ibraaheem (peace be upon him) and ordained among his offspring Prophethood and the Book (al-'Ankaboot 29:27).

"And mention in the Book (the Quran) Ibraaheem (Abraham). Verily, he was a man of truth, a Prophet [Maryam 19:41 – interpretation of the meaning]

Allah guided Ibraaheem and honoured him with virtues and praiseworthy characteristics:

"Verily, Ibraaheem (Abraham) was an Ummah (a leader having all the good righteous qualities), or a nation, obedient to Allah, Haneef (i.e. to worship none but Allah), and he was not one of those who were Al-Mushrikoon (polytheists, idolaters, disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah, and those who joined partners with Allah).

(He was) thankful for His (Allah's) Favours. He (Allah) chose him (as an intimate friend) and guided him to a Straight Path (Islamic Monotheism — neither Judaism nor Christianity).

And We gave him good in this world, and in the Hereafter he shall be of the righteous"[al-Nahl 16:120-122 – interpretation of the meaning]

Ibraaheem (peace be upon him) was the father of the Prophets; no Prophet was sent after him but he was from among his descendents. He had two sons whom Allah chose to be Prophets. They were Ismaa'eel the grandfather of the Arabs, from among whose descendents Allah sent the

Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and Ishaaq whom Allah blessed with a Prophet called Ya'qoob, who was also known as Israa'eel, after whom Bani Israa'eel (the Children of Israel) and their Prophets were called.

The Quran refers to the fact that Ibraaheem was the father of the Prophets, when it says concerning Ibraaheem (interpretation of the meaning):

"And We bestowed upon him Ishaaq (Isaac) and Ya'qoob (Jacob), each of them We guided, and before him, We guided Nooh (Noah), and among his progeny Dawood (David), Sulaymaan (Solomon), Ayyoob (Job), Yoosuf (Joseph), Moosa (Moses), and Haaroon (Aaron). Thus do We reward Al-Muhsinoon (the good-doers).

And Zakariyya (Zachariya), and Yahya (John) and 'Eesa (Jesus) and Ilyaas (Elias), each one of them was of the righteous.

And Isma'eel (Ishmael) and Al-Yasaa' (Elisha), and Yoonus (Jonah) and Loot (Lot), and each one of them We preferred above the 'Aalameen [mankind and jinn (of their times)]"[al-An'aam 6:84-86]

Ibraaheem called his people in Mesopotamia to worship Allah alone and to stop worshipping the idols which could neither bring benefit nor cause harm. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And (remember) Ibraaheem (Abraham) when he said to his people: 'Worship Allah (Alone), and fear Him: that is better for you if you did but know.

You worship besides Allah only idols, and you only invent falsehood. Verily, those whom you worship besides Allah have no power to give you provision, so seek your provision from Allah (Alone), and worship Him (Alone), and be grateful to Him. To Him (Alone) you will be brought back'"[al-'Ankaboot 29:16-17]

Ibraaheem (peace be upon him) wanted to free his people from idol-worship and rid them of myths and legends. He asked his people about these idols, as Allah tells us (interpretation of the meaning):

“And recite to them the story of Ibraaheem (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 fathers doing so’”[al-Shu’araa’ 26:69-74]

Then he explained to them that they should not mindlessly follow others like dumb animals and clarified for them the ultimate reality which is that they should worship Allah alone, in Whose hand is the dominion of all things:

“He said: ‘Do you observe that which you have been worshipping

You and your ancient fathers?

Verily, they are enemies to me, save the Lord of the ‘Aalameen (mankind, jinn and all that exists),

Who has created me, and it is He Who guides me.

And it is He Who feeds me and gives me to drink.

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 me my faults on the Day of Recompense (the Day of Resurrection)’”[al-Shu’araa’ 26:75-82]

The father of Ibraaheem was one of the idol-worshippers. He used to carve them and sell them. His father’s disbelief troubled Ibraaheem, so he singled him out for advice and said to him:

“O my father! Why do you worship that which hears not, sees not and cannot avail you in anything?

O my father! Verily, there has come to me of the knowledge that which came not unto you. So follow me, I will guide you to the Straight Path”[Maryam 19:42-43 – interpretation of the meaning]

But his father did not respond to him, rather he threatened to stone him and forsake him. He said:

“Do you reject my gods, O Ibraaheem (Abraham)? If you stop not (this), I will indeed stone you. So get away from me safely (before I punish you)”[Maryam 19:46 – interpretation of the meaning]

So Ibraaheem had no choice but to leave him, and he said to him:

“Peace be on you! I will ask forgiveness of my Lord for you. Verily, He is unto me Ever Most Gracious[Maryam 19:47 – interpretation of the meaning]

Ibraaheem continued to ask for forgiveness for his father and to ask his Lord to guide him, but when it became clear to him that he (his father) was an enemy of Allah, he disavowed him and stopped asking for forgiveness for him. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And Ibraaheem’s (Abraham) invoking (of Allah) for his father’s forgiveness was only because of a promise he [Ibraaheem (Abraham)] had made to him (his father). But when it became clear to him that he (his father) is an enemy of Allah, he dissociated himself from him. Verily, Ibraaheem was Awwah (one who invokes Allah with humility, glorifies Him and remembers Him much) and was forbearing[al-Tawbah 9:114]

When the people of Ibraaheem persisted in worshipping idols, Ibraaheem wanted to prove to them in practical terms that these idols could not cause harm or bring benefit, after his preaching and teaching had no effect on his people:

“Then he cast a glance at the stars,

And he said: ‘Verily, I am sick (with plague). [He did this trick to remain in their temple of idols to

destroy them and not to accompany them to the pagan feast)].’

So they turned away from him, and departed (for fear of the disease).

Then he turned to their aalihah (gods) and said: ‘Will you not eat (of the offering before you)?

What is the matter with you that you speak not?’

Then he turned upon them, striking (them) with (his) right hand”

[al-Saaffaaat :88:93]

Ibraaheem broke all the idols except the biggest one, which he left so that they could ask it who had done this:

“So he broke them to pieces, (all) except the biggest of them, that they might turn to it”

[al-Anbiyaa’ 21:58 – interpretation of the meaning]

When they came back from the festival for which they had gone out, they saw the broken idols and they accused Ibraaheem (of breaking them). He said to them:

“Nay, this one, the biggest of them (idols) did it. Ask them, if they can speak!”

[al-Anbiyaa’ 21:63 – interpretation of the meaning]

Because they knew that these idols could not speak – for they were inanimate objects – they said to Ibraaheem:

“Indeed you [Ibraaheem (Abraham)] know well that these (idols) speak not!”

[al-Anbiyaa’ 21:65 – interpretation of the meaning]

When they admitted that these idols could do nothing, Ibraaheem said to them:

“Do you then worship besides Allah, things that can neither profit you, nor harm you?

Fie upon you, and upon that which you worship besides Allah! Have you then no sense?”

[al-Anbiyaa’ 21:67 – interpretation of the meaning]

When they had exhausted all lines of argument, they resorted to the use of force and said:

“Burn him and help your aalihah (gods), if you will be doing”

[al-Anbiyaa’ 21:68 – interpretation of the meaning]

They gathered a lot of wood and started a fire which had great sparks and flames, then they threw Ibraaheem (peace be upon him) into that fire. He said, “Hasbi Allah wa ni’am al-wakeel (Allah is sufficient for me and He is the best Disposer of affairs).” So Allah saved him from it and made it coolness and safety for him, and foiled the plot of his enemies:

“We (Allah) said: ‘O fire! Be you coolness and safety for Ibraaheem (Abraham)!’

And they wanted to harm him, but We made them the worst losers”

[al-Anbiyaa’ 21:69-70 – interpretation of the meaning]

After saving Ibraaheem from the fire, Allah commanded him to leave Mesopotamia and migrate to the Holy Land in Palestine. He married his cousin (the daughter of his paternal uncle) – Saarah – and set out with her and his brother’s son Loot for Syria, as Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And We rescued him and Loot (Lot) to the land which We have blessed for the ‘Aalameen (mankind and jinn)[al-Anbiyaa’ 21:71]

Then great hardship befell the land of Syria, so Ibraaheem moved to Egypt with his wife, then he came back to Palestine, bringing his wife and a slave woman of hers called Haajar. Ibraaheem longed to have children, but his wife was barren and had grown old. When she saw how much her husband longed to have a child, she gave her slave woman, Haajar, to him. So he married her and was blessed with his son Ismaa’eel from her:

“’My Lord! Grant me (offspring) from the righteous.’

So We gave him the glad tidings of a forbearing boy”

[al-Saaffaat 37:100-101 – interpretation of the meaning]

After Haajar gave birth to Ismaa’eel, Saarah began to feel jealous, so she asked Ibraaheem to send them away from her. Allah revealed to Ibraaheem that he should take Haajar and the infant Ismaa’eel and take them to Makkah. So he took them and left Haajar and her child Ismaa’eel in an bleak, isolated place in which there was no water, then he left them and went back to Palestine. Haajar said to him, “For whom are you leaving us in this forsaken valley?” But Ibraaheem went and left her, and she said, “Has Allah commanded you to do this?” He said, “Yes.” She said, “Then Allah will not cause us to be lost.”

Ibraaheem submitted to the command of his Lord and patiently bore the separation from his wife and child. Then he turned towards where they were at the Sacred House and prayed for them in the following words (interpretation of the meaning):

“O our Lord! I have made some of my offspring to dwell in an uncultivable valley by Your Sacred House (the Ka‘bah at Makkah) in order, O our Lord, that they may perform As-Salaah (Iqaamat-as-Salaah). So fill some hearts among men with love towards them, and (O Allah) provide them with fruits so that they may give thanks”[Ibraaheem 14:37]

Haajar stayed in Makkah, eating the food and drinking the water that Ibraaheem had left for her and her son. When that ran out, she and her son became thirsty. She looked for water, and climbed the hill of al-Safaa but she did not see anything. Then she climbed the hill of al-Marwah but she did not see anything. She did that seven times, then she turned towards Ismaa’eel and saw water gushing from beneath his feet. She rejoiced and drank some, and gave some to her son to drink. Then a tribe – Jurham – came to Haajar and asked her permission to settle by the water. She gave them permission and they settled beside her. When Ismaa’eel grew up, he married one of their women and learned Arabic from them.

During this period, Ibraaheem used to visit his son from time to time. On one of these visits, Ibraaheem saw in a dream that Allah was commanding him to sacrifice his son Ismaa'eel. The dreams of the Prophets are true, so Ibraaheem resolved to obey the command of Allah, even though he was old and Ismaa'eel was his only son. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"So We gave him the glad tidings of a forbearing boy.

And, when he (his son) was old enough to walk with him, he said: 'O my son! I have seen in a dream that I am slaughtering you (offering you in sacrifice to Allah). So look what you think!' He said: 'O my father! Do that which you are commanded, In sha' Allah (if Allah wills), you shall find me of As-Saabiroon (the patient).'

Then, when they had both submitted themselves (to the Will of Allah), and he had laid him prostrate on his forehead (or on the side of his forehead for slaughtering);

We called out to him: 'O Ibraaheem!

You have fulfilled the dream!' Verily, thus do We reward the Muhsinoon (good-doers).

Verily, that indeed was a manifest trial.

And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice (i.e. a ram)"

[al-Saffaat 37:101-107]

Then Allah gave him the glad tidings of another son, who was Ishaaq, and then Ibraaheem returned to Palestine:

"And We gave him the glad tidings of Ishaaq (Isaac) a Prophet from the righteous[al-Saaffaat 37:112 – interpretation of the meaning]

Ishaaq was born to him from his wife Saarah:

"And his wife was standing (there), and she laughed [either, because the messengers did not eat

their food or for being glad for the destruction of the people of Loot (Lot)]. But We gave her glad tidings of Ishaaq (Isaac), and after Ishaaq, of Ya'qoob (Jacob)"

[Hood 11:71 – interpretation of the meaning]

Then Ibraaheem stayed in Palestine for a while, then he returned to Makkah for an important reason. Allah had commanded him to build in Makkah the first House to be built for the worship of Allah. So Ibraaheem undertook this task of construction, and his son Ismaa'eel was lifting up the stones to him. When the walls grew higher, Ibraaheem stood on a rock, and this is the Station of Ibraaheem (Maqaam Ibraaheem) which is to be found in the vicinity of the Ka'bah. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And (remember) when Ibraaheem (Abraham) and (his son) Ismaaee'eel (Ishmael) were raising the foundations of the House (the Ka'bah at Makkah), (saying), 'Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us. Verily, You are the All-Hearer, the All-Knower'"

[al-Baqarah 2:127]

Allah commanded Ibraaheem and Ismaa'eel to cleanse the House of idols and other impurities so that it would be pure for those who would circumambulate it and stand and bow and prostrate (in prayer). When Ibraaheem built the House, Allah commanded him to call mankind to perform the Hajj, as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And proclaim to mankind the Hajj (pilgrimage). They will come to you on foot and on every lean camel, they will come from every deep and distant (wide) mountain highway (to perform Hajj)"

[al-Hajj 22:27]

Then Ibraaheem offered this great supplication for Makkah and for those who live in it:

"And (remember) when Ibraaheem (Abraham) said, 'My Lord, make this city (Makkah) a place of security and provide its people with fruits, such of them as believe in Allah and the Last Day.' He (Allah) answered: 'As for him who disbelieves, I shall leave him in contentment for a while, then I

shall compel him to the torment of the Fire, and worst indeed is that destination!’”

[al-Baqarah 2:126 – interpretation of the meaning]

Then he prayed for himself and his descendents, saying:

“Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us. Verily, You are the All-Hearer, the All-Knower.

Our Lord! And make us submissive unto You and of our offspring a nation submissive unto You, and show us our Manaasik (all the ceremonies of pilgrimage — Hajj and ‘Umrah), and accept our repentance. Truly, You are the One Who accepts repentance, the Most Merciful”[al-Baqarah 2:127-128 – interpretation of the meaning]

Then he prayed for the people of the sanctuary, that Allah would send to them a Messenger from amongst them, who would call them to worship Allah Alone. He said:

“Our Lord! Send amongst them a Messenger of their own, who shall recite unto them Your Verses and instruct them in the Book (this Quran) and Al-Hikmah (full knowledge of the Islamic laws and jurisprudence or wisdom or Prophethood), and purify them. Verily, You are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise”

[al-Baqarah 1:129 – interpretation of the meaning]

Allah responded to the prayer of His Prophet Ibraaheem. He made Makkah a place of security, He blessed its people with fruits and sent to them a Messenger from amongst themselves, who was the Seal of the Prophets and Messengers, Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). All praise and thanks be to Allah.

After Ibraaheem, Prophethood remained with the Children of Israel for a long time, until Allah sent Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) from among the descendents of Ismaa’eel as a Messenger to all of mankind, and commanded him as He said (interpretation of the meaning):

“Say (O Muhammad): ‘O mankind! Verily, I am sent to you all as the Messenger of Allah…’”[al-

A’raaf 7:158]

Allah commanded Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to follow the religion of Ibraaheem, as He said (interpretation of the meaning):

“Then, We have sent the Revelation to you (O Muhammad saying): ‘Follow the religion of Ibraaheem (Abraham) Haneef (Islamic Monotheism — to worship none but Allah) and he was not of the Mushrikoon (polytheists, idolaters, disbelievers)”[al-Nahl 16:123]

Ibraaheem’s advice to his children was to adhere to the religion of Islam and follow its commands until they died. Allah said (interpretation of the meaning):

“And this (submission to Allah, Islam) was enjoined by Ibraaheem (Abraham) upon his sons and by Ya‘qoob (Jacob) (saying), ‘O my sons! Allah has chosen for you the (true) religion, then die not except in the Faith of Islam (as Muslims — Islamic Monotheism)’” [al-Baqarah 2:132]

O Allah, send blessings upon Ibraaheem and upon the family of Ibraaheem, for You are Praiseworthy, Most Glorious.

Other Prophets who were alive at the time of Ibraaheem (peace be upon him) were Loot, Ismaa’eel, Ishaaq, and Ya’qoob. Then came Yoosuf, then Shu’ayb, then Ayyoob, then Dhu’l-Kifl. Then Allah sent Moosa and Haaroon (peace be upon them and may the best of blessings and peace be upon all the Prophets).