Prophet Ibrahim / Abraham (pbuh)

Some of the People of the Book stated that his name was Abraham Ibn Tarikh, Ibn Nahur, Ibn Sarough, Ibn Raghu, Ibn Phaligh, Ibn Aher, Ibn Shalih, Ibn Arfghshand, Ibn Sam, Ibn Noah.

They said that when Tarikh was seventy five years old, he had Abraham, Nahor (Nohour) 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 Chaldeans (Al Kaldanieen), also known as Babylonia. At that time some people worshiped idols of stone and wood; others worshiped the planets, stars, sun and moon; still others worshiped their kings and rulers.

Abraham was born into that atmosphere, into 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 the idols with his own hands. Some traditions claimed that Abraham's father died before his birth and he was raised by an uncle whom Abraham called father. Other traditions said that his father was alive and was named Azer.

Into that family 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 gave him wisdom from childhood. Allah the Almighty stated: Indeed We bestowed aforetime on Abraham his (portion of) guidance, and We were Well Acquainted with him (as to his Belief in the Oneness of Allah etc).
(Ch 21:51)

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 he 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 that these idols did not eat, drink or talk and they could not even turn themselves right side up if someone turned them upside 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 biggest gods which was of different kinds, qualities and shapes. Abraham, who 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 these 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 when he was grown. He wanted nothing more from his son that that he revere those statues, yet Abraham never stopped displaying his hatred and disdain of them.

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 worshiped 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 (i.e. Allah) and was astonished that these celestial bodies were worshiped 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 worshiped 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 like not that 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 up 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 Him Who has created the heavens and the earth Hanifan (Islamic Monotheism, i.e. worshiping none but Allah Alone) and I am not of the Al Mushrikeen (those who worship others besides Allah)."

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) except when my Lord (Allah) wills something. My Lord comprehends in His Knowledge all things. Will you not then remember?

"And how should I fear those whom you associate in worship with Allah (though they can neither benefit nor harm), while you fear not that you have joined in worship with Allah things for which HE has not sent down to you 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 confuse not their belief with Zulm (wrong, i.e. by worshiping others besides Allah), for them only 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. (Ch 6:75-83 Quran).

In that debate, Abraham clarified to his people that these celestial bodies do not serve as deities and cannot be worshiped 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 the night and the 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.
(Ch 41:37)

Abraham's reasoning helped to reveal the truth, and then the conflict between him and his people began for the worshipers of the stars and planets did not stand mute. They began arguing and threatening Abraham.

Abraham replied: "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 except when my Lord (Allah) wills something. My Lord comprehends in His Knowledge all things. Will you not then remember? How should I fear those whom you associate in worship with Allah (though they can neither benefit or harm), while you fear not that you have joined in worship with Allah things for which He has not sent down to you any authority. SO which of the two parties has more rights 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 confuse not their belief with Zulm (wrong by worshiping others besides Allah), for them only there is security and they are the guided."
(Ch 6:80-82)

The curtains are drawn on the first category of the people, those who were worshiping celestial bodies. The next situation reveals the second group, those who were practicing idolatry. Allah gave Abraham (pbuh) the reasoning he needed the first time and every time he argued with his people. Almighty Allah declared: And that was Our Proof which We gave Abraham against his people. We raised whom We will in degrees. Certainly your Lord is All Wise, All Knowing.
(Ch 6:83)

Abraham did his best to make his people heedful to the belief in the oneness of Almighty Allah and to the worship of Him alone. He bade them to firmly renounce the worship of idols. HE said to his father and his people: "What are these images, to which you are devoted?" they said:

"We found our fathers worshiping them." He said: "Indeed you and your fathers have been in manifest error." They said: "Have you brought us the truth, or are you one of those who play about?" He said: "Nay, your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, Who created them and of that I am of the witnesses." (Ch 21:52-56)

All was finished between Abraham and his people and the struggle began. The most amazed and furious was his father (or his uncle who had raised him), for as it is well known, he not only worshiped 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 worshiped lifeless idols who could not hear, see or protect him. before his father could become angry he hastily added: " O my father! Verily! There has come to me of knowledge that which came not unto you. So follow me. I will guide you to a Straight Path. O my father! Worship not Satan. Verily! Stan has been a rebel against the Most Beneficent (Allah). O my father! Verily! I fear lest a torment from the Most Beneficent (Allah) overtake you as that you become a companion of Satan (in the Hellfire)."

He (the father) said: "Do you reject my gods, O Abraham? If you stop not this, I will indeed 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 unto me, Ever Most Gracious. And I shall turn away from you and from those whom you invoke besides Allah." (Ch 19:43-48)

His father's harsh treatment did not stop Abraham from delivering the message of truth. Angry and sad to see people prostate before idols, he was determined to stamp out these practices and went to the town to debate with the people knowing full well that he might suffer harm.

Like a wise doctor searching for the cause of a sickness so as to prescribe the proper cure, or like a judge who questioned the accused sharply so that he mighty detect the truth. Abraham asked them: "Do the 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 worshiped 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 just 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; of 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 worshiping, You and your ancient fathers? Verily! They are enemies to me, save the Lord of the Alamin (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 Resurrection." (Ch 26:69-82 Quran).

In another surah The Almighty revealed: And remember 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 beside Allah have no power to give you provision, so seek your provision from Allah Alone, you will be brought back. And if you deny then nations before you have denied their Messengers. the duty of the Messenger is only to convey the Message plainly."

See they not how Allah originates creation, then will repent it. Verily, that is easy for Allah.

Say: "Travel in the land and see how Allah originated creation and then Allah will bring forth (resurrect) the creation of the Hereafter (i.e. resurrection after death) 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. And you cannot escape in the earth or in the heaven. And besides Allah you have neither any Wali (Protector, or guardian) nor any Helper. And those who disbelieve in the Ayat (proofs, lessons, signs, evidences, verses, revelations etc) 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. (CH 29:16-23 Quran)

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, guided him and provided him with food and drink and cured him when he was sick and Who will cause him to die and be raised up again. It was He to Whom Abraham prayed and Who would forgive his sins on the Day of Judgment. However, they would not give up but clung fast to idolatry.

Abraham left his father's house and abandoned his people and what they worshiped. He decides 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?" (Ch 37:91)

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?"
(Ch 37:92)

He then raised his axe and started smashing the false gods worshiped by the people. He destroyed them all except one on whose neck he hung the axe. After this his anger subsides and he felt at peace. He left the temple. He had fulfilled his vow to show his people a practical proof of their foolishness in worshipping something other than All.

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: "Then bring him before the eyes of the people, that 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): "Indeed you (Abraham) know well that these idols speak not?" Abraham said: "DO you then worship besides Allah, things that can neither profit you nor harm you? If upon you, and upon that which you worship besides Allah! Have you then no sense?" (Ch 21:59-67 Quran)

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 for 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 worshiping 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 usually do 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 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 descent 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 you coolness and safety for Abraham." (Ch 21:69 Quran)

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 was turned into coolness, making the air pleasant. Those who love Allah as Abraham do did not fear.

Allah declared: Those (believers) unto whom the people (hypocrites) said: "Verily! the people (pagans) have gathered against you (a great army), therefore, fear them." but it only increased them in Faith, and they said: Allah Alone is Sufficient for us, and He is the Best Disposer of affairs for us."

So they returned with Grace and Bounty from Allah. No harm touched them; and they followed the good Pleasure of Allah. Allah is the Owner of Great bounty. It is only Satan that suggests to you the fear of his Auliya (supporters and friends, polytheists, disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah and in His Messenger Muhammad) so fear them not but fear Me if you are true believers." (Ch 3:173-175 Qur'an)

The throng, the chiefs, and the priests sad watching the fire from a distance. It was burning their faces and nearly suffocating them. It kept burning for such a long time that the disbelievers thought it would never be extinguished. 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 heathens. They wanted to harm him, but We made them the worst losers.
(Ch 21:70)

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 a secret for fear of harm or death at the hands of the rulers.

Abraham had established a definite reasoning against idolaters. Nothing was left for him except to reason against the people who proclaimed themselves 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; then cause it you to rise from the west." So the disbeliever was utterly defeated. Allah guides not the people who are Zalimeen (wrongdoers etc). (Ch 2:258 Quran)

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 and 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 traveled with his wife and Lot to a city called Ur, then another called Haran, and then to Palestine.

Allah the Almighty told us: So Lut 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." (Ch 29:26)

After Palestine, Abraham traveled to Egypt, calling people to believe in Allah wherever he traveled, judging fairly between people, and guiding them to truth and righteousness.

Abu Hurairah narrated that Abraham (pbuh) did not tell a lie except on three occasions, twice for the sake of Allah (Exalted and Almighty) when he said: "I am sick," (when his people were holding a festival in honor of their gods, Abraham excused himself by saying he was sick. (Ch 37:89 Quran) and when he said: "(I have not done this but) the big idol has done it." The (third was) that while Abraham and Sarah (his wife) were going (on a journey), they passed by (the territory of) a tyrant. Someone said to the tyrant: "This man (Abraham is accompanied by a very charming lady." SO, he sent for Abraham and asked him about Sarah saying "Who is this lady?" Abraham said: "She is my sister." Abraham went to Sarah 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 have told him that you are my sister do not contradict my statement." the tyrant then called Sarah, and 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 for the second time, but his hand got as stiff as or stiffer than before and he was more confounded. He again requested Sarah: "Pray to Allah for me, and I will not harm you." Sarah asked Allah to again, and he became all right. He then called one of his guards who had brought her and said: "You have not brought me a human being but have brought me a devil." The tyrant then gave Hajar as a maid servant to Sarah. Abraham, gesturing with his hand, asked: "What has happened?" She replied: "Allah has spoiled the evil plot of the infidel or immoral person and gave me Hajar for service." Abu Hurairah then addressed his listeners saying: "That Hajar was your mother, O Bani Ma is Sama (Arab, the descendants of Ishmael, Hajar's son)."

Abraham's wife Sarah was sterile. She had been given an Egyptian woman Hajar, as a servant. Abraham had aged and his hair was gray and after many years spent in calling people to Allah. Sarah thought she and Abraham were lonely because she could not have a child. 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 worshiping Allah and calling people to monotheism, but he was journeying to Allah, knowing that his days on earth were limited and that they would be followed by death and finally resurrection. The knowledge of life after death filled Abraham with peace and love and certitude.

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 back the birds 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, but to be stronger in Faith." HE said: "Take four birds, the cause them to incline towards you (then slaughter them, cut them into pieces) and then put a portion of them on every hill and call them they will come to you in haste. And know that Allah is All Mighty and All Wise."
(Ch 2:260 Quran)