

Prophet Ishmael (PBUH)

One day, Abraham woke up and asked his wife Hajar to get her son and prepare for a long journey. In a few days, Abraham started out with his wife Hajar and their son Ishmael. 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 and came to an uncultivated valley having no fruit, no trees, no food, no water. The valley had no sign of life. After Abraham had helped his wife and child to dismount, he left them with a small amount of food and water which was hardly enough for two days. He turned around and walked away. His wife hurried after him asking: "Where are you going, Abraham, leaving us in this barren valley?"

Abraham did not answer her, but continued walking. She repeated what she said, but he remained silent. Finally, she understood 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 so?" He replied: "Yes." Then his great wife said: "We are not going to be lost, since Allah, Who has commanded you, is with us."

Abraham invoked Almighty Allah thus: "O our Lord! I have made some of my offspring to dwell in a valley without cultivation by thy Sacred House; in order O our Lord that they may establish regular prayer: so fill the hearts of some among men with love towards them and feed them with Fruits: so that they may give thanks. O our Lord! truly Thou dost know what we conceal and what we reveal: for nothing whatever is hidden from Allah whether on earth or in heaven."
(14: 37-38)

Ibn 'Abbas narrated: "The first lady to use a girdle was the mother of Ishmael. She used a girdle so that she might hide her tracks from Sarah (by dragging it). Abraham brought her and her son Ishmael, while she was suckling him, to a place near the Kaba under a tree on the spot of Zamzam, at the highest place in the mosque. During those days there was no body in Mecca, nor was there any water so he made them sit over there and placed near them a leather bag containing some dates and a small water-skin containing some water and set out homeward. Ishmael's mother followed him saying: "Oh Abraham! Where are you going leaving us in this valley where there is no person whose company we may enjoy, nor is there anything (to

enjoy)?" She repeated that to him many times, but he did not look back at her. Then she asked him: "Has Allah ordered you to do so?" He said: "Yes." She said: "Then He will not neglect us," and returned while Abraham proceeded onwards. On reaching the Thaniya where they could not see him, he faced the Ka'ba, and raising both hands, invoked Allah in saying the following prayers: "O our Lord! I have made some of my offspring to dwell in a valley without cultivation by thy Sacred House; in order O our Lord that they may establish regular prayer: so fill the hearts of some among men with love towards them and feed them with Fruits: so that they may give thanks."

Ibn 'Abbas's narration continued: "Ishmael's mother went on suckling Ishmael and drinking from the water (she had). When the water in the water-skin had all been used up, she became thirsty and her child became thirsty. She started looking at him (i.e. Ishmael) tossing in agony. She left him, for she could not endure looking at him, and found that the mountain of As-Safa was the nearest mountain to her on that land. She stood on it and started looking at the valley keenly so that she might see somebody, but she could not see anybody. Then she descended from 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-Marwa. There she stood and started looking, expecting to see somebody, but she could not see anybody. She repeated that (running between Safa and Marwa) seven times."

The Prophet Muhammad (as-PBUH) said: "This is the source of the tradition of the Sa'y the going of people between them (i.e. As-Safa and Al-Marwa). When she reached Al-Marwa (for 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 may be)! You have made me hear your voice; have you got something to help me?" 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 hand in this way, and started filling her water-skin with water with her hands, and the water was flowing out after she had scooped some of it."

The Prophet (PBUH) 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 from that water to fill her water-skin), Zamzam would have been a stream flowing on the surface of the earth."

The Prophet (PBUH) continued: "Then 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 (i.e. the Ka'ba) at that time was on a high place resembling a hillock, and hence torrents

came, they flowed to its right and left.

"She lived in that way till some people from the tribe of Jurhum or a family from Jurhum passed by her and her child, as they (i.e. the Jurhum people) were coming through the way of Kada'. They landed in the lower part of Mecca where they saw a bird that had the habit of flying around after 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 on 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: "Do 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, as she used to love to enjoy the company of people. So, they settled there, and later on they sent for their families, who came and settled with them so that some families became permanent residents there. The child (i.e. Ishmael) grew up and learned Arabic from them and (his virtues) caused them to love and admire him as he grew up, and when he reached the age of puberty they made him marry a woman amongst them"

The Prophet (PBUH) continued: "After Ishmael's mother had died, Abraham came after Ishmael's marriage in order to see his family that he had left before, but he did not find Ishmael there. When she asked Ishmael's wife about him she replied: "He has gone in search for our livelihood." Then he asked her about their way of living and their condition, and she replied: "We are living in misery; we are living in hardship and destitution," complaining to him. He said, "When your husband returns, convey my salutation 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 informed me, and he asked about our state of living, and I told him we were living in hardship and poverty." On that Ishmael said: "Did he advise you anything?" She replied: "Yes, he told me to convey my 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 (i.e. Jurhum).

"Then 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?" asking her about their sustenance and living. She replied: "We are prosperous and well-off (i.e.

we have everything in abundance)." 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."

The Prophet (PBUH) added: "At that time they did not have grain, and if they had grain, he would have also invoked Allah to bless it. If somebody has only two things as his sustenance, his health and disposition will be badly affected, unless he lives in Mecca."

The Prophet (PBUH) continued: "Then Abraham said to Ishmael's wife" 'When your husband comes, give my regards to him and tell him he should keep firm the threshold of his gate.'" When Ishmael came back, he asked his wife: "Did anyone call on you?" She replied: "Yes, a good looking old man came to me," so she praised him and added: "He asked about you and I informed him, he asked about our livelihood and I told him that we were in good condition." Ishmael asked her: "Did he give you any piece of advice?" She said: "Yes, he told me to give his regards to you and ordered that you should keep firm the threshold of your gate." On that Ishmael said: "It was my father, and you are the threshold (of the gate). He has ordered me to keep you with me."

"Then 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 Zam-Zam, sharpening his arrows. When he saw Abraham, he rose up to welcome him (and they greeted each other as a father does with his son or a son does with his father). 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.

"Then they raised the foundations of the House (i.e. the Ka'ba). Ishmael brought the stones while Abraham built, and when the walls became high, Ishmael brought this stone and put it for Abraham, who stood over it and carried on building. When Ishmael was handing the stones, and both of them were saying: "Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us for thou art the All-Hearing the All-Knowing." (Surah 2: 127). Then both of them went on building and going round the Ka'ba saying: "Our Lord! accept (this service) from us for thou art the All-Hearing the All-Knowing." (Sahih Al-Bukhari)

Ibn 'Abbas narrated a slightly different version: "When Abraham had differences with his wife (because of her jealousy of Hajar, Ishmael's mother), he took Ishmael and his mother and went

away. They had a water-skin with them containing some water. Ishmael's mother used to drink water from the water-skin so that her milk would increase for the child. When Abraham reached Mecca, he made her sit under a tree and afterwards returned home. Ishmael's mother followed him, and when they reached Kada', she called him from behind: "O Abraham! To whom are you leaving us?" He replied: "(I am leaving you) to Allah's (care). She said: "I am satisfied to be with Allah". She returned to her place and started drinking water from the water-skin, and her milk increased for her child.

"When the water had all been used up, she said to herself: "I had better go and look so that I may see somebody." She ascended As-Safa Mountain and looked, hoping to see somebody but in vain. When she came down to the valley, she ran till she reached Al-Marwa Mountain. She ran to and from (between the two mountains) many times. Then she said to herself: "I had better go and see the state of the child." She went and found it in a state of one on the point of dying. She could not endure to watch it dying and said (to herself): "If I go and look, I may find somebody." She went and ascended Al-Safa and Al-Marwa. Again she said (to herself): "I had better go back and see the state of the child." But suddenly she heard a voice, and she said to that strange voice: "Help us if you can offer any help." Lo! It was Gabriel (who had made the voice). Gabriel hit the earth with his heel like this (Ibn' Abbas hit the earth with his heel to illustrate it), and so the water gushed out. Ishmael's mother was astonished and started digging."

Abu Al-Qasim, i.e. The Prophet (PBUH) said: "If she had left the water, (flow naturally without her intervention), it would have been flowing on the surface of the earth."

Ibn Abbas continued narrating: "Ishmael's mother started drinking from the water, and her milk increased for her child. Afterwards some people of the tribe of Jurhum saw some birds while passing through the bottom of the valley and that astonished them. They said: "Birds can only be found at a place is water." They sent a messenger, who searched the place and found water, and returned to inform them about it. Then they all went to her and said: "O Ishmael's mother! Will you allow us to be with you (or dwell with you)?" (And thus they stayed there).

"Later on her boy reached the age of puberty and married a lady from them. Then an idea occurred to Abraham, which he disclosed to his wife (Sarah) "I want to call on my dependents I left (at Mecca)." When he went there he greeted Ishmael's wife and said: "Where is Ishmael?" She replied: "He has gone out hunting." Abraham said to her: "When he comes tell him to change the threshold of his gate." When Ishmael came, she told him the same, whereupon Ishmael said to her: "You are the threshold, so go to your family (i.e. you are divorced).

"Again Abraham thought of visiting his dependents whom he had left (at Mecca), and he told his wife (Sarah) of his intentions. Abraham came to Ishmael's house and asked: "Where is Ishmael?" Ishmael's wife replied: "He has gone out hunting," and added "Will you stay (for some time) and have something to eat and drink?" Abraham asked: "What is your food and what is your drink?" She replied: "Our food is meat and our drink is water". He said: "O Allah! Bless their meals and their drink."

Abu Al-Qasim, i.e. Prophet (PBUH) said: "Because of Abraham's invocation there are blessings (in Mecca)"

Ibn Abbas continued: " Once again Abraham thought of visiting his family he had left (at Mecca), so he told his wife (Sarah) of his decision. He went and found Ishmael behind the Zam-zam well, mending his arrows. He said: "O Ishmael, your Lord has ordered me to build a house for Him." Ishmael said: "Obey (the order of) your Lord." Abraham said: "Allah has ordered me that you should help me therein." Ishmael said: "Then I will do so." So both of them rose and Abraham started building (the Ka'ba) while Ishmael went on handing him the stones, and both of them were saying: ""Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us for thou art the All-Hearing the All-Knowing."

When the building became high and the old man (Abraham) could no longer lift the stones (to such a high position) he stood over the stone of Al-Maqam and Ishmael carried on handing him the stones, and both of them were saying: "Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us for thou art the All-Hearing the All-Knowing." Allah the Almighty told us of Abraham's affliction with his beloved son: (and he said after rescue from the fire) "He said: "I will go to my Lord! He will surely guide me! O my Lord! grant me a righteous (son)! So We gave him the good news of a boy ready to suffer and forbear. Then when (the son) reached (the age of) (serious) work with him he said: "O my son! I see in vision that I offer thee in sacrifice: now see what is thy view!" (The son) said: "O my father! do as thou art commanded: thou wilt find me if Allah so wills one practicing Patience and Constancy! So when they had both submitted their wills (to Allah) and He had laid Him prostrate on his forehead (for sacrifice). We called out to him "O Abraham! Thou hast already fulfilled the vision!" thus indeed do We reward those who do right. For this was obviously a trial And We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice: And We left (this blessing) for him among generations (to come) in later times: Peace and salutation to Abraham! Thus indeed do We reward those who do right. For he was one of Our believing Servants." (Surah 37:99-111)

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 for his countless blessings. A big tear dropped from his eyes and reminded him of Ishmael.

In the meantime, three angles descended to the earth: Gabriel, Israphael, and Michael. They came in human shape and saluted Abraham. Abraham rose and welcomed them. He took them inside his tent, thinking they were strangers and guests. He seated them and made sure they were comfortable, then excused himself to go to his people.

His wife Sarah arose when he entered. She had become old and white haired. Abraham said to her: "We have three strangers in the house." "Who are they?" she asked. "I do not know any of them," he answered. "What food have we got?" Abraham asked. "Half a sheep," she replied. "Half a sheep! 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 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 their food. He said to them: "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 to eat food but you do not stretch out your hands to eat. Do you intend me evil?"

One of the angels smiled and said: "We do not eat. We are Allah's angles." One of them then turned towards his wife and conveyed the glad tidings about Isaac (Ishaaq).

Almighty Allah revealed: "There came Our Messengers to Abraham with glad tidings. They said "Peace!" He answered "Peace!" and hastened to entertain them with a roasted calf. But when he saw their hands went not towards 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 Lut." And his wife was standing (there) and she laughed: but We gave her glad tidings of Isaac and after him of Jacob. She said: "Alas for me! Shall I bear a child seeing I am an old woman and my husband

here is an old man? That would indeed be a wonderful thing!" they said: "Dost thou wonder at Allah's decree? The grace of Allah and His blessings on you O ye people of the house! for He is indeed worthy of all praise full of all glory!" (Surah 11: 69-73).