

Ibrahim and the Idol-Worshippers

Ibrahim's Childhood

Ibrahim (alayhis salam) was born into that time, place, and household in which the head of the family was not only an idol-worshipper, but was one who totally rejected Allah and who used to make idols with his own hands. Ibrahim's father's name was Azar; he was the idol-maker, idol-seller and idol-worshipper.

Azar's son, Ibrahim was an intelligent boy. Allah had enlightened his heart and mind and had granted him wisdom from childhood.

Allah Ta`ala said:

"Indeed We gave Ibrahim his (portion of) guidance from before, and We were well acquainted with him (as to his Belief in the Oneness of Allah etc). (21:51)

During his early childhood Ibrahim (alayhis salam) 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. Ibrahim (alayhis salam) was astonished and he immediately 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. Ibrahim 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 Ibrahim laugh; he was only seven years old at that time.

Ibrahim's Hatred for Idols

Years passed and Ibrahim (alayhis salam) 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?

Ibrahim's people had a big temple full of idols, in the middle of which was a place for the biggest gods which was of different kinds, qualities and shapes. Ibrahim, 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 Ibrahim, 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 than that he look after those statues, yet Ibrahim never stopped displaying his hatred and dislike of them.

Ibrahim Ponders About Allah

One night Ibrahim (alayhis salam) 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 worshipped 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 things were worshipped by men when they had been created to worship and obey their Creator, appearing and disappearing at His command.

Ibrahim Explains to the Star-Worshippers

Ibrahim addressed his people who worshipped the stars, sun and moon. Allah Ta`ala mentions their discussion in the Qur'an:

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 wholeheartedly and I am not of the Mushrikeen (those who worship others besides Allah)."

In that debate, Ibrahim clarified to his people that these things cannot be worshipped as partners with Allah the Almighty. These things 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 Ta`ala does not lose sight of anything, and nothing can be hidden from Him. He is without end, everlasting without disappearance. There is nothing worthy of worship but Allah.

Ibrahim made clear to them, first that the stars, sun and moon are not worthy of worship and second that they are among the signs of Allah.

Allah commanded:

"And from among His Signs are the night and the day, and the sun and the moon. Do not prostrate to the sun nor to the moon, but prostrate to Allah Who created them if you really worship Him. (41:37)

Ibrahim 's reasoning helped to reveal the truth, and then the conflict between him and his people began because the worshippers of the stars and planets did not like Ibrahim's advice. They began arguing and threatening Ibrahim.... *(to be continued....)*

