Prophet Ibrahim (A)

Prophet Ibrahim is one of the greatest Prophets of Allah. The Holy Qur'an says:

Ibrahim was certainly a model of faith for the people, obedient to Allah and upright, and was not an idolater but grateful to Him for His favors; so He chose him and guided him on the right path, and gave him what is good in this world, and in the hereafter he will be amongst the righteous ones. (Quran 16:120-122)

Prophet Ibrahim was born in Syria at the time when Namrud was the king. Namrud was a proud man and forced the people to believe in him as their god. Since the people were idolaters, who already worshipped idols of wood and stone, they willingly accepted him as their god. After some time, Allah decided to send Prophet Ibrahim to these people so they may be guided.

A short while before Prophet Ibrahim was born, Namrud was told by his astrologers that a child would soon be born, who would stand against him and tell the people to stop worshipping idols. After that warning, Namrud ordered that all newborn babies should be examined carefully to see if they showed any signs or miracles.

Prophet Ibrahim's mother had shown no signs of pregnancy when she carried him, so she knew that her baby was special. To protect him from Namrud's men, she hid the baby in a cave and returned to the town. Allah caused milk to flow from the fingers of Prophet Ibrahim and thus provided him with a source of food.

Prophet Ibrahim grew up outside the town for 13 years before his mother brought him to her home secretly. His father, Taraq, had already died, so Azar, his father's brother, adopted him. Azar was a famous sculptor who used to make idols out of stone. His sons used to sell these idols to the people. Azar gave Prophet Ibrahim the same job as his sons.

Even in his young age, Prophet Ibrahim already believed in Allah and he hated idols. On the first day of his job, he tied a rope around some idols and dragged them through the dirt to the market place. He then called to the people, "Come and buy these lifeless idols that can neither benefit nor harm anybody."

The people looked at the dirty idols and were angry at the disrespect that Prophet Ibrahim had shown to their gods. They complained to Azar and Prophet Ibrahim was not allowed to sell any more idols.

As time passed, Prophet Ibrahim tried to show the people the error of their ways. He first approached his uncle, who was like a father to him, and advised him to worship Allah and abandon the idols. The Holy Qur'an records his conversation with Azar in the following verses:
O my father! serve not the Shaitan, surely the Shaitan is disobedient to the Beneficent Allah:

O my father! surely I fear that a punishment from the Beneficent Allah should afflict you so that you should be a friend of the Shaitan.

He said: Do you dislike my gods, O Ibrahim? If you do not desist I will certainly revile you, and leave me for a time.

He said: Peace be on you, I will pray to my Lord to forgive you; surely He is ever Affectionate to me:  (Quran 19:44-47)

Although he was unsuccessful with Azar, Prophet Ibrahim did not lose hope and began preaching to the people. He used to tell them, "Can your idols hear you? Can they ever help you or harm you?"

They would say, "We worship them because our forefathers worshipped them."
Prophet Ibrahim would then teach them that only Allah, the Creator of the heavens and earth, should be worshipped.

Although the people could not answer Prophet Ibrahim's arguments against their idols, they were stubborn and only a few people listened to him and began worshipping Allah. Prophet Ibrahim then decided to show the people how useless their idols were by destroying them. He got his chance during the annual festival, which was held outside the town.

On the day of the festival, when all the people, young and old, had left the town, Prophet Ibrahim was alone. He went to the main temple where all the important idols were kept. He took an axe and broke all the idols except the largest one. The idols, which had been kept neat and tidy, now lay in pieces on the ground. Before he left the temple, Prophet Ibrahim put the axe in the hands of the largest, unbroken, idol.

The Holy Qur'an says:

When he (Ibrahim) said to his father and his people, "What are these images to which you turn (in devotion)?" They said, "We found our fathers (ancestors) worshipping them." He (Ibrahim) said, "Indeed you and your fathers were in a clear error." They said, "Have you really brought us the truth or are you only a joker?" He said, "No! Your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, Who has created them. And I am a witness to this (Truth). And, by God! I will plan against your idols when your backs are turned!" So he broke them into pieces, except the chief of them, so they could return to it."  (Quran 21:52-58)

Prophet Ibrahim had broken all the idols except the largest one in the main temple while the people were celebrating their festival outside the town. When they returned and found what had happened to their
gods, they were shocked and said, "Who has done this cruel thing to our lords?" One of them said, "It must be Ibrahim. He has always hated idol worship."

Prophet Ibrahim was brought to court to face trial for damaging the idols. When he was asked whether he was guilty he replied, "It must have been done by the biggest idol. Ask him about it." But the people said, "Our idols do not talk or answer questions." Now Prophet Ibrahim took the opportunity to make the people understand how useless their idols were. He said, "Shame on you! How can you worship pieces of wood and stone. They do not know anything and can neither harm nor benefit you." However, nobody was willing to listen to his words and he was declared guilty. The people began to shout, "Burn him alive! Let him be with his Lord."

Namrud decided to burn Prophet Ibrahim alive to please his idols. He ordered that wood be collected to make a huge bonfire. So much wood was brought that when the fire was lit, no one could get close enough to throw Prophet Ibrahim into it.

Namrud decided to build a large catapult and Prophet Ibrahim was thrown into the fire using this catapult. When Prophet Ibrahim was flying in the air towards the fire, the angel Jibraeel came to ask him if he needed his help. Prophet Ibrahim replied, "No I need help from Allah only."

The Holy Qur'an says:

They said, "Burn him to ashes if you want to help your gods." We (Allah) said, "O Fire, be cold and peaceful for Ibrahim." (Quran 21:68-69)

When Prophet Ibrahim landed in the fire he prayed to Allah to protect him. By Allah's command, the fire became cool and harmless. Namrud and his followers were amazed to see Prophet Ibrahim sitting calmly and comfortably in the middle of the burning fire. Many who saw this miracle realized the truth of his teachings but others, especially Namrud, remained proud and stubborn.

After a while, Prophet Ibrahim came out of the fire and met Namrud who told him, "You are creating confusion in my community by inviting them to worship another lord besides me. Tell me Who is your Lord?"

The Holy Qur'an says:

Have you thought about the one (Namrud) who argued with Ibrahim about his Lord, because Allah had given him the kingdom? Ibrahim said to him, "My Lord is He Who gives life and causes death." He (Namrud) said, "I (also) give life and cause death." (Then) Ibrahim said, "Allah makes the sun rise from the east, (why don't) you bring it from the west." Thus the unbeliever was baffled and Allah does not guide unjust people. (Quran 2:258)
Prophet Ibrahim told Namrud that Allah is the One who gives and takes away life. Namrud said, "I can also do that. If I call two prisoners who are going to be hanged, and let one go free and kill the other, I have given one life and the other death." Prophet Ibrahim replied, "No, you are only right if you bring the dead one back to life. Anyway, my Lord makes the sun rise in the east. If you are so powerful, make it rise from the west." Namrud could not reply to this argument and was defeated. However, he remained stubborn and did not accept the religion of Prophet Ibrahim.

Namrud knew that he could not harm Prophet Ibrahim, because he was under the protection of Allah. So he ordered Prophet Ibrahim to leave his kingdom and stopped everybody from following his religion. Prophet Ibrahim thus left his homeland with his family and sheep. He took with him his wife Sarah and his cousin Prophet Lut and left for Palestine.

Prophet Ibrahim had been told to leave the country by the king, Namrud. He took his family and left for Baytul Muqaddas in Palestine. His wife Sarah was a beautiful woman, so to guard her from the eyes of the people, he would put her in a box whenever they came to a town. When they were traveling in the middle of the desert, he would let her out.

After some time, they arrived in a new country, which was ruled by an Arab king. The guard at the border wanted to check the box in which Sarah lay hidden. Prophet Ibrahim told the guard, "You may suppose that the box is full of gold and silver and I will pay the tax for that, but do not open the box." However, the guard insisted that he had to see what Prophet Ibrahim was carrying and so he opened the box. When he saw Sarah, he took Prophet Ibrahim to the king.

When they came before the king, he was attracted to the beauty of Sarah and he reached out to touch her. Prophet Ibrahim prayed to Allah to protect the honor and dignity of his wife. At his prayer, the king's hand turned into a solid block of wood.

The king begged Prophet Ibrahim to pray to Allah to give him his hand back, saying that he would not look at Sarah again. Prophet Ibrahim prayed and the king's hand became normal again.

After talking for a while with Prophet Ibrahim, the king looked up at Sarah and could not resist making the same mistake as before. As he tried to touch her, his hand dried up like a piece of wood.

He turned to Prophet Ibrahim, once more begging for Allah's forgiveness and asking for his hand back. Prophet Ibrahim told him that he would pray for him one last time. He said, "O my Lord, if this man is truly sorry, then change his hand to its original form."
Through this prayer, the king was cured. He was impressed with the power of Prophet Ibrahim, and accepted his faith. He treated Prophet Ibrahim with great respect and presented him with a maid called Hagar, to serve Sarah, and allowed them to go wherever they wanted.

On his way to Baytul Muqaddas, Prophet Ibrahim came across a group of people who worshipped the stars. These people were called the Magi. He decided to guide them towards Allah. To teach them the error of their ways, he used a very polite way of approach. Prophet Ibrahim introduced himself as a star-worshipper also and then sat down at night to worship with them.

The Holy Qur'an says:

> We showed Ibrahim the kingdom of the heavens and the earth to strengthen his faith. When it became dark, he saw a star and said, "This is my Lord." But when it set, he said, "I do not love those who fade away." When he saw the moon rising, he said, "This is my Lord." And when it set he said, "Had my Lord not guided me I would certainly have gone astray." Then when he saw the sun rising he said, "This is my Lord, this is the greatest one" And then when it (also) set, he said, "O my people, I am not part of what you associate with God. (Quran 6:77-79)

Prophet Ibrahim got the people's attention by claiming that the star, then the moon, and finally, the sun, were his gods. But as each of these set, he turned away from them saying, "I am sick of these ever-changing creations. I believe in Allah, Who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. I do not belong to those who believe in partners to Allah or the idol-worshippers."

Although Prophet Ibrahim used this polite way of teaching and proved how useless their worship was, the Magi continued to argue with him. He said, "Why do you argue with me about Allah when He has guided me to the right path?" The people refused to believe his words and threatened to harm him and told him to be afraid of the revenge of the stars. Finally Prophet Ibrahim left these foolish people and continued on his way to Baytul Muqaddas.

Prophet Ibrahim and Sarah could not have any children and this made him very sad. Sarah then suggested that he marry her maid Hagar, and perhaps Allah would give them a child.

Prophet Ibrahim and Hagar were married and Allah blessed them with a son, Prophet Isma'il.

Five years later, Sarah also gave birth to a son, Prophet Ishaaq.

Prophet Ibrahim is called the father of the Prophets because from his son Prophet Isma'il came the Arab Prophets, including the Holy Prophet (S), and from his son Prophet Ishaaq came the Jewish Prophets, including Prophet Isa.
The title of Prophet Ibrahim was "Khalilullah", which means, "Friend of Allah". When the time came for his death, he told the angel who had come to take his soul, "Ask Allah, Does a friend take the life of his friend?" He meant that Allah should not order Prophet Ibrahim’s death because he was His friend. The angel of death, Israa’il, could not answer this question, so he returned to Allah, Who commanded him to go back to Prophet Ibrahim and say, "O Ibrahim, does a friend refuse an invitation to meet his friend?"