

## **Muhammad and Abraham**

**Abraham** is considered as the father of prophets in the Jewish, Christian and Islamic religions because most of the known prophets were from his offspring. Muslims believe that prophet Muhammad is his descendent through his first son Ishmael who was also the father of many Arab tribes. On the other hand, the nation of Israel and many prophets such as Jacob, Joseph, Aaron and Moses have descended from his second son Isaac. The Quran frequently mentioned the story of Abraham, who used personal observation, reason and common sense to search for the truth. He recognized that God cannot be the sun, or the moon or any idol or creature. God is the creator of the universe and all beings. He is the only deity that is worthy to be worshipped. He is one and He has no partners. Abraham dedicated his life and struggled to teach people monotheism. He practically proved his sincerity, honesty, thankfulness and obedience to God. He presented one of the greatest and most memorable examples in the history for full submission to One God, the Lord of lords and all beings.

Who is better in religion than the one who submits him / herself to Allah (surrender his/her purpose to God) while being a doer of good and follows the religion of Abraham (tradition inclining towards truth, the upright)? And Allah chose Abraham as an intimate friend. The Quran, 4:125

Abraham was a man of truth who showed an exemplar obedience to God, therefore, according to the Quran, God chose Abraham as a friend and as one of the elite in the world and among the righteous in the Hereafter (Quran, 4:25, 2:130). God guided him to the right religion and made him an "Imam" i.e. a leader for people (Quran, 2:124) and described him as a nation (Quran, 16:120). Abraham is revered by Muslims as the person who gave them their name as "Muslims" (i.e. those who believe in One God and submit to Him) (Quran, 22:78).

"Abraham was neither a Jew, nor a Christian; but he was "Musliman Hanifan" an upright man who had surrendered and sincerely submitted to Allah (God), and he was not of the idolaters" The Quran, 3:67

It is believed that the first building for worshipping one God was established when Adam first descended on the earth. Muslims believe that the most important person who rebuilt this building and raised its walls was Prophet Abraham together with his son Ishmael. The building is cubical in shape and it is called "Ka'bah". It is located in Makkah, which is currently in Saudi Arabia. God imposed a duty upon Abraham and his son to purify the Ka'bah for those who pray, meditate and prostrate to Him. God made it a place of worship, and a sanctuary (a safe place and a resort) for the people.

### **Abraham and Ishmael's supplication**

"Our Lord! make us submissive unto You and of our Seed (descendants) a nation submissive unto You, and show us our ways (rites) of worship, and accept our repentance. You are the Most Forgiving the Most Merciful" The Quran, 2:128

**The Sacred Mosque** (Al Masjid Al-Haram) in Mecca (Makkah), Saudi Arabia. This is the holiest Mosque in Islam. The black building is the Ka'bah. Muslims believe God commanded Prophet Abraham to establish the Ka'bah to glorify and worship Him (The One God). When Muslims pray to God, they direct their faces (from all over the world) toward the Ka'bah.

Prophet Muhammad indicated that praying in the Sacred Mosque (God's house of worship) is highly rewardable. The reward for one prayer in the Sacred Mosque is equivalent to the reward of 100,000 prayers.

**Hajj** Every year, more than three million Muslims perform pilgrimage "Hajj" to the Sacred places in Makkah. It is the fifth pillar of Islam that must be done once in a lifetime by those who have the financial and health capabilities to perform it. Muhammad taught people how to perform Hajj, which mainly contains Abrahamic rites. He circumambulated the Ka'bah, i.e. walked around it in circles. This is commonly known "Tawaf". Please remember Ka'bah is the cubical building established by Abraham as the House of God. Circumambulation is performed seven times and goes counterclockwise as an act of submission to God, which is also harmonious with the motion of the planets and even the electrons.

Then Muhammad prayed behind Abraham's station. Currently it is an enclosure that contains Abraham's footprint on a piece of rock. Muslims call it Maqam Ibrahim.

Then Muhammad walked between the Safa and Marwa hills, the same place Hagar walked thousands of years ago searching for water after her husband Abraham left her there with their son Ishmael. Abraham asked her to stay there as an act of obedience and submission to God's Command Who wanted the place to become a sanctuary and a place of worship. The distance between these two hills is approximately 395m. This Hajj rite is called "Sa'ee" i.e. a brisk walk between Safa and Marwa hills that resembles the walk of Hagar in the same place.

Also, Sa'ee resembles the daily motion, activities, actions and efforts a person performs during his / her life. These deeds should be for good, benevolent and useful goals that add positive values to the world and humanity.

**Sa'ee** consists of 7 laps (with a total distance of 2.76 Km) starting from Safa and finishing at Marwa. In addition to other Hajj rites, Muhammad went to a place currently known as "Jamarat" in a town called Mina (8 Km east of Makkah). There he threw stones in resemblance of Abraham's act, when he stoned the satan who appeared to him as an old man trying to dissuade him from slaughtering his son as a sacrifice to God. Abraham stoned the satan several times. When Muslims perform the same act, they in fact challenge the satan and the inner evil desires within themselves.

Finally, as God saved Abraham's son and instead substituted a ram, Muhammad taught Muslims to provide a sacrifice to God by slaughtering a sheep or a goat as a symbol of Abraham's sacrifice, and divide the meat among the poor.

Muhammad taught Muslims to dedicate a supplication for Abraham and his family in every prayer of the daily five prayers. Also, it is worth mentioning that Muhammad named one of his children "Ibrahim", who died in his childhood.

"Say (O Muhammad): My Lord has guided me to a straight path, a correct (right) religion, the way and community of Abraham, the upright way inclining towards the truth and he was not an idolater (he didn't associate others with God)" The Quran, 6:161