

An Account of Ibrahim and his righteous sons

[Merits of Ibrahim and his perfect Morals](#)

Through authentic chains it is narrated from Imam Musa ibn Ja'far that Ibrahim was fifteen years old when he acquired perfect morals and divine recognition. It is related from the Holy Prophet that, "I would be the first one to be summoned on the Resurrection Day and I shall go and stand on the right of the throne. I would be made to wear a green garment of Paradise. Then my forefather Ibrahim and my brother 'Ali shall be summoned. They would stand on the right side of the throne under its shade and would also be given green garments of Paradise. A caller will raise a cry in front of the Divine Throne: "O Muhammad! How virtuous is your forefather Ibrahim and how virtuous is your brother, 'Ali."

Authentic tradition from Imam Musa ibn Ja'far says, "The Almighty Allah has required four things from everyone. He has appointed Ibrahim, Dawud and Musa for Jihad and sword fighting and he has appointed me for dwellers of house, as mentioned in the Holy Qur'an that Allah gave superiority to Adam, Nuh, the family of Ibrahim and the family of 'Imran over the whole world.

Amir al-Mu'minin says that Ibrahim is from those Prophets who were born circumcised. And he was the first one to command the people regarding circumcision.

According to authentic traditions Ibrahim is the first person who hosted guests and got grey hair in his beard. He asked the Almighty as to what it was. The Almighty revealed, "It is the dignity of this world and the light (noor) of the hereafter." In certain ayats the Almighty has referred to Ibrahim as his 'Khalil' (friend). 'Khalil' is one who does not allow any type of 'Khalal' (deficiency) in fulfilling the rights of friendship. In this way the Almighty appointed him as His friend. Many traditions have been mentioned in this regard. One of such traditions is related through reliable sources from Imam al-Ridha.

The Almighty Allah appointed Ibrahim as His friend because he did not spun the request of anyone and himself never asked anyone but Allah.

According to correct chains Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq is reported to have said, "The Almighty Allah made

Ibrahim His friend because he prostrated much (for Allah).”

Reliable sources report Imam ‘Ali al-Naqi said that Allah appointed Ibrahim as His friend because he frequently recited Salawaat on Muhammad and the family of Muhammad. According to the Holy Prophet Allah made Ibrahim His Khalil because he used to feed the people and pray at night when people were asleep.¹

A reliable report from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir says, “When Allah the Almighty appointed Ibrahim as His Khalil, He sent a handsome youth in white garments – who was actually the angel of death – to convey the good news to Ibrahim. When he came to deliver the good news, oil and water was dripped from his hair. When Ibrahim returned home he saw someone leaving his house. Now Ibrahim was a very modest person. Whenever he went out he used to shut his door, lock it and carry the keys with him. That day he had gone on some errand when upon his return he saw this young man standing in his house. He said, ‘Creature of Allah! Who gave you permission to enter my house?’

‘The Master of the house,’ replied the man.

‘Indeed my Master has a greater right than me. But who are you?’ asked Ibrahim

‘I am the angel of death.’

Ibrahim became afraid. ‘Have you come to capture my soul?’ He asked.

‘No! The Almighty has appointed a certain person as His friend. I have come to convey this good news to him.’

‘Who is that fortunate person? May be I shall spend my life in his service,’ asked Ibrahim.

‘Ibrahim, you are that fortunate one.’ When Ibrahim heard this he was exhilarated. He rushed to Sarah and said, ‘Allah has appointed me as His Khalil.’”

Through reliable reporters we have a tradition from Imam Ja‘far as-Sadiq that he said, “When the Almighty sent angels, His messenger to destroy the people of Lut, Ibrahim brought for them roasted meat of calf. They said, ‘We shall not partake of it until you inform us of its cost.’

Ibrahim said, ‘Recite Bismillah (In the name of Allah) before you begin and Alhamdulillah (Praise be to Allah) after you finish. This is the compensation.’”

Archangel Gabriel told four of his deputies: “Ibrahim deserves that Allah appoint him as His Khalil.”

Imam Ja‘far as-Sadiq says that when Ibrahim was thrown into the fire Archangel Gabriel met him in the air as he was descending towards the inferno. Archangel Gabriel asked him if he had any wishes.

“Not from you!” said Ibrahim

Another authentic tradition from Imam Ja‘far as–Sadiq says:

Ibrahim was the first person for whom the desert sand turned into flour. It was when he had gone to Egypt to one of his friends to borrow some food grains, but did not find him home. Ibrahim did not like that he should take back his beasts of burden empty. So he filled the sacks with sand. When he reached home, he sent the loaded animals inside to Sarah and he went to sleep in a secluded place. Sarah opened the sacks to find the best quality flour. She prepared leavened breads and carried them to Ibrahim.

“Where did you get these breads from?” asked Ibrahim.

“They are prepared from the same flour that you brought from your Egyptian friend.”

“Indeed one who gave me this flour is my friend but not that Egyptian friend (Khalil),” said Ibrahim. It was for this reason that Allah appointed him as His Khalil.

Thus Ibrahim thanked the Almighty and consumed his food.

According to an authentic tradition of Imam Ja‘far as–Sadiq on the Resurrection Day Muhammad al–Mustafa shall be summoned, given a pink dress and made to stand at the right of the throne (the Holy Throne). Then Ibrahim would be summoned, given a white garment and made to stand on the left of the throne (the Holy Throne). Then ‘Ali will be called, given a crimson garment and made to stand at the right of the Holy Prophet. Isma‘il would be called, given a white garment and made to stand as the right of Ibrahim. After this Imam Al–Hasan shall be summoned. He would be given a crimson dress and made to stand on the right of Amir al–Mu‘minin ‘Ali. Next, Imam al–Husayn shall be called, offered a crimson garment and made to stand at the right of Imam Al–Hasan, One by one all the Imams shall be called, made to dress in a red garment and stand to the right of their respective predecessors. After this the Shi‘ahs of the Imams shall be summoned and made to stand facing them. Finally, Fatimah al–Zahra’ will come with the women and children of their Shi‘ahs and they would enter Paradise in large numbers. Then by the command of Allah, a crier will call out from the middle of the Holy Throne: O Muhammad! How virtuous is your forefather Ibrahim and your brother ‘Ali, how virtuous he is! And how virtuous are your grandsons; Hasan and Husayn. And how virtuous is your grandson, Mohsin who was martyred in the womb, and Imam Zayn al–‘abidin until the last Imam – how meritorious is your progeny! How virtuous are the guiding Imams and how fortunate your Shi‘ahs. Indeed! Muhammad, his legatee (‘Ali) and their progeny of holy Imams – all of them are the successful ones.”

Then they shall be made to enter Paradise. This is the interpretation of the Almighty’s statement,

“Those who are removed far from Hell–fire and made to enter the gate of Paradise. Indeed they are the successful ones.”

It is related from Imam Al–Hasan that Ibrahim had a broad chest and high forehead.

The Messenger of Allah is quoted to have said that “Whosoever desires to see Ibrahim, should look at me.” A authentic tradition from Imam Ja‘far as-Sadiq says that prior to Ibrahim people never had gray beard. One day Ibrahim notice a white hair in his beard. ‘What is this?’ Ibrahim asked his Lord. The Almighty revealed that it was a mark of dignity.

“My lord! Increase me in dignity,” prayed Ibrahim.

By authentic chains Imam Muhammad al-Baqir says, “Ibrahim awoke one morning to find a gray hair in his beard.”

“*Alhamdulillah* (Praise be to Allah!)” he exclaimed, “that He has made me reach this age and I have not disobeyed Him even for a blink of an eye.”

According to a reliable tradition from Amir al-Mu‘minin ‘Ali in the ancient times no matter how old a person became he never had any gray hair either in his beard or his head. If sons, fathers and grandfathers gathered at a place no one could distinguish among them. Strangers had to enquire as to who the father was and who the son was. When Ibrahim prayed to the Almighty to bestow him with a sign by which he could be distinguished, the hair of his beard and head turned gray.

In a certified tradition, Muhammad bin Arfa asked Imam Ja‘far as-Sadiq, “There are some people who assert that after executing his own circumcision, Ibrahim threw the scalpel in a pond?”

“It is not so!” said Imam, “These people make allegations regarding a Prophet. The foreskin of the Prophets and the stub of umbilical cord fall away on the seventh day of their birth.”

Another tradition says that Ibrahim was very particular in entertaining guests. One day some guests arrived while he had nothing to offer them. Ibrahim thought that if he sold some wood to the wood cutter he would carve idols from it so that was out of question. Meanwhile he housed the guests in the guest room. Then taking a bag with him he went to the desert and prayed two Rak’ahs (units) prayers. After the prayers he found the bag missing. Upon his return he found Sarah cooking something. He asked her as to how she had obtained the ingredients. She said they were the same that a person delivered on his directions. Actually the Almighty had ordered Archangel Gabriel to pick up the bag where Ibrahim had prayed and to fill it with sand and stones. Then He converted the sand into clean Bajra flour, the round stones into beetroot and the elongated stones into carrots.

A reliable tradition from Imam Ja‘far as-Sadiq says that, “Whenever one of you returns from a journey he should bring whatever he could afford for his family, even if they be mere stones. Because whenever Ibrahim was in straitened circumstances he went to his people. If they had similar condition he returned. One day he was returning empty-handed. As he neared home he got down from his mule and filled the carry bag with sand to avoid embarrassment in front of Sarah . Then he entered the house, and putting down the bag started his prayers. Sarah untied the bag and found it filled with flour. She took out the flour, kneaded it and prepared bread. Then she called Ibrahim for his meal. Seeing the bread he inquired

from where she obtained them. "From the flour you had brought," replied Sarah . Ibrahim raised his head towards the sky and said, "I witness that you alone are Khalil."

Moreover, the Almighty has referred to Ibrahim in Qur'an as 'Burda'. According to traditions it means a person who supplicates much.

Another authentic tradition says that there was a time when only a single believer remained on the face of the earth. As mentioned by Allah,

Surely Ibrahim was an exemplar, obedient to Allah, upright, and he was not of the polytheists. (16: 120)

Imam says that if there had been any other believer, Allah would have mentioned him with Ibrahim (when He referred to him as 'a nation').

The situation continued for a long time until the Almighty bestowed Ibrahim with Isma'il and Ishaq. Allah inculcated love in their hearts. The number of worshippers (of Allah) became three.

According to a reliable narration from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq before appointing Ibrahim as his Prophet, He made him His servant. He appointed him Prophet before appointing him as His messenger (Rasul). He designated him as His messenger before appointing him as the Imam. Ibrahim realized the high status of Imam and asked Allah if He has appointed anyone from his progeny for the post of Imamate. The Almighty replied that His covenant (of Imamate and vicegerency) shall not reach the unjust.

Imam further explains that a foolish person cannot become the Imam of the pious and righteous people.

A reliable tradition from the sixth Imam says that the first one to wear sandals was Ibrahim.

A similar authentic hadith of Imam al-Baqir says that until the period of Ibrahim, death occurred without a cause. Ibrahim requested the Almighty to create some cause of death, so that those who suffer its pain can be recompensed and the survivors get some solace. So the Almighty first sent pleurisy and delirium. These were followed by other kinds of diseases.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq is quoted in a reliable tradition that Ibrahim was the father of guests. That is, he was very fond of entertaining guests. Whenever he did not have any guest to join him for dinner he used to go out in search of a guest. One day when he returned home he saw a youth in his house.

"Who permitted you to enter my house, O creature of Allah?" asked Ibrahim. The youths repeated thrice, "The absolute Master of this house." Ibrahim understood that it was Archangel Gabriel and there he recited the Praise of Allah.

Archangel Gabriel said, "Your Lord has sent me with glad tidings for a fortunate person whom He has appointed as His Khalil." "Tell me, who it is. So that I can spent my life in his service," requested

Ibrahim. "You are that fortunate one." said Archangel Gabriel

"Why am I appointed 'Khalil?'" asked Ibrahim.

"Because you neither request anyone of favors nor fail to fulfill the needs of others," explained Archangel Gabriel.

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir says in a reliable tradition, "One day Ibrahim went to stroll in the town and derive some lessons from the creatures of Allah. Wandering through the town he reached wilderness and saw a man standing up in prayers. His voice was reaching the sky and his dress stuck close to his body. Ibrahim stood there in amazement and watched him pray. Then he sat down near waiting for him to conclude the prayers. A long time passed. At last Ibrahim nudged him with his hand saying that he had a request from him and should shorten his prayers. The person concluded the prayers and turned towards Ibrahim.

"For whom do you offer prayers?" asked Ibrahim

"For the God of Ibrahim."

"Who is the God of Ibrahim?"

"The One who has created you and I."

"I like your way," said Ibrahim, "I wish to make you my brother for Allah's pleasure. Tell me, where do you live? So that whenever I wish, I can pay you a visit."

"You cannot reach the place," said the worshipper, because it is across a stream that you cannot traverse."

"How do you cross it?" asked Ibrahim.

"I walk on the surface of water." Replied the man.

Ibrahim said, "May be, the One who has solidified water for you, can do the same for me? Rise up. Let us go we shall spend the night together."

So they set out. When they reached the bank of the river the worshipper uttered 'Bismillah' (in the name of Allah) and started walking on the surface of the stream. Ibrahim too uttered 'Bismillah' and followed. The person was amazed. When they reached his house Ibrahim asked him the source of his livelihood.

"I collect the fruit of this tree, all the year round," he replied, "and that is my livelihood."

"Which is the most difficult day?" asked Ibrahim.

"The day when the Almighty would recompense the deeds of all His creatures."

“Come let us pray to Allah, to save us from the afflictions of that day,” said Ibrahim

There is a variation in another tradition wherein Ibrahim suggests, ‘You supplicate and I say ‘Amen.’ Or ‘I supplicate and you say ‘Amen’.

“What for?” asked the worshipper.

“For the sinners among the believers,” replied Ibrahim.

The worshipper refused and when asked the reason he said that he was praying for a particular thing for the past three years and his prayers have not been answered so far. “I feel ashamed of requesting Allah for something. Because He may not oblige me,” he explained.

Ibrahim said, “Whenever Allah loves a person, He saves his supplications, so that the supplicant would continue to plead and invoke Him. And when He hates a person He either fulfils his wishes instantly or instills despair so that he would stop invoking.”

The Ibrahim asked him as to what was his need that he continues to invoke Allah.

The worshipper said, “One day while busy in prayers at my usual place, I saw a handsome boy pass by. A light shone his forehead and his tresses flowed on his back. He was grazing some cows with such shiny skins, as if anointed with oil. He also had well-fed and healthy sheep. I was elated at the sight and asked him, “O young man. To whom do these cows and sheep belong?”

“They are mine,” replied the boy.

“Who are you?” asked I.

“I am Isma‘il, the son of Ibrahim the Khalil of Allah.”

At that moment I prayed to Allah that He allow me to see His friend (Khalil).”

“I am Ibrahim, the Khalil of the Beneficent (Rahman) and that boy is my son.”

“*Alhamdo lillahe Rabbil A‘lameen* (Praise be to Allah the Lord of the worlds),” said the worshipper, “He has granted my prayers!”

Then he kissed the cheeks of Ibrahim and putting his arms around his neck said, “Now you supplicate and I’ll say ‘Amen’.”

So Ibrahim supplicated Allah for the believers from that time unto the Resurrection Day and requested Allah to condone their sins and to be satisfied with them. The worshipper recited ‘Amen’ on his invocations. Imam al-Baqir says that the complete prayer of Ibrahim is effective for our erring Shi‘ahs right up to the Resurrection Day.

It is mentioned in some narrations that the name of this worshipper was Maria the son of Aws. He lived for six hundred and sixty years.

Birth of Ibrahim and his upbringing... until the time of the breaking of the idols; An account of his confrontation with the tyrant rulers of his time

Good, or rather, correct chains of narrators quote Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq to have said that Azar the son of Canaan was the father of Ibrahim. He was the court astrologer of Nimrod. He told Nimrod that according to the position of the stars a man shall be born in this period. He would falsify this religion and invite people towards a new faith.

"Where would he take birth?" asked Nimrod.

"In this town," said Azar.

Nimrod's palace was situated in Kosaria a district of al-Kufah. Nimrod asked if that person has already taken birth.

"No," replied Azar.

Nimrod said that it would be better if men and women are separated, and he issued commands for the same. But the mother of Ibrahim conceived him although the pregnancy was not apparent. When the term neared completion, Ibrahim's mother told Azar that she thought she was suffering from some disease or menstruating, hence it was advisable that she separated from her husband for some days. It was a custom of that period that whenever the women became sick or had monthly periods they used to live away from their husbands. Thus she left the house and went to a cave. Ibrahim was born there. She wrapped him in a cloth and left him inside the cave. Then closing the mouth of the cave with a stone she returned home. The Almighty caused milk to flow from the thumb of Ibrahim and he sucked at it (deriving nutrition).

Once in a while his mother came to visit him. Since Nimrod had appointed surveillance on every pregnant woman, any male child that arrived in this world was immediately killed. It was for this reason that Ibrahim's mother left him in the cave. Ibrahim grew up fast. In one day he grew as much as other children grew in a month. Thus he grew up to be a lad of thirteen years. One day when his mother came to visit him he hugged her and pleaded to be taken out. She told him that if the King learnt that he was born in this period he would kill him. When the mother left him, he came out of the cave himself after the sunset. The star al-Zahra' was shining on the sky. Upon seeing it, Ibrahim said, "Is it my Lord?" But when it set, he said, "It could not be my Lord, or it wouldn't have moved and disappeared."

Then the Sun arose from the east Ibrahim wondered, "It is bigger than al-Zahra', is this my Lord?" But when it moved and declined he said, "If it had been my Lord it would not have moved or disappeared. I am not impressed with those who decline." Now the Moon arose from the East and Ibrahim said "Is this

my Lord? For it is much bigger than al-Zahra'." But the Moon also declined and disappeared. Ibrahim said, "If my Lord had not protected me, I would have surely strayed from the right path."

Again when it was daybreak and the sun illuminated the earth with its rays, Ibrahim said, "This is better and bigger than the others. Is this my Lord?" However the sun also moved, and gradually declined and the Almighty spread open the skies. Ibrahim saw the firmament with all the heavenly bodies and the Almighty showed him the creatures of the heavens and the earth. Ibrahim said, "O my people! I dissociate with those whom you consider as associates of Allah. I have turned towards the One who created the heavens and the earth by light. I am of those who reject the false religion and move towards the correct faith. I am not from the polytheists."

Ibrahim was taken to the house of Azar by his mother. She left him with her other sons. When Azar came home and saw Ibrahim, he asked as to who that boy was that survived the king's order for killing all male children.

"It is your son, he was born when I was living separately," said Ibrahim's mother.

"Shame on you!" chided Azar, "If the king learns of it I shall lose my prestige."

Actually Azar was a minister of Nimrod and possessed substantial power. He was also a professional idol-maker. After preparing idols he sent them with his sons to the market. The idol temple was also under his control. Ibrahim's mother said that there was no risk if the king is not informed about it. "My son will remain with me, safe and sound." She said, "And even if he comes to know of it, I will pacify him."

Whenever Azar looked at Ibrahim, his heart filled with fatherly love. Later he began to entrust Ibrahim with idols for sale, as was his practice with his other sons. Ibrahim used to tie the heads of idols with a rope and drag them all the way saying, "Who would buy them, when they can neither cause harm nor profit."

He also caught the hair of idols and ducked its head in water saying, "Drink it! And say something."

The brothers reported all this to Azar. He summoned Ibrahim and warned him not to repeat it. But since the admonition produced no effect Azar locked up Ibrahim in the house.

According to a reliable tradition of Imam Musa Ibn Ja'far, Ibrahim was born on the 1st of Dhu'l-hijjah.

A authentic tradition from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq says, "Ibrahim's father was Azar the son of Canaan. He was the court astrologer of Nimrod. Nimrod did not move a step without seeking counsel of Azar. One night Azar studied the position of the stars and told Nimrod, 'I saw a strange thing last night.'

Nimrod was surprised and asked him what it was. Azar said, 'I have learnt that a boy is to take birth in our country and that he would destroy us all. And his mother shall conceive him in the near future.'

Nimrod was amazed and asked if he has made some woman pregnant.

Azar had learnt through Astrology that the same boy was going to be burnt in fire but he did not know that he would be saved by the Almighty.

Nimrod ordered that women be separated from men. All the men should leave their women and go out of town. Ibrahim was conceived that very night. His father suspected the conception and he called for experienced women to examine if his wife was pregnant. But the Almighty made the fetus stick to the back of Ibrahim's mother and therefore none of the symptoms were apparent. The nurses told Azar that his wife was definitely not pregnant. When Ibrahim was born his father decided to take him to Nimrod, but his wife restrained him saying that the king would kill her son.

'Leave him to me. I shall take him to a cave and abandon him there. He will soon perish and thus you won't be an accomplice in its murder.'

Azar agreed and Ibrahim's mother took him to a cave. After suckling him she left him inside and closed the mouth of the cave with a boulder. The Almighty Allah caused his sustenance to flow from his thumb. He sucked his thumb and consumed the milk that flew from it. He grew up faster than ordinary children did. His growth in a day was equal to a week's growth in other children. In a week he grew as much as other's grew in a month. And in a month his body developed as much as a year.

After some days his mother took leave of Azar and came to the cave. She saw that Ibrahim was alive and his eyes shone like brilliant lamps. She embraced him and gave him suck. When she returned the father asked her about Ibrahim. She said that it has died. 'I have buried him,' she wept.

Now whenever Azar left home for a considerable time his wife went to the cave and suckled Ibrahim. This continued for quite some time. When Ibrahim was able to crawl on his knees and his mother had come to feed him, he clung to her and pleaded she take him with her. 'Have patience!' said the mother. 'Let me take your father's permission.'

During the period of occultation, Ibrahim kept himself hidden and also concealed the affair of faith. When the Almighty permitted, he appeared and began to propagate religion in public. Allah ."

In another tradition of the Holy Prophet, the parents of Ibrahim escaped from the dominion of the tyrant. Ibrahim was born on the bank of Kharzan at the foot of some hillocks. He was born between sunset and nightfall." When Ibrahim touched the ground he rubbed his eyes and recited a number of times, "*Ash-hado alla-ilaaha illallah*" (I testify that there is no god except Allah). Then he picked up some clothes and put them on. Seeing this his mother was terrified. Ibrahim stood up before his mother and looked towards the sky. Then he used the symbolism of heavenly bodies to prove the existence of his Lord, as mentioned in Qur'an.

According to 'Ali ibn Ibrahim, Ibrahim restrained his people from idol-worship and also tried to convince

them through logical arguments and completed the proof. But the people refused to accept. At last on the day of feast, Nimrod and all his people went out of the town for celebrating the occasion at the grounds outside the limits of the city. Ibrahim refused to accompany them, so they left him to mind the idols of the temple. When the people departed, Ibrahim took some food to the temple. He offered the food to each idol in turn and exhorted them to say something. When there was no reply he took the axe and chopped off the hands and legs of all the idols and then hung the axe around the neck of the largest idol that stood in the centre. When the king, his army and the people returned, they beheld the broken statues. "Whoever has done this to our god has indeed committed injustice upon him. He shall be executed!" they said.

"It must be Ibrahim the son of Azar," suggested the people, "He alone is critical of the gods."

Ibrahim was brought to Nimrod. Nimrod accused Azar for breach of trust as he had concealed the existence of Ibrahim.

"It is the handiwork of his mother, O king!" protested Azar, "She says that she has a convincing argument." Nimrod summoned Ibrahim's mother and said, "Why did you conceal this boy? See what he has done to our gods!" "O King!" replied the mother of Ibrahim, "I acted in this manner for the good of your people, when I saw that you were killing all their progeny I decided that if my son would be the one predicted by astrology I would hand him over to you and thus the rest of the children would be spared. If he did not happen to be the predicted one I would be able to keep my son. Now this boy is in your hands. Do whatever you want with him." Nimrod was pleased with the argument and considered it valid. Then he asked Ibrahim who had committed the act?

Ibrahim said that the largest one has performed the deed and they can ask them if the idols could speak. After receiving Ibrahim's reply, Nimrod consulted his people. They all suggested that Ibrahim be roasted alive for the sake of their deities. According to Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq Nimrod and his cohorts were of illegitimate birth, therefore they were swift to take the decision of killing Ibrahim. Whereas, the Pharaoh and his companions were legitimate because they ordered the release of Musa and his brother (Harun); and invited the sorcerers to compete with Musa. They didn't issue immediate orders for their execution, because no one undertakes the killing of a Prophet or an Imam, except the illegitimate persons.

Thus, Ibrahim was put under arrest and wood was collected for burning him alive. On the appointed day Nimrod came with the army. A high platform was constructed for him to view the execution. Ibrahim was brought, but such was the intensity of the fire that no one could summon the courage to put him in it. The roaring fire scorched even the birds that flew a parasang above it.

Satan came to the people and taught them the technique of catapult. Ibrahim was made to sit in the catapult. Azar came to him, slapped him and said, "Give up your beliefs!"

Ibrahim did not accept. A cry of protest arose from the heaven and the earth. All the creation of the world expressed their wish to assist Ibrahim.

“O Lord! there is no worshipper upon you except Ibrahim. Would allow him to be burnt?” asked the earth.

The Angels said, “People are about to incinerate your Khalil!”

“If he calls Me for help, I would definitely oblige,” said the Lord.

Archangel Gabriel said, “Apart from your Khalil, Ibrahim there is no one to worship You on the earth. You have allowed his enemies to suppress him and burn him alive?”

“Keep quiet!” said Allah, “Only they utter such things, those who fear that some matters would be beyond their control. He is My servant. I can save him any moment. If he supplicates Me, I will accept his prayers.”

Ibrahim prayed to his Lord with utmost sincerity, “*Yaa Allaho, Yaa Wahido, Yaa Ah’ado, Yaa man lam yalid wa lam yoolad walam yakullahu kofowwan Ah’ad. Najjaini minannaare be Rah’mateka.*”

Ibrahim shot out from the catapult and was in mid-air when Archangel Gabriel met him and asked him if he had my wish. He said that he had nothing to ask from him. Archangel Gabriel handed him a ring upon which was engraved, “*La ilaaha illallaho Muhammadur Rasulullahe anjaato Z’ahri ilallahe wa asnadto amri wafawwaz “to amri ilallaah.*” Almighty Allah revealed to the fire, “Be cool!” It became so cold that the teeth of Ibrahim began to chatter. Allah added, “And peace upon Ibrahim ”

Archangel Gabriel arrived and sat down to converse with Ibrahim. They were surrounded by blooms. When Nimrod witnessed this spectacle he remarked, “If anyone wishes to believe in a God he should believe in a God like that of Ibrahim.”

Just then one of the dignitaries of Nimrod court said, “I had put the fire under oath, not to scorch Ibrahim.” Immediately, a fiery mace shot out from the fire and hit the wicked man and burnt him to ashes. Nimrod saw that Ibrahim was sitting amidst greenery engaged in conversation with an elderly person. “What a great position your son has in the eyes of his Lord!” Nimrod told Azar. The lizard blew at the fire and the frog threw water to douse it. And when the Almighty had revealed “Be cool” all the fires of the world were bereft of any heat for three days in a row.

It is narrated from ‘Ali ibn Ibrahim that when Nimrod has Ibrahim thrown into the fire, and the fire became cool and peace for him and he came out unscathed, Nimrod asked him, “O Ibrahim! Who is your Lord?”

“He is the One who gives life and death.”

“I give life and cause death,” claimed Nimrod. Ibrahim asked him how he gave life and death. In response Nimrod, the accursed, summoned two prisoners who had been sentenced to death. He put one of them to death and set the other free.

Ibrahim told Nimrod, "If what you claim is true, bring back to life the one whom you have killed. And my Lord causes the sun to rise from the east, you bring it out from the west."

The infidel was speechless and vanquished.

Various authentic chains mention that Imam al-Ridha said: When Ibrahim was put on the catapult, Archangel Gabriel became angry. The Almighty Allah asked him through revelation as to what it was that had angered him. Archangel Gabriel said, "Lord Almighty! Ibrahim is your Khalil, and he is the solitary person on earth who worships you with a belief in your oneness. You have allowed Your and his enemies to gain the upper hand."

"Keep quiet!" commanded the Lord, "Only people like you become impatient, those who think that circumstances will go beyond their control. Ibrahim is My servant. I can save him whenever I want." Archangel Gabriel was pleased at this and he came to Ibrahim and asked, "Do you have any wishes?"

"No!" said Ibrahim.

Allah sent for him a ring engraved with the following words:

Lailaaha illallah Muh'ammedon rasoolullah. La hawla wa laa quwwata illa billah fawaz"z"aito amri ilallaah wa asnadto amri ilallaah h'asbiyallaaho.

And revealed, "Wear the ring so that I make the fire cool and peaceful for you."

A reliable tradition mentions that people asked Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq,

"When Musa bin 'Imran was confronted by the staves and ropes of magicians, he was fearful, whereas when Ibrahim was put on the catapult he was absolutely composed and fearless."

Imam explained, "Ibrahim had faith in the light of Muhammad, 'Ali, Fatimah, hasan, husayn and the Imams from the progeny husayn that he carried in his backbone. On the other hand Musa did not carry that light, therefore he was afraid."

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq is quoted in a reliable tradition that he said, "Four rulers had dominion over the whole earth in their reigns. Two of them were believers, Sulayman and Dhu'l-Qarnayn, and two were infidels Nebuchadnezzar and Nimrod."

It is quoted from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq that the first catapult to be constructed was that for Ibrahim. It was built in al-Kufah on the bank of river Kosaar, in the village of Qantana. Satan was the architect of the said catapult. And when Ibrahim was put upon it Archangel Gabriel came to him said, "Peace be upon you and the Mercy of Allah, O Ibrahim. Do you have any wishes?"

Ibrahim declined and the Almighty God ordered the fire to cool down.

In an authentic tradition Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq is reported to have said that when the inferno was lighted to burn Ibrahim all the animals of the earth complained to the Almighty and asked for divine permission to douse the fire. Allah did not permit anyone except the frog. Two third of the fire burnt out and only one-third remained.

In another tradition is recorded the wisdom of the gnat. Though gnat itself is the food of other birds, it was made to degrade Nimrod, who had transgressed against Allah and rejected His Lordship. The Almighty subjected Nimrod to be subdued by a puny gnat in order to manifest His Power and Greatness. The gnat entered the nose and brought about his death.

According to an authentic hadith of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali, Ibrahim was flung into the fire on a Wednesday, and the same day Allah subjected Nimrod to the gnat.[2](#)

Most of the historians have recorded that after being saved from the ravages of fire, Ibrahim invited Nimrod towards the true religion. The tyrant Nimrod said, "I will fight your Lord."

A day was fixed for the purpose and Nimrod arrived with a huge army. Ibrahim stood facing them all alone. Then the Almighty Allah sent a horde of mosquitoes that darkened the atmosphere. They attacked the advancing army and clung to their heads and entered their nostrils. The army retreated and Nimrod had to return dejected and ashamed. Yet he did not accept belief. The Almighty ordered a puny mosquito to enter Nimrod's head. The mosquito obliged, and once inside, began to feed upon the brain of Nimrod. Nimrod became so restless that he appointed four servants to strike his head with maces in the hope it will relieve him from the terrible pain. He remained in that condition for forty years, but did not accept faith. At last he was consigned to the Hell-fire.

An authentic tradition of Imam Musa ibn Ja'far states that there is a Valley in Hell, called Saqar. It has not taken even a single breathe since its inception. If the Almighty permits it to breathe even as little as the eye of the needle, it will scorch everything on the face of the earth. The dwellers of Hell seek Allah's refuge from the heat, stench, dirt and chastisement bestowed to it by the Almighty. It has a mountain, and dwellers of the valley seek Allah's refuge from the heat, stench, dirt and chastisement bestowed to the mountain by the Almighty. There is a pass on this mountain. It is endowed with such heat, impurity and dirt by Allah that the dwellers of the mountain seek Allah's refuge from it. The pass has well. The well is given such heat, impurity and punishment that even the dwellers of the pass dread it. The well houses a snake and the inhabitants of this well are terrified of the foulness of its venom etc. The snake carries seven caskets in its belly, containing five evil persons of the past nations: Qabil the killer of Habil, Nimrod who confronted Ibrahim with the claim that he gave life and death, the Pharaoh who said that he was the greater god, Judas who misguided the Jews and St. Paul who misled the Christians. Two remaining caskets will have two most evil persons from the Muslim community.

According to an authentic tradition from Imam al-Ridha, "When Ibrahim was tossed into the fire, he beseeched the Almighty Who made the fire cool and comforting for him.

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir and Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq are quoted in authentic texts that when Ibrahim was put into the fire he recited the following invocation:

Yaa Ah'ado Yaa S'amado Yaa man lam Yalid walam yoolad walm Yakullahu kofowwan Ah'ad Tawakkalt a'lallaah.

The Almighty revealed to the fire to become cool and safe for Ibrahim. So for three days no one could obtain any heat from fire, even water could not be heated. A tall platform was constructed for Nimrod. On the third day he ascended it accompanied by Azar. He saw that Ibrahim was sitting in a blooming garden engaged in conversation with an elderly man.

“How exalted is your son in the eyes of his Lord!” Nimrod told Azar.

Then he told Ibrahim to leave the city and said, “You cannot live with me in the same town.”

According to trustworthy chain of reporters, Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq said, “When Yusuf went to Nimrod he asked, ‘How are you, Ibrahim.’

‘I am not Ibrahim,’ replied Yusuf, ‘I am Yusuf son of Ya'qub, son of Ishaq son of Ibrahim.’

It was the same Nimrod who had confronted Ibrahim regarding the Almighty. He retained his youth for a period of four hundred years.”

Reliable narrators maintain that Imam Zayn al-'abidin said, “When Ibrahim was thrown in the fire Archangel Gabriel brought a garment of Paradise and clothed him. As a result the fire receded from him and Narcissus grew around him. Yusuf was in possession of the same garment. When he took it out in Egypt and Ya'qub smelt it, he said it smelt of Yusuf.”³

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq is reported from authentic chains of narrators that it was the day of Navroz when Ibrahim broke the idols. In the tafsir of Imam Al-Hasan al-'Askari the Holy Prophet is quoted to have said that the Almighty relieved Nuh from difficulties and extreme sorrow by the right of Muhammad and the Progeny of Muhammad. By the grace of the same personalities, the Almighty made the fire cool and comforting for Ibrahim. He provided a chair and couch for him, which was so resplendent that the devilish king had never seen before. And neither had any ruler of the world ever possessed its kind. And the Almighty cause to grow in the same fire such green plants, bearing flowers and fruit the kinds of which are not seen in any of the four seasons.

Amir al-Mu'minin is quoted through reliable traditions that when Nimrod wished to gain information about the heavens, he acquired four vultures and trained them. He constructed a wooden box and put a man in it. Then he starved the vultures for some days and tied them to the legs of this box. Pieces of meat were hung from a pole on the top side of the box. The starving vultures rushed to snatch the meat and as a result lifted the box with its occupant towards the sky. They climbed so high that when the man looked down to the earth he saw the mountains seemed like trenches, and yet the sky remained at the same

distance. After a long time again he looked towards the earth but saw only water whereas the sky was as far as before. They continued to rise for a long time. Again when he looked down but could not see anything. Yet the sky was still far away. At last he was surrounded by darkness he could see neither the sky nor the earth. He became frightened and hung the meat downwards. The vultures headed downwards and returned to the earth.⁴

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq is quoted in an authentic tradition that the place of birth of Ibrahim was Kosaria, a district of al-Kufah. His father was a native of that place. The mothers of Ibrahim and Lut were sisters. That is Sarah and Warqah, the daughters of Lahaj, a Prophet who was appointed to warn of Allah's punishment but was not a Messenger. (One who brings a shari'ah). Since his childhood, Ibrahim followed the same nature that Allah created for all humans until the time Allah guided him to his religion and exalted him. Ibrahim selected the daughter of his maternal aunt and married her. Sarah was barren. She possessed a lot of land and cattle and she gifted it to Ibrahim. Ibrahim obtained knowledge of everything through his efforts. The cattle multiplied and agriculture prospered. Ibrahim became the most prosperous person of Kosaria.

When Ibrahim was consigned to the fire but escaped unhurt Nimrod ordered him to be banished, and that all his wealth, cattle and property be confiscated. Ibrahim argued with them and said that they wished to seize his cattle and property they should give him in lieu, his age that he spent in acquiring the wealth. The case was ultimately presented to a judge. The judgment issued was that since Ibrahim had earned his wealth in the country, it should be seized but he must be compensated for the age he spent in its acquisition. When Nimrod was informed of the judgment he told the people to return all the wealth and ask Ibrahim to leave the city. For if he remained among them, he would continue to denounce their religion and cause harm to their gods. Thus Ibrahim and Lut were expelled from their country to Syria. Ibrahim departed with Lut and Sarah, saying,

“Surely I fly to my Lord (Jerusalem); He will guide me.” (37:99)

Then he constructed a large casket and placed Sarah in it, and taking all his wealth and cattle left the city of Nimrod. They reached the country of a Copt, named Urara and were stopped at the check post.

A government official began to assess the goods of Ibrahim. When he reached the casket he ordered it to be opened so that it can also be taxed. Ibrahim said the casket contained gold and silver thread and that they may charge whatever they liked for it but not to open it. The official said it was necessary to open the box to determine the charges. He abruptly opened the box and saw a beautiful lady (Sarah) in it. “What is your relation with this woman?” they asked Ibrahim.

“She is my honor, my cousin.”

“Why have you concealed her?”

“For her modesty, that no one may cast a glance on her.” The officer said that he will not release them

until the matter is reported to the king. A messenger was sent to the king with this information. The king sent people to carry the box to him. Ibrahim followed them saying he will not part with box until he was alive. When the king learnt of this he ordered that Ibrahim should also be presented in the court with the casket. Thus Ibrahim was brought to the king along with the casket and his other belongings. The king ordered Ibrahim to open the casket. Ibrahim said it contained his honor, his cousin. "Take all my wealth and belongings but do not open the casket," pleaded Ibrahim. The king opened the casket abruptly. When he beheld the beauty of Sarah he could not control himself and he moved his hand to touch her. Ibrahim turned his face away and said, "My Lord! Save the honor of my cousin from this hand." The king's arm withered. He could neither move it towards Sarah nor pull it back.

"Has your god caused this to happen?" asked the king.

"Yes," replied Ibrahim, "My Lord is the possessor of modesty and dislikes sin. He became an obstruction between you and your intention because you intended sin."

"Request your Lord to restore my arm and I shall not repeat it," said the king.

Ibrahim prayed to the Almighty to restore the king's hand so that he may not move it towards Sarah. The arm regained life but when the king looked at Sarah, again he lost control of himself and his hand shot forward. Again Ibrahim turned his face away in shame and prayed. The hand froze and could not reach Sarah. The king said, "Indeed, your Lord is modest and you are chivalrous. Now you pray to your God for my hand. I will never act in this manner again."

"I will pray only upon the condition that if you go back on your word, I will not request the Almighty to forgive you again."

The King agreed and Ibrahim prayed for his hand if he was speaking the truth.

The hand was restored. When the king saw all this he was amazed and instilled with the fear of Ibrahim. He began to respect and honor him and said, "Rest assured, I will not touch your wealth or your honor. Go wherever you like, but grant me a favor."

Ibrahim asked what it was. He said, "I have a beautiful and intelligent slave-girl. I wish to present it to Sarah." Ibrahim agreed and he presented Hajar, the mother of Isma'il to Sarah. Then Ibrahim left with his goods and family. The king escorted them as a mark of respect, walking behind. The Almighty sent a revelation upon Ibrahim that he should wait and let the king walk before him even though he has been subdued. For despite his kingship he was defeated, whether he was good-doer or a sinner was another matter. Ibrahim stopped and said to the King, "You walk before me because my Lord has revealed that I should not precede you as He wants me to show respect to you and show preference to you."

"Has your Lord really revealed this to you?"

"Yes" replied Ibrahim

“I testify that your Lord is High and Mighty, and He is Respectful and Merciful. You have attracted me towards your religion,” remarked the king and said farewell to Ibrahim. Upon reaching Syria they halted and Ibrahim left Lut there. After a long time, when they were still childless, Ibrahim told Sarah, “If you like, sell Hajar to me. Maybe Allah shall grant me a son to succeed me.”

So he purchased Hajar from Sarah and Isma‘il was born.

According to a reliable tradition a Syrian asked Amir al-Mu‘minin the tafsir (exegesis) of the ayah:

“On the day when man will dissociate from his brother, his mother and his father.”

Imam said, “The one to dissociate from his father in the Resurrection Day will be Ibrahim.”⁵

An Account of the visit of Ibrahim to the heavens, His knowledge...

In the Tafsir of Imam Al-Hasan al-‘Askari there is a tradition that the Holy Prophet said:

When Ibrahim was raised up by the Almighty to the heavens as mention by Allah,

“And thus did we show Ibrahim the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and that he might be of those who are sure.” (6:75)

He said, Have you then considered what you have been worshipping

He saw a man and a woman engaged in adultery. He cursed them and they died. Then he saw two men committing sodomy. Again he cursed them and they died. Again he saw a couple engaged in fornication and cursed them to death. The fourth time he beheld a similar spectacle and was about to curse when Allah sent a revelation upon him.

‘O Ibrahim, Restrain your malediction from my servants. Indeed I am Forgiving, Merciful and Honorable. The sins of My creatures do not harm Me just as their worship does not benefit Me. I do not train and educate them by subjecting them to My wrath immediately. So refrain from cursing My servants. Indeed you are appointed to warn My servants about My chastisement, you are not My partner in My kingdom, and neither a guard or witness for the people. I deal with My servants in one of the three ways:

They repent and I accept their repentance and forgive their sins and conceal their defects. Or I stop My chastisement from them because I know they are carrying some believers in their loins. When the believers are born to them and separate from them, it becomes necessary to punish them. Then My wrath descends. If they are not carrying believers in their loins or wombs and they also do not repent, then the punishment that I have stored for them in the Hereafter is more severe than what you wish for them of the worldly chastisement. Because My punishment for My servants is according to My wrath and My majesty. So leave My servants to me and do not interfere, because I am more Merciful for them than you and more mighty and wise. I destine according My knowledge and allow destiny and free will among

them.’

There are many other traditions with similar connotation.

In many of the authentic traditions the exegesis of the following ayah:

“And thus did we show Ibrahim the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and that He might be of those who are sure.”

He said, Have you then considered what you have been worshipping: (6:75)

That the Almighty bestowed to Ibrahim with such a vision that he could see all that was in the heavens. The curtain was removed from the earth and he saw all that was in the earth. In the heavens he saw the angels that support the sky. He also saw the Divine Throne and whatever else was present in the heavens. In the same way the Messenger of Allah and the holy Imams were also shown all that was present in the heavens.

According to an authentic tradition from Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq when Ibrahim was viewing the spectacles of the heavens and the earth, he witnessed the adultery of three couples. He prayed for their destruction and they died. The Almighty revealed to Ibrahim: O Ibrahim! Your prayers have been answered but do not curse My servants. If I had wished I would not have created them in the first place. My creatures are of three types. The first one worships Me and does not associate anyone or anything with Me. I reward these people. The second type one those who worship others by they are not beyond My control. The third kind are also polytheists but carry believers in their loins, and in future they shall beget a group who would worship Me.

Then Ibrahim saw a dead animal on the bank of a river, half inside the water and other half on land. The creatures of the sea were feeding of the part that lay in the water. In turn they were consumed by other aquatic animals. Similarly the land scavengers fed upon the other half of the dead animal. And when they returned to wilderness some of them were killed and eaten by other wild animals. Ibrahim was amazed and asked the Almighty how the raised the dead. Because some of them were being devoured by others, so how could the different parts of their body rejoin. The Almighty asked him if he did not believe that He enlivens the dead. Ibrahim said that he believed but desired to have his heart at ease. That is, “I want to see it with my own eyes, just as I have seen the other things.” The Almighty told him to catch four birds, cut them up, mince their meat and mix them thoroughly. Then to keep a portion of this mixture on ten different mountain peaks and then call them by their names. They shall rush to him. In another tradition the Almighty tells Ibrahim to call them through His name, and quote His Greatness and Might as intermediary. The four birds were, the cock, the pigeon, the peacock and the crow.

In authentic tradition of Imam al-Ridha when Al-Ma’mun asked him the tafsir of the ayah,

“My lord show me how you enliven the dead,”

Imam said: The Almighty revealed to Ibrahim, "I would certainly appoint one of My servants as 'Khalil'. And that even if he wishes that I give life to the dead, I would oblige him." Ibrahim thought he might be that 'Khalil'. So he requested Allah to show him how He gave life to the dead.

And when Ibrahim said, My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead, He said, What! And do you not believe? He said, Yes, but that my heart may be at ease. He said, Then take four of the birds, then train them to follow you, then place on every mountain a part of them, then call them, they will come to you flying; and know that Allah is Mighty, Wise. (2:260)

Imam says that Ibrahim caught a vulture, a rooster a wild-duck and a peacock and cut them into small pieces. Then he mixed their flesh and bones and placed portions of the concoction on the mountain peaks surrounding him. There were ten mountains in all. He continued to hold the severed beaks of the birds in his hand. Then he put some bird feed and water on the ground and called then one by one. The different portions of the birds flew from different sides and formed their bodies. The bodies joined with the necks. Ibrahim attached their beaks and they become alive and rose in the air. Then they alighted and fed on the grains and water. Then they said, "O Prophet of Allah! You have given life to us, may Allah keep you alive."

Ibrahim said, "No, Allah gives life to the dead and He Alone has power over everything.

In another authentic tradition from Imam as-Sadiq when he was asked the explanation of this ayah he said: Ibrahim took four birds, a woodpecker, a pigeon, a peacock and a crow. He slaughtered them and severed their heads; and then putting them in a mortar minced their flesh and bones so that they mixed beyond recognition. He divided the mixture into ten parts and placed each portion on a mountain peak. Then he put some grains and water near him and held their beaks in between his fingers. He called out to them in the name of Allah. The flesh and bones from different locations came together to form bodies, then the bodies joined the necks. Ibrahim released their beaks and the birds landed on the ground. After feeding on the grains and gulping down the water they said, "O Prophet of Allah, You have given us life, May Allah keep you alive."

"Allah gives life and causes death," said Ibrahim. Imam says this is the clear interpretation of the verses. But the intrinsic meaning is, "Get four persons who are capable of understanding and self control. Then impart your knowledge to them and sent them to the four corners of the world so that they are your proof upon the people. And whenever you desire you can summon them. So call them by the name of Allah that they come soon by His command."

In another reliable tradition Ibrahim minced their flesh and bones in a mortar and retained their heads. Then he called by the name He had commanded. He saw that pieces of flesh and feather were flying from the mountain tops and the veins stuck out and joined with the bodies, until they were all complete. They flew towards Ibrahim. When he offered the head of another bird in its place it would turn aside and join only with its original head.

Through authentic chains of narrators Imam Muhammad al-Baqir is quoted that Ibrahim collected the Ostrich, peacock, wild-duck and a cock. Removed their feathers and slaughtered them. Putting them into a mortar pulverized them and placed portions of this mixture on the peaks of Ohud. They were ten peaks in all. Then he summoned them by their names and they rushed towards him. [6](#)

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq is reported to have said in a reliable tradition that the heavenly book of Ibrahim was revealed on the first night of the month of Ramadhan.

According to Abu-Dharr, the Messenger of Allah said the twenty heavenly books (Sahifah) were revealed to Ibrahim. When Abu-Dharr asked regarding the content of those books, the Holy Prophet replied, "All types of examples and wise sayings. They also contained the following advices:

O arrogant king who stands for examination! I did not send you to hoard wealth. I sent you so that you would fulfill the need of poor people who pray to Me. And I do not reject their prayers unless they are infidels.

It is incumbent upon the man of reason that except for having a valid excuse, he should appoint for himself four occasions. One when he supplicates to his lord, one for taking account of his self; regarding whatever good and bad deeds he has committed, One when he ponders upon the Divine bounties and whatever Allah has bestowed upon him and one occasion for fulfilling his sensual desires in a legitimate way in private. Indeed this portion is more important than other occasions because it imparts comfort to the hearts.

The rational man must keep himself well-informed of the conditions of the people of his times. He must endeavor to better his own status. He should protect his tongue from the things not worthy of being spoken. One who keeps account of his speech, reduces his speech. And only speaks what is beneficial for him.

An intelligent person must desire three things: Livelihood of the world, betterment of the Hereafter and pleasures that are permitted by the Almighty."

Abu-Dharr asked if the Book of Ibrahim had any message from the teaching of Qur'an.

The Holy Prophet said, "O Abu-Dharr! Read the following ayats:

He indeed shall be successful who purifies himself, And magnifies the name of his Lord and prays. Nay! you prefer the life of this world, While the hereafter is better and more lasting. Most surely this is in the earlier scriptures, The scriptures of Ibrahim and Musa. (87: 14-19)

According to a reliable tradition of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq the exegesis of the ayah,

"Ibrahim was the one who fulfilled" is that he fulfilled the task entrusted to him or fulfilled the vow he had made to the Almighty.

Imam says that every morning Ibrahim recited the following supplication:

As'bah to wa rabbi Mah'moodan As'bah' to laa Ushreka billaah shay-an wa laa Ado'o Ma'allao he ilaahan Aakhara wa laa attackhed'a ma'a hoo Waliyya.

It was for this reason that he is referred to as the 'servant who thanked excessively.'

In an authentic tradition Mufadhhdhal bin Umar asked Imam as-Sadiq the tafsir of the following verse:

"And when his lord tried Ibrahim with certain words, he fulfilled them." (2: 124)

Mufadhhdhal wanted to know what were the 'certain words'!

Imam replied, "They were the same words that Allah had taught to Adam and accepted his repentance. That is he said 'O Allah! I plead to you through the rights of Muhammad, 'Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Husayn that you accept my repentance. And Allah forgave him."

"What is the meaning of 'he fulfilled them'?" asked Mufadhhdhal. "Ibrahim recited the blessed names until the twelfth, Imam al-al-Qa'im (aj) the family of Muhammad, who is the ninth descendant of Imam al-Husayn."

According to Ibn Babawayh the above tradition has stated only one explanation whereas there are other meanings also:

First: The Almighty says that He caused Ibrahim to witness the spectacles of the heavens and the earth so that he becomes firm in belief.

Second: Recognition (Ma'refah). That is to consider Allah as the First and the Last, His Oneness and Purity from any similarity with His creatures. When he saw the star, the moon and the sun and each of them disappeared, he remarked that they were subject to change and whatever is subject to change must have a creator.

Third: Bravery! His daring was obvious when he broke the idols. As Allah says, that when Ibrahim asked his father and his people the reality behind the idols they worshipped. They replied that they had seen their forefathers worshipping them. "Even if they were on manifest error?" asked Ibrahim. They asked him if he was serious or he was just saying all that in jest.

"Your Lord is the God of the earth and the sky and One who has created everything from nothingness.

And I testify to this. By Allah! I would deal with your idols in a particular way when you go out of the city," said Ibrahim

When the people departed for the feast, Ibrahim broke all the idols except the largest one, with the hope that people may question it (about the distances), and thus argument shall be complete on them.

Indeed confronting the whole community single-handed requires bravery.

Fourth: Forbearance and self-respect. As the Almighty says that Ibrahim was self-respecting and god-fearing, He supplicated Allah quite often and always turned to Him for help.

Fifth: Charity and Chivalry. As mentioned by the Almighty in the incident of his guests.

Sixth: Separation from the family members for the sake of Allah. As the Almighty says that Ibrahim told his people that he wanted to be away from them and their false deities. He said, "I call you only to my Lord and worship Him alone.

Seventh: Enjoining good and forbidding evil. As the Lord Almighty says that Ibrahim asked his father Azar why he worshipped something that neither spoke nor heard. And it cannot offer him anything. "Indeed! I am in receipt of a Knowledge that has reached you. So you must obey me so that I can guide you on the straight path. Do not worship your father, the Devil because is the most disobedient of Allah. I fear that some punishment will descend upon you from the Beneficent Lord. At that time, you will become the companion of Satan.

Eight: Preventing evil through goodness. When Azar asked Ibrahim to accept their gods, and that if he refused they would stone him to death. Finally he told him to go away for some time."

Ibrahim replied, "I will soon pray to my Lord for your forgiveness, because He is more Merciful than I am."

Nine: Reliance. As mentioned by Ibrahim that, "O People! All those whom you and your ancestors have worshipped are enemies of us except the Lord of the worlds; who created me. He alone shall guide me. Only He bestows sustenance upon me. When I am sick, He alone bestows the cure.

And I desire that He forgive my sins that day.

Tenth: Associating with the wise and righteous people. Ibrahim prayed to Allah to impart wisdom and to include him among the righteous ones. And those righteous are the Messenger of Allah and the purified Imams. He also prayed that after him to bestow the people with a truthful tongue and that he should be remembered with gentle words by the future generations. And according to one explanation 'truthful tongue' refers to Amir al-Mu'minin' 'Ali. As the Almighty Allah has said at another place, 'And we appointed for them a truthful tongue.'

Eleventh: Tested by peril to life. When he was put on the catapult and flung into the fire.

Twelve: Tested by sacrificing his son. When the Almighty ordered him to sacrifice Isma'il.

Thirteen: Tested by wife's honor. When the Almighty tested him by putting him in a perilous position in the court of Gazara the Copt.

Fourteen: Patience on the domestic bickering of Sarah.

Fifteen: Dedicating his self to the obedience of Allah as he mentions in a du'a: "O Lord do not expose me on the day people shall be raised."

Sixteen: Purified from every defect. The Almighty says that Ibrahim was neither a Jew nor a Christian. He was away from the false religion and an upright Muslim. He obeyed the truth and was not a polytheist.

Seventeenth: Unifying all the qualities of worship. As mentioned in the following ayats.

"Say: Surely my prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are (all) for Allah, the Lord of the worlds; No associate has He; and this am I commanded, and I am the first of those who submit." (6: 162-163)

Eighteen: Acceptance of his prayer to enliven the dead.

Nineteen: The Almighty declaring that he was from the righteous ones: "and most certainly we chose him in this world, and in the hereafter he is most surely among the righteous."

The 'righteous' indicate that the Holy Prophet and his holy successors.

Twenty: The succeeding Prophet followed Ibrahim in his religion. The Almighty Allah commands,

"(O Muhammad) we revealed to you follow the religion of Ibrahim."

Then Allah Says, "The faith of your father, Ibrahim, was upright. Who has named you Muslims?"

(End of Ibn Babawayh's narration).

According to an authentic tradition from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq, in the very beginning, Ibrahim was ordered through revelation in his dream that he should sacrifice his son Isma'il. Ibrahim agreed to carry out the Divine commands. After fulfilling the same, he received Allah's revelation that He has made him the Imam of the people. Then the Almighty made ten practices incumbent upon him. Five of them related to the head and five to the body. The five with regard to head are: Trimming of mustache, beard, pruning the hair, brushing of teeth, and picking of teeth. Five actions are related to the body:

Shaving of pubic hair, circumcision, trimming of nails, ritual bath (after sexual intercourse) and purification with water after passing urine.

These are the upright practices of Ibrahim which shall remain in force until the Resurrection Day. This is the meaning of Allah's words: Follow the religion of Ibrahim. Because it is the correct method to move from the false religion towards the true faith.

Another authentic tradition says that Ibrahim was the first person who entertained guests, performed circumcision, undertook Jihad (holy war), paid khums (1/5) from his property, wore sandals and prepared standards for the battlefield.

It is quoted in a narration that Ibrahim met an Angel and asked him who he was. He said, "I am the Angel of death."

"Can you show me your appearance at the time of extracting the soul of a believer?" requested Ibrahim. "Turn your face away for a moment," said the Angel."

Ibrahim turned his face away. When he looked back, he beheld a handsome and well-dressed youth exuding a pleasant fragrance.

Then Ibrahim requested him to show his face when he takes the life of infidels.

"You cannot bear the right," warned the Angel.

"I can," said Ibrahim.

"All right!" said the Angel, "Turn your face away."

When he looked back, he saw a black man in a black garment. The hair of his body were standing on their ends, the body exuded a foul smell. And fire and smoke emitted from his mouth and nostrils. Ibrahim fell down in a swoon. When he regained consciousness, the Angel of death had reverted to his original appearance.

He told the Angel of death, "If a transgressor sees this dreadful sight, it is enough for his punishment."

According to a reliable tradition of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq the Almighty Allah revealed to Ibrahim that the earth felt ashamed to view his private parts therefore he should wear a garment to conceal his nakedness from the earth. So Ibrahim made for himself an under garment that came up to his thighs.

Age of Ibrahim, Account of his death...

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq in a reliable tradition quotes the Holy Prophet to have said that the age of Ibrahim was 175 years.

Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali says in an authentic tradition that Ibrahim passed through the area of Inqiya in the neighborhood of Najaf al-Ashraf. The place is struck by earthquakes every night. When Ibrahim passed the night there, there were no earthquakes. The inhabitants of the city were astonished and wondered why there had been no tremors last night. Someone remarked that an aged traveler reached their town last evening accompanied by his young son. The people came to Ibrahim and said that their city had earthquakes every night but since he halted among them there were no tremors. "Please stay for another night so that we may understand this phenomenon completely," they requested. When there

was no earthquake for the second consecutive night the people went to Ibrahim and said, "Please settle down in our city, permanently, we are prepared to offer you anything you want."

"I will not reside here permanently," Ibrahim told them, "However if you sell the wilderness of Najaf, adjoining your area, your city shall be immune from quakes."

"We give it to you free of cost."

"I will pay for it," insisted Ibrahim.

"Then you can pay whatever you like;" they said.

Ibrahim paid in its lieu seven sheep and four asses. This is the reason that the area is known as 'Inqiya', the word 'Inqiya' in Nabateen Language means 'ram'. His son said, "O Khalil-us-Rahman (Friend of the Beneficent), why have you purchased this land, it is uncultivable and not even fit for grazing."

"Be quiet!" replied the Khalil, "Because the Lord of the Universe, shall raise 70,000 Prophets from this tract of land and they will enter the Paradise in hordes. And each of them will intercede for a large group of people."

According to a reliable tradition of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir, the first two people to shake hands on this earth were Ibrahim and Dhu'l-Qarnayn. Ibrahim met Dhu'l-Qarnayn in person and they shook hands.

In yet another authentic tradition Imam as-Sadiq says that Ibrahim traveled from the Sahla mosque towards Yemen for the Battle of Amalaqa.

According to reliable chain of narrators the same Imam says, "Ibrahim requested Allah to bestow him with a daughter who would weep upon his death."

The Messenger of Allah is recorded to have said that Sarah told Ibrahim,

"O Ibrahim! You have become old, pray to the Lord for a son who can be a light of our eyes. Since the Almighty has appointed you as His Khalil, He would surely grant your wish."

So Ibrahim prayed to Allah for an intelligent son. The Almighty revealed to him that He would bestow upon him a wise son. But that He would also test Ibrahim with regard to him. Ibrahim was expecting the fulfillment of his prayers for three years after that. Then the Almighty gave him the opportunity. Sarah again reminded him that he was old and nearing his end. "Please pray to the Lord that He grant you a long life so that you can spend you life with me as it would be much better." She said.

As suggested by Sarah, Ibrahim prayed to Allah and He revealed that he was bestowing him as much life as he liked. Ibrahim informed Sarah of this. She advised him ask Allah not to give him death until he himself asked Him for it. Ibrahim prayed and the Almighty accepted. When he informed Sarah, again of

the Almighty's acceptance of his *dua* she said he must thank Allah and feed the poor.

So Ibrahim announced a public feast. When the people began to arrive a blind, weak man also came, supported by another person. When he sat down to eat, his shaky hand did not allow the morsel to reach his mouth. Sometimes it went to the left and sometimes to the right. Once it even stuck against the poor man's forehead. His companion helped him to place the morsel in his mouth. The blind man took a second morsel and this time his shaky hands delivered it to his eyes. Ibrahim was watching this scene and highly surprised. He asked the tribal chief of the cause of this. He explained that it was due to weakness and old age. Ibrahim thought that if he also became as old as this man, he would also be like him. Hence, he prayed to the Lord that it would be better if he sent death at the previously appointed time. "Because after seeing this spectacle I do not more desire old age any more."

A reliable tradition from Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali says that when Allah desired to take away the soul of Ibrahim He sent the Angel of death. "*As salaamo A'laika Ya Ibrahim*" said the Angel of death. "*Wa a'laikas salaamo Ya Malakul Maut,*" replied Ibrahim, "Have you come to take me towards the Hereafter or you bring the news of death? Indeed, you have come to capture my soul!"

"Yes" said the Angel, "I have come for this purpose and by your permission I invite you to meet your Lord and enter the heavenly world. So please accept this invitation."

Ibrahim said, "Have you ever seen a friend putting to death a friend?"

The angel went back to his appointed place in the Heavens and told Allah, "My Lord you heard what your Khalil said?"

It was revealed upon him to go back to Ibrahim and ask if he had known of any friend hesitating to meet his friend? A true friend is the one who looks forward to their meeting. Upon hearing this argument, Ibrahim relented.

Through trustworthy chains of narrators Imam as-Sadiq is reported to have said, "The soul of Ibrahim left for the heavenly abode when he had returned to Syria after performing hajj." The reason for this was when the Angel of death approached, Ibrahim did not prefer death. The Angel of death went back to Allah and reported that Ibrahim did not want death.

"Let it be," said Allah, "Ibrahim wants to worship Me." Till the time Ibrahim saw an old man. His condition was such that whatever he ate was immediately discharged from the other end. Upon seeing this, he did not prefer life and wished for death. So one day when he returned home he saw a handsome face. So attractive that he had never seen the like of it before.

"Who are you?" asked Ibrahim

"The Angel of death." Was the reply.

Ibrahim said, "Glory be to Allah! Who wouldn't want to see you and meet you when you are so handsome?"

"Khalil-ur-Rahman, (Friend of the Beneficent) when Allah desires goodness for His servant, He sends me with this appearance." said the angel of death. "And if He wants to punish him, He sends me with another appearance."

Thus Ibrahim breathed his last in Syria. After him the Almighty conferred Prophethood to Isma'il. He lived for a total of 130 years. He was buried near his mother in Hijr Isma'il (at the Ka'bah).

Imam as-Sadiq mentions in a reliable tradition that Ibrahim supplicated the Almighty in the following words, "What will happen to the family of the man who dies without a legatee to manage the survivors and home of the deceased?" The Almighty revealed, "Are you more concerned about a successor for your family after your death than Me?"

"No," replied Ibrahim, "Now my heart is at ease. I have understood that your mercy and grace shall take care of them."⁷

Wives and sons of Ibrahim and an account of the construction of Ka'bah

Correct, or rather, authentic sources quote Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq that he said:

Ibrahim settled down in Syria and when Isma'il was born to Hajra, Sarah was devastated because she was not carrying a fetus from Ibrahim. She began bickering about Hajra, which caused uneasiness to Ibrahim. When he complained to the Almighty, he received a revelation that women were like curved bones, if left alone they can prove beneficial. If one tries to straighten them, they break. Then the Almighty commanded that Hajar be separated from Sarah "Where should I take her?" asked Ibrahim.

"Towards My sanctuary. The place that I have appointed to be safe for whoever seeks refuge in it. It is that part of land that I created first of all, that is Makkah," the Almighty Allah said.

Archangel Gabriel brought the Buraq and Ibrahim, Isma'il and Hajar mounted it. It left towards Makkah. Whenever they passed by a place favorable for inhabitation; with greenery and pastures, Ibrahim asked Archangel Gabriel if it was their proposed home. Archangel Gabriel replied in the negative and continued to lead them ahead. At last, they reached Makkah. Archangel Gabriel landed them in the Holy Ka'bah. Ibrahim had promised Sarah that he would not alight from the mount until he returns to her. When Hajar and Isma'il alighted there was a tree in that house. Hajar spread a board underneath the tree and settled there with her infant son. When Ibrahim was leaving Hajar asked him to whose care he was entrusting them in a place bereft of water and habitation. Where there was no one to help or give company.

"I am leaving you in the care of One Who has ordered me to leave you here," so saying Ibrahim departed.

When Ibrahim reached a mountain in Zitanea, he turned around and looked at Hajar and Isma‘il, and said,

“O my Lord! I have certainly settled my son in a dry and desolate valley near your exalted house so that he may establish the prayers. So, (I beseech you to) divert the attention of some people towards, they may feel attracted towards them and seek their company. And bestow them with fruits that they may thank you.”

Saying this he went away and Hajar remained there. When the sun arose and Isma‘il felt thirsty, Hajar became restless. She arose, went to the valley between the mountains of Safa and Marwa and cried for help. She lost sight of Isma‘il. Hajar went to Safa and from there she saw a mirage at the Marwa. Thinking it to be water, she went to Marwa. When she reached there, she saw the pilgrims of Ka‘bah walking slowly and some were running too. Again she lost sight of Isma‘il and became restless. She ran back to the spot from where he was visible. Then again, she reached Marwa and saw the mirage at Safa. She ran towards Safa but lost sight of Isma‘il. Again she returned to the spot from where Isma‘il was visible. She continued to run between Safa and Marwa. When she reached Safa for the seventh time, she saw a spring of water gushing out from below the feet of Isma‘il. She rushed to Isma‘il and collected sand around the water to prevent it from spreading. It was for this reason that the spring is named ‘Zamzam’ (Stop! Stop!). The tribe of Jurham was camping in the plains of ‘Arafat and Zulmajaz. When water appeared in Makkah and the birds and animals rushed towards it, the tribe of Jurham noted this. They decided to investigate the incidence of water. When they reached the spot, they saw a woman and a child below a tree. “Who are you?” they asked Hajar, “and how did you come here?”

“I am the mother of the son of Khaleelur Rahman. And this is my son,” replied Hajar. “The Almighty commanded him to leave us here.”

The people sought her permission to settle nearby. On the third day, Ibrahim traveled the huge distance to check the well-being of Hajar and Isma‘il

“O friend of Allah! There is a tribe, Jurham, in the neighborhood. Its people desire to settle near us. Do you permit them?”

Ibrahim gave them permission. They came near and pitched their tents. Hajar and Isma‘il became attached to these people. When Ibrahim visited them the third time he saw a multitude of people surrounding them. He was pleased. When Isma‘il grew up, each member of the Jurham tribe gave him one or two sheep. As a result, he became the owner of a huge flock of sheep. He began to spend a peaceful life until he attained maturity.

The Almighty ordered Ibrahim and Isma‘il to reconstruct the Holy Ka‘bah. “Where should we construct it,” they asked Allah.

“On the spot where I had sent the cubicle for Adam,” replied Allah.

Actually, the cubicle was sent for Adam and fixed in that particular spot. It had illuminated the sanctuary around it. During the deluge of Nuh it was lifted towards heaven. Again the Almighty Allah sent Archangel Gabriel and he drew the times of Ka'bah for Ibrahim. The foundation of Ka'bah was also sent from the heaven for Ibrahim and the Black Stone. Actually, it was white as snow but the contact of unbelievers and sinners had rendered it black.

Thus Ibrahim constructed the Ka'bah. Isma'il carried the stones from Ziltawa. When the walls were nine hands high the Almighty informed them of the location of the Black Stone in mountains of Abu Qubays. Ibrahim brought it out and fixed it at the place where it is presently located. He fixed the doors of Ka'bah. One opening towards east and the other towards west; which is known as Mustejarr. Ibrahim put wooden beams on the top and spread hay upon them. He hung the Chador of Hajar around the cubicle and began to reside in it. Then the Almighty commanded Ibrahim and Isma'il to dig a well.

On the 8th of Dhu'l-hijjah, Archangel Gabriel descended and asked Ibrahim to arise and arrange for water because in those days there was no water in the plains of 'Arafat and Mina. The eighth day is known as Day of Tarwiyah because 'Tarwiyah' means offering of water. Then Archangel Gabriel escorted Ibrahim to Mina and they camped for the night. Archangel Gabriel also instructed him in the rituals of hajj, like Adam had been taught.

When Ibrahim completed the construction of the Ka'bah, he prayed to Allah to "make it the safest sanctuary on the earth and give them fruits as sustenance to those who reside in it and have faith in Allah and believe in the hereafter."

Imam explains that fruits mean the fruits of heart. Ibrahim prayed to the Almighty to create love for them in the hearts of the people, so that they come towards them from around the world.

Another authentic tradition records that when Ibrahim left Isma'il in Makkah, Isma'il was thirsty. There was a tree between the Safa and Marwa mountains. Hajar came out, stood on Mount Safa and cried, "Is there anyone in this valley who can help us?" She got no response. She went to Marwa and called out in the same fashion. Again, there was no reply. Once more, she came to Safa and called, but still no one responded. She repeated this seven times. This became the basis for the ritual sa'y' (Jogging between Safa and Marwa). Archangel Gabriel came to Hajar and asked who she was.

"I am the mother of Ibrahim's son." She replied.

"To whom has Ibrahim entrusted you?"

"I had also asked him the same question when he was leaving us here," said Hajar, "He said he was leaving us in care of the Lord of the worlds."

"He has left you in care of One Who is indeed Sufficient," said Archangel Gabriel.

Imam says that people avoided the route through Makkah because it was absolutely arid. Isma'il

thrashed his feet on the ground due to extreme thirst. Suddenly the spring of Zamzam began to gush out near his feet. When Hajar returned, she saw the water and she began to surround it with sand. If she had allowed it to flow, it would have gushed forever. At that time, a group of traders was passing by. They saw birds circling the area and understood that they were attracted by the water.

They also came near and Hajar offered them water. They gave her a lot of eatables in return. Whenever travelers reached that area, they came for the water and gave food and eatables in return.

Other reliable sources mention a tradition wherein Imam says, "The Almighty ordered Ibrahim to perform the hajj and to take Isma'il with him for the same purpose and then to settle Isma'il in the sanctuary. Father and son set out for hajj riding a red camel accompanied by no one except Archangel Gabriel. When they reached the sanctuary Archangel Gabriel said, 'Ibrahim, alight from the camel and take a ritual bath before entering the sacred house.' Ibrahim performed the ghusl and Archangel Gabriel clothed him in Ihram (white unstitched cloth).

Then told him to raise the slogans of 'Talbiya.' The four slogans that were later practiced by the Holy Prophet of Islam. Archangel Gabriel brought him towards Safa. He stepped down from the camel and Archangel Gabriel stood between them, and turning towards the Ka'bah said, '*Allahu Akbar*' (Allah is the Greatest). Then he said '*Alhamdo lillah*' (Praise to Allah) – and glorified the name of the Almighty. The two of them also followed suit. Chanting the Praise of Allah, they followed Archangel Gabriel from there. Archangel Gabriel brought them to the Black stone and ordered them to rub their hands on it and kiss it, and to circumambulate seven times. They were made to stand at the 'place of Ibrahim' and offer two Rak'ahs of prayers. Thus, they were taught all the ritual of hajj. After all the rituals had been completed Ibrahim returned home. Isma'il remained at Makkah all alone. There was no one with him.

The next year, Allah ordered Ibrahim to perform the hajj again and to reconstruct the Holy House. Even in those days, Arabs came to perform hajj in large numbers. The Ka'bah was in a dilapidated condition and only a few relics remained, but it was well-known for its religious significance. When the Arabs dispersed after completing hajj, Isma'il collected stones and stored them inside the Ka'bah. Ibrahim arrived and they began the construction. They lifted sand and stones and reached up to the foundation. The floor of Ka'bah was of a red stone. The Almighty sent a revelation that the foundation of Ka'bah must be based on this stone. Four Angels were deputed to collect stones. They brought the stones and Ibrahim and Isma'il raised the wall. They continued until the walls reached twelve hands in height. Thereafter, two doors were opened so that one can enter from one and leave from the other. Then they fixed door sills and attached chains to the doors. But the Ka'bah was yet uncoursed."

When people arrived in Makkah, Isma'il requested the Almighty for a beautiful lady he had seen from the tribe of himyar. But she was already married. The Almighty destined death for her husband and the woman stayed behind in Makkah to mourn him. Allah changed her sorrow into patience and offered her the companionship of Isma'il. She was a brilliant and a clever woman. When Ibrahim came to perform hajj, he visited the residence of Isma'il. Isma'il had gone to obtain his livelihood. His wife saw Ibrahim

that he was an elderly person and covered with dust of a long journey. Ibrahim asked her how they were. Then he asked about Isma'il. The woman praised him and said that he was well. He also asked from which tribe she came. "From himyar", she replied. After this Ibrahim went back handing a letter addressed to Isma'il. When Isma'il returned and read the letter he asked his wife if she knew who that gentleman was. She said he was a very righteous man and that he resembled Isma'il much.

"He was my father!" said Isma'il

The wife was stunned and an exclamation came out of her lips.

"Why are you shocked?" asked Isma'il, "Were you not covered properly before him?"

"No", she replied, "It's a pity I did not serve him in the appropriate manner."

The intelligent lady made two curtains, each of them twenty hands long for the Holy Ka'bah. They were hung upon the two doors and looked very beautiful. So she sought advice for a cloth cover for the whole building in order to conceal the ugliness of the stones. Isma'il supported the idea. She took up the assignment with enthusiasm and carried wool to other ladies of her tribe. From that day, it became a practice among women to co-operate with each other. Then she began to prepare the curtains with great urgency, with the help of the people of her tribe and other acquaintances. As a curtain was completed she brought it and hung it on the Ka'bah.

However, the season of hajj arrived and yet one side of the Ka'bah remained uncovered. She asked Isma'il what they should do as the cloth was not yet ready for that portion. At last, curtains of palm-leaves were made and hung on this portion. When the time of hajj arrived a larger number of Arabs came for pilgrimage. When they saw developments and improvements in Ka'bah they were pleased and discussed among themselves that they must compensate those who had taken these initiatives. So it was decided to carry gifts for the caretakers of Ka'bah. People began to make offerings to Ka'bah in cash and kind. A lot of wealth accumulated. The palm leaves curtains were removed and Ka'bah was clothed in a new and complete covering. There was no ceiling on the Ka'bah.

Isma'il installed wooden beams across the ceiling and spread dried branches over them. Then he covered them with wet mud. When the Arabs came for hajj the next year they saw some more additions to the Holy House. They found it was appropriate that the voluntary caretaker of Ka'bah be presented more gifts. Isma'il did not know what should be done with the large donations. The Almighty sent a revelation that he may use them to slaughter animals and serve them to the pilgrims. Isma'il complained of water scarcity to Ibrahim. Again Allah revealed to Ibrahim to construct a well that would provide water for guests of the Holy House.

Archangel Gabriel descended and the well of Zamzam was excavated. Archangel Gabriel told Ibrahim to strike the shovel from four directions and recite '*Bismillah*' at every stroke. Ibrahim hit the shovel first facing the Ka'bah and recited '*Bismillah*.' A spring of water gushed out. Then he plunged his shovel from

another direction chanting '*Bismillah*' Again spring gushed on. Archangel Gabriel told Ibrahim to drink the water and pray that Allah imparts *barakat* in it for his descendants. Both of them came out of the well. "Now sprinkle this water on your heads and torso and then go around the Ka'bah (circumambulation), because it is that water that Almighty Allah has specially bestowed for your son Isma'il." Ibrahim returned and Isma'il escorted him out of the sanctuary. After Ibrahim departed, Isma'il returned to the Holy precincts.

Allah the Almighty bestowed Isma'il with a son from the lady of himyar. It was her first child. After her Isma'il married four other women and had four sons from each of them. On the other hand Ibrahim left for the heavenly abode due to a mortal fever. Isma'il was unaware of this. When the Hajj season arrived and Isma'il was expecting his respected father that Archangel Gabriel appeared and broke the tragic news. He offered his condolences and warned Isma'il not to raise objection against the Divine decree because the Almighty has summoned Ibrahim to His Mercy. Isma'il agreed and was told that one day he too shall meet his father.

Isma'il had a young son whom he adored much and desired that after him he should be bestowed with Prophethood and vicegerency. But the Almighty conferred vicegerency and successorship to the other children. At the time of his death Isma'il sent for the son whom Allah has designated as his legatee, made bequests to him and asked him to do as he himself had done. "And do not appoint anyone as your successor except the one the Almighty indicates. From that time it became a necessary practice that every Imam informed of his legatee before death.

A reliable source mentions that a person came to Imam as-Sadiq and said, "There are some people who assert that Ibrahim performed his own circumcision with a scalpel on the bank of a pond?"

"Glory to Allah!" exclaimed Imam, "It is not as the people claim. They make allegations against Ibrahim."

The narrator requested Imam to explain the reality and Imam said, "The stub of the umbilical cord and the foreskin falls off on the seventh day in case of Prophets. On the seventh day of his birth the stub and foreskin of Isma'il dried and fell off. Sarah chastised Hajar in a way slave girls are scolded – she might have acted in this manner for the darkness of the skin or bad odor. Hajar was unhappy and wept bitterly. When Isma'il saw his mother weeping he followed suit. Ibrahim entered and asked the reason for Isma'il's wailing. Isma'il complained that Sarah had colded his mother, and caused her to weep. "Seeing her weep I also began to cry," said he.

Ibrahim went to the place of prayers and invoked Allah that He might remove the sorrow of Hajar. His prayers were accepted. When Ishaq was born to Sarah, on the seventh day the stub of his navel dropped but the foreskin remained intact. Sarah was distraught due to this. Ibrahim arrived and wanted to learn of the new situation that had developed in his progeny and in the descendants of Prophets. Sarah told him though the navel stub of Ishaq dried and fallen off, his foreskin remained. Ibrahim went to his place of worship and complained Allah regarding the situation. The Almighty sent him a revelation

saying it was because of Sarah's scolding of Hajra.

"I have vowed that I will not remove the foreskin of any of the Prophets," said Allah., "Hence circumcise Ishaq and give him the taste of hot iron."

So Ibrahim circumcised Ishaq with an iron (instrument). The practice became common among the people to circumcise their sons with iron.

According to an authentic hadith of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali the significance of stoning the Shaitans is that when Archangel Gabriel was teaching the hajj rituals to Ibrahim, the Satan appeared to him first at al-Jamarah al-Ula, Archangel Gabriel told Ibrahim to stone the Satan.

Ibrahim threw seven pebbles at Satan and he disappeared into the earth at that very spot. Again he appeared at the second place. (Al-Jamarah) and Ibrahim tossed seven pebbles at him in succession. The Satan disappeared and arose at the third Al-Jamarah. Once more Ibrahim tossed seven pebbles and Satan disappeared into the earth never to show up again.

A tradition quoted from Imam al-Ridha through correct and reliable chains of narrators, says that 'Sakina' is a breeze of Paradise that comes in the shape of a human being and has a pleasant fragrance. This particular breeze blew upon Ibrahim when he was constructing the Ka'bah. The foundations was being laid and Ibrahim was engaged in constructing the foundation from the back side.

Ibn 'Abbas relates that the Arabian horses were initially wild. When Ibrahim and Isma'il removed the idols from Ka'bah the Almighty sent him a revelation saying that He was conferring a treasure upon him, that was never bestowed to anyone before this Ibrahim and Isma'il went to a mountain called Barheya and summoned the horses saying '*Alaa halaa Alaa Halam.*' All the wild horses of Arabia converged at that spot referred to as 'Jeyad'.

Numerous reliable traditions from Imam al-Baqir and Imam as-Sadiq state that when Ibrahim and Isma'il completed the construction of Ka'bah it was revealed that they should invite people for hajj. Ibrahim stood at 'Rukn' and according to another tradition at 'Maqaam'. The place where he stood became so elevated that it became equal to the Mount Qubais. Then he called the people for hajj.

The Almighty caused his call to reach all the people, even those who were in the loins of their father and wombs of their mother and shall be born until the day the Resurrection Day. They all responded with '*Labbaik Daai Allah Labbaik Daai Allah*' (Here we come O! one who calls towards Allah). One who recites it once gets the reward of one hajj, the reward of two Hajjs is for those who repeat this formula twice and three Hajjs for one who utters it thrice and finally five Hajjs are written for those who recite this five times. And those who do not say it even once, has no hajj to his credit.

According to a reliable tradition of Imam al-Ridha the first person to mount an Arabian horse was Isma'il. Before this Arabian horses were untrained and no one could ride them. The Almighty rounded them up

from Mount Mina and due to this they are known as 'Aeraab', because Isma'il was an Arab.

Reliable chains quote Imam Muhammad al-Baqir that the ritual of Sa'y (Jogging between Safa and Marwa) came into practice because when Ibrahim reached that particular place, Satan came to him. Archangel Gabriel told him to attack it and Ibrahim obeyed. The Satan fled and Ibrahim chased him.

Imam says that 'Mina' is known by that name because Archangel Gabriel advised Ibrahim to express his wishes (Tamanna) to Allah. "Arafat' is referred by title because when the Sun declined from its zenith Archangel Gabriel told Ibrahim to repent for his sins (eteraaf) and to understand (the significance) of hajj rituals. When the sun had set, he was told '*Laf ilaa she'ril H'araam*' (Move towards Masharul haram). Therefore Mashar is also known as Muzdalefa.

Some people asked Imam why Sarah prayed to Allah not to punish her for what she had done to Hajra. Imam replied that Sarah had circumcised Hajar to create a defect in her. But she became all the more beautiful for it. The practice of female circumcision thus came into being.

Imam al-Ridha says in an authentic tradition that when Ibrahim settled his children in Makkah he prayed to the Almighty to bestow them with fruits. The Almighty separated a tract of land from Syria, named Ordain and along with its orchards and fruits brought it to Makkah where it circumambulated (circumambulation) of Ka'bah then settled in the neighboring area. It is for this reason that it has been named 'Taif'.

According to an authentic tradition of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq, Ibrahim had two sons, one from his wife and one from his slave-girl. The son of the slave-girl was superior. When the Angels brought the glad-tidings of Ishaq to Ibrahim as mentioned in Qur'an, "His woman was standing. She laughed (Fadahekat)."

Imam said Dahekat does not mean she laughed. It means that she menstruated. So the corrected translation is:

"His woman was standing and she began to menstruate." (upon hearing the news). In spite of the fact that she was ninety and Ibrahim was 120 years. When the people saw Ishaq they were amazed that he was born to such an elderly couple. They alleged that they might have brought him from somewhere and claimed it was their own son. But when Ishaq grew up he resembled his father so closely that people could not distinguish between him and Ibrahim. Till Allah caused Ibrahim's beard to grey. Thus appeared a distinguishing feature between them. One day Ibrahim was handling his beard and he saw a white hair. He asked Allah what it was. Allah revealed that it was his dignity and he said "My lord increase my dignity."

Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali says in an authentic hadith that when Isma'il and Ishaq were growing up, they decided to race and Isma'il won. Ibrahim picked up both of them, placed Isma'il in his lap and Ishaq on his side. Sarah entered and when she saw them she became angry and said, "So the matter has

reached this point that you do not consider your sons equal. Rather prefer the son of a slave-girl to my son! Take his boy away from me.”

So Ibrahim took Hajar and Isma‘il and settled them near the Ka‘bah. When the provisions were exhausted, Ibrahim decided to go out in search of food. Hajar asked him, “Under whose care are you leaving us?”

“Under the care of the Lord of the worlds,” replied Ibrahim Hajar felt the pangs of hunger and Archangel Gabriel descended and asked her to whose care has Ibrahim entrusted her. She said, “He has left us under Allah’s care.”

“He has entrusted you to the Sufficient One.” Archangel Gabriel told her. Archangel Gabriel put his hand inside the well of Zamzam and drew an imaginary circle. Water gushed out from it. Hajar filled a water-skin with water fearing that the water will dry up. Archangel Gabriel reassured her that it will remain forever and asked her to bring her son.

Thus they quenched their thirst to satiation. When Ibrahim returned and the incident was narrated to him, he said it was Archangel Gabriel.

Correct chains of reporters quote Imam Ja‘far as-Sadiq that he said, Isma‘il married Samma, a lady of Amaleqa tribe. One day Ibrahim desired to see Isma‘il and mounted a horse to head for Makkah. Sarah come to know and she extracted an oath that he would not alight from it until he came back to her. When he reached Makkah, Hajar had already departed for her heavenly abode.

“Where is your husband?” Ibrahim asked the wife of his son.

“He has gone hunting,” she replied.

Ibrahim then asked her of their well-being. She said they were in extreme difficulties and life was a burden, but did not invite him to alight. Ibrahim said, “When your husband returns, tell him an elderly person had come and advised that he change his threshold.”

When Isma‘il returned he sensed the fragrance of his respected father.

“Did anyone come to you?” he asked Samma.

“Yes,” she replied, “An old man came and said you must change your threshold stone.”

On hearing this, Isma‘il divorced Samma.

Once again Ibrahim yearned to see Isma‘il and again Sarah laid the same condition, that he will not alight from his mount until he returns to her. Ibrahim reached Makkah, but Isma‘il was not at home. Isma‘il had married another woman.

“Where is your husband,” Ibrahim asked her.

“May Allah shower you with His Mercy, my husband is gone for hunting.” She replied politely.

When Ibrahim asked her of their well-being, she replied that they were quite happy. Also when he asked her how she was, she replied, “Allah’s Mercy and blessings are upon us. Please step down from your mount, may Allah bless you. And rest awhile until Isma‘il returns.”

Ibrahim declined the invitation, hence she requested him to bring forward his head so that she can wash it clean of the dust. Saying this she brought some water and a stone. Ibrahim rested one foot on the stone keeping the other in the stirrup allowed her to wash one side of the head. Then rested his other foot on the stone and had the other side washed.

Ibrahim blessed her and said, “When your husband returns, tell him an elderly man had come and left a message that he should care and guard this threshold. It is beneficial for him.”

When Isma‘il returned home and felt the fragrance of his father he asked his wife if they had a visitor.

“Yes,” she replied, “An elderly gentleman had paid us a visit. This is the impression of his foot that he left on the stone. Isma‘il fell down and kissed the footprints of his father.

Imam Ja‘far as-Sadiq says that Sarah was daughter (descendent) of Prophets and Ibrahim married her on the condition that she will not oppose him and do whatever he commands if it is not against the Divine orders. Every day Ibrahim went to Makkah via the route of al-Kufah.

According to an authentic tradition of Imam Ibrahim sought Sarah’s permission to visit Isma‘il at Makkah. She allowed him on the condition that he’ll return by evening, and that he will not alight from his mount. The narrator asked how that was possible. Imam explained that land contracted for him.

Another tradition says that when Isma‘il was born, Sarah was devastated. The Almighty ordered Ibrahim to comfort her and make her happy. She told Ibrahim to go and leave Hajar at a desolate spot, bereft of vegetation and milk-giving animals. Ibrahim left Hajar near the Ka‘bah. In those days there was neither water nor habitation in Makkah. Ibrahim left them at this place and returned weeping.

Al-Qutb al-Rawandi says that when Isma‘il reached maturity he collected seven goats. That was all that he possessed. His facial hair was in abundance. He spoke Arabic and was an expert archer. After the demise of his mother, he married a woman from the tribe of Jurham. She was named Zahla or Amawa. Later he divorced her. He did not have any child from her. After that he married Sayyada the daughter of Harith bin Qass. From this wife he had many sons. His total life span was of 137 years and he was buried in Hijr Isma‘il.

Authentic chain of traditionalists state that according to Imam Ja‘far as-Sadiq the age of Isma‘il was 130 years. He is buried near his mother in Hijr Isma‘il. The descendants of Isma‘il were the bearers of the

post of successorship (caliphate). They looked after the pilgrims until the time of Adnan bin Awd.

Another authentic hadith from the Holy Prophet says that both the sons of Ibrahim, viz. Isma'il and Ishaq lived for 120 years.[8](#)

A hadith quoted from Imam Musa Ibn Ja'far says that when Ibrahim was leaving Hajar and Isma'il at Makkah, they began to lament.

“Why do you weep?” asked Ibrahim, “I am leaving you at a place that is most beloved one of Allah and the sanctuary (Haram) of Allah is also situated here?”

“I never expected this from a Prophet like you,” said Hajar.

“What did I do?” asked Ibrahim.

“You are leaving a helpless woman and a weak child in a place where there is no one to help them and there is neither vegetation and water nor any habitation.”

Upon hearing these words Ibrahim began to weep. He came to the door of Ka'bah and said, “O My Lord! I have settled some of my progeny in a barren valley near Your Holy House, so that they may establish prayers. So I beg you to instill their love in the hearts of some people and they are attracted towards them; and grant them fruits in excess so that they be thankful to you.”

The Almighty Allah revealed to him that he should go atop the mountain of Abu Qubais and call the people for the hajj of Ka'bah as ordered by Him. For the Ka'bah is the Holy sanctuary of Allah in Makkah.

Thus Ibrahim scaled the peak of Abu Qubais and called out in his loud voice. The Almighty spread his call to the east and the west of the earth and all the people heard it. Even those who were in the loins of their father or in the wombs of their mother. Therefore hajj became incumbent for all the creatures from that time onwards. And the Talbiya (Reply) that the hajj chant is the reply to the call of Ibrahim, the call that he had issued under the Divine instructions.

A good chain of narrators relates from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq that the pigeons that inhabited the precincts of the Ka'bah from the progeny of pigeons owned by Isma'il. In another tradition it is mentioned that Hijr was the residence of Isma'il. Hajar is buried at that very spot. Imam says in another narration that Hijr Isma'il is not a part of Ka'bah because when Hajar was buried there, he constructed boundary wall so that her grave does not get trampled under the feet of pilgrims. It contains the graves of other Prophets also.

In the same way a reliable tradition says that the graves of the unmarried daughters of Isma'il are situated near the third 'Rukn'.

Acceptable traditions give additional information alluding to Qur'anic ayats that Makkah has 'Maqaame Ibrahim' (place of Ibrahim) where he stood during the construction of Ka'bah and the stone on which he stood was inscribed with the print of his soles. And that the marks of his feet are still there. Also that the Black stone was the abode of Isma'il [9](#)

Ibrahim prepares to slaughter his son; Who was taken for the slaughter—Isma'il or Ishaq?

The Sixth holy Imam, Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq is reported through correct or rather authentic traditions that he said: Archangel Gabriel came to Ibrahim on the 8th of Dhu'l-hijjah at the time of zawaal (decline of Sun from its zenith) and said, "O Ibrahim, procure water for yourself and your family." At that time there was no water between Makkah and 'Arafat. So Archangel Gabriel led Ibrahim to Mina and he prayed Zuhr and Asr, then Maghrib and Isha and finally the Fajr prayers. When the sun arose they left for 'Arafat, reached Marwa and halted there. At the time of Zawaal, they prayed Zuhr and Asr with one *Azaan* but with different *Iqamah*, at the spot where the Masjid of 'Arafat is situated.

Then he made him stand in an empty space and told him to repent for his sins. (Eteraaf) and to Understand the rituals of his hajj. Ibrahim was made to stand there until sunset. Then he was ordered to proceed towards *Mashar-al-haram*. Upon reaching Mashar he performed the Maghrib and Isha prayers with one *Azaan* and two different *Iqamah*. He spent the night there and when he finished his morning prayers the next day, Archangel Gabriel showed him the position and brought him to Mina and told him to throw pebbles at Al-Jamarah Aqba as this was where Satan had appeared first. Then he was instructed in the ritual of the slaughter. When Ibrahim reached *Masharul haram* he went to sleep that night, happy and satisfied. He dreamt that he was slaughtering his son. He had brought his wife and son with him for hajj. When they reached Mina, they stoned the Satan together. Then he told Sarah to go and visit Ka'bah keeping the son with himself. Then he took his son to the middle Satan and discussed the matter with him as mentioned in Qur'an:

O my son! Surely I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice you; consider then what you see."
(37:102)

The righteous son told his father to complete the task he had begun.

"He said, O my father! Do what you are Commanded; if Allah please, you will find me of the patient ones." (37:102)

Thus both of them submitted to the will of Allah and suddenly Satan appeared in the form of an old man.

"Ibrahim, where are you taking this lad?" asked Satan.

"I want to slaughter him," replied Ibrahim

"*SubhanAllah* (Glory be to Allah)!" exclaimed the Satan, "You are going to slaughter this Child who never committed the smallest of sins?"

“But my Lord has commanded me for it,” said Ibrahim

“Your Lord prohibits you!” lied Satan. “Satan has fooled you into it!”

“Fie upon you!” said Ibrahim, “The One Who has conferred Prophethood upon me has ordered me for it. And I received the Divine Command through the same Angel whose voice I am familiar with. I have no doubt about it.”

“By Allah,” persisted Satan, “No one but Satan has issued such an order.”

“By Allah,” said Ibrahim, “I do not wish to speak about it to you.” And he decided to go ahead with his mission.

Satan made a last effort and said, “O Ibrahim you are the leader of all the creatures, and people follow your example. If you perform such an act all people will be compelled to slaughter their own children.”

Ibrahim did not reply. He discussed the matter with his son. When both of them agreed to fulfill the Divine Command, the son told his father to cover his face and to tie the hands and the legs securely. Ibrahim said he could either slaughter him or tie his hands and feet. But he could not muster the strength to do both the things. So he spread out a skin and made the son lie on it. Then he placed the knife at his throat and raised his head towards the sky. Then he held the knife with all his strength. Archangel Gabriel turned the knife so that the unsharpened edge did not cut the throat. Ibrahim saw that he was holding the knife the wrong way. He corrected it and repeated the act. Again Archangel Gabriel turned the knife. This happened many times. Finally Archangel Gabriel brought a ram from the hillside and removed the child from under the hands of Ibrahim and replaced him with the ram. And a voice from the direction of Khaif Mosque announced, “You have fulfilled your dream. We reward the righteous servants in this way. Indeed this was a manifest examination!”

Meanwhile the Satan came to the wife of Ibrahim when the Ka‘bah was yet far away. He asked her of the person he had met in Mina. She said that it was her husband.

“And the boy with him?” he asked.

“He is my son,” she replied.

“I have seen that man had laid down the boy and was holding a knife ready to slaughter him,” said the Satan.

“You lie!” said Sarah, “Ibrahim is the most merciful man, how can he slaughter his own son?”

“By the Lord of the heavens and the Earth, by the Lord of this great house! I have seen with my own eyes the man has laid down the son and readied the knife to slaughter him.”

“But why?” asked Sarah

“He is under the impression that his Lord has commanded him for it.”

“Then he must follow the commands of his Lord,” she said.

After completing the rituals she hurried towards Mina. Keeping her hands on her head she said again and again, “O Allah! Do not punish me for what I have done to the mother of Isma‘il!”

When she came to Ibrahim and inquired about her son, she was shocked to see the scar of the Knife. She fell ill and left for the heavenly abode.

The narrator asked Imam about the place where Ibrahim carried out the slaughter.

“Near the middle Al-Jamarah,” replied Imam, “And the ram descended from heaven on the mountain that is on the right of Mina Mosque. It used to graze there in darkness.”

“What color was it?” inquired the narrator

“Black and white,” Imam said, “big in size and with large horns.”[10](#)

Trustworthy chains of reporters quote Imam al-Ridha that the Holy Prophet said, “I am the son of two slaughtering.”

Imam explained, “The two “slaughtering” were Isma‘il the son of Ibrahim and ‘Abdullah the son of Abdul Muttalib.” Isma‘il was that forbearing person whose glad-tidings were conveyed to Ibrahim. When he grew up enough to walk with his father, Ibrahim told him one day that he had dreamt that he was slaughtering him. “So I want you to think upon it and take a decision.”

“Dear father,” said Isma‘il, “Go ahead with your mission.” He did not ask him to go ahead with what he had seen in dream.

“You shall find me of the patient ones.”

When Ibrahim took him for the slaughter, the Almighty ransomed him with black ram that used graze and feed only in dark. It was capable of seeing and roaming in the darkness. It could also speak, and forty years hence it had grazed in the gardens of Paradise. It was not born from the womb. The Almighty had ordered ‘Be’ and it one into being, so that one day it shall become the ransom of Isma‘il. And all the sacrifices that one performed in Mina, until the Resurrection Day shall be the ransom of Isma‘il. This is the meaning of “Two slaughtering.”[11](#)

Shaykh Muhammad bin Babawayh quotes the above hadith then says, that there are different explanations of the term “slaughtered one.” Some say it was Isma‘il and some mention Ishaq. And it is not possible to reject the traditions received through proper sources. In reality the incident occurred with regard to Isma‘il but when Ishaq was born he also desired to be made a sacrificial ram like his brother. He also wished to exhibit patience and obtain a lofty status like Isma‘il. The Almighty knew that he was

sincere in his intentions, so ordered the Angels to name him 'zabih' (slaughtered one). This explanation is recorded through reliable channels from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq. Moreover the claim of the Holy Prophet that he was the son of two "slaughtered ones" also fits because the uncle is equal in status of the father. This point is mentioned in Qur'an and the Holy Prophet has said, "An uncle is like the father? So from this aspect the statement of Holy Prophet is correct when he said "I am the son of two 'slaughtered ones.'" He was the actual descendent of the actual "slaughtered one" (Isma'il) the metaphoric descendent of the metaphoric "slaughtered one" (Ishaq).

'Zibh al-Azeem' (The great Sacrifice) can be explained in another way. Fadhl bin Shadhan says that he has heard Imam al-Ridha say, "When the Almighty commanded Ibrahim to sacrifice his son Isma'il and he obliged. The Almighty replaced Isma'il with a ram. When Ibrahim came to know this he became disappointed that he was not allowed to slaughter Isma'il and that he was denied the rewards he would have earned for sacrificing his son for Allah. So the Almighty Allah asked him who his most beloved one was. He replied, 'No one is more beloved to me that Muhammad al-Mustafa.'

'Do you value you life more or the life of Muhammad al-Mustafa?'

'I love him more than my life,' said Ibrahim.

'Whom do you prefer, his son or your own son?'

'His son,' replied Ibrahim

'Would you be pained more to see him slaughtered by his enemies or slaughtering your son with your hands be painful?'

'My Lord! It would be more painful if his son is slaughtered by the enemies.'

The Almighty revealed, 'O Ibrahim! A group claiming to be from the community of Muhammad (Muslims), after his passing away from this world would slaughter his son just like a ram is slaughtered. And they would become eligible for My wrath.'

After listening to this heart-rending prophecy Ibrahim became sorrowful. He began a plaintive lamentation. Then Allah revealed.

'O Ibrahim! I have taken this lamentation of yours as the ransom of your son Isma'il. For you would have lamented in the same way, had you slaughtered Isma'il with your hands. So I bestow you with the best of the rewards that is given to those eligible for them due to their afflictions. This is the explanation of the words: We ransomed him with a great sacrifice.' (37:107)

It is recorded in reliable traditions that the ram of Ibrahim was one of those creatures whom Allah created without the mother's womb.

In a trustworthy hadith people asked Imam al-Ridha whether Isma'il was 'Slaughtered' by Ibrahim or it was Ishaq "It was Isma'il," replied Imam "It seems you have not seen the Almighty's words wherein He gave the glad-tidings of Ishaq to Ibrahim after He has mentioned the incident of Isma'il in Surah al-Saffat. So how can Ishaq be the 'Slaughtered one'?"

According to a reliable tradition from Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali the 'Slaughtered one' was Isma'il

A trustworthy source mentions that people asked Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq why the spleen of a slaughtered animal became haram (Prohibited). Imam explained: When Ibrahim was preparing to slaughter Isma'il, a ram was brought from the Bashir Mountain of Makkah to ransom the sacrifice of Isma'il. The Satan came to him to claim his portion in the slaughtered ram. Ibrahim told him that the sacrifice was exclusive for Allah. But Allah sent a revelation and said the Satan too has a share in it. Then He ordered Ibrahim to hand over to Satan the spleen, which is the organ where blood collects. The testicles are also haram because it is here that semen is produced. Hence Ibrahim gave the spleen and testicles to the accursed Satan.

In a reliable tradition someone asked Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq whether Isma'il was older or Ishaq. Imam said that Isma'il was five years older to Ishaq, and he was the 'Slaughtered one.' He resided in Makkah and Ibrahim took him for the slaughter. Also, there was a gap of five years between the glad tiding of the birth of Isma'il and Ishaq. Have you not heard the Qur'anic words that Ibrahim requested Allah,

My Lord! Grant me of the doers of good deeds. (37: 100)

Allah accepted his request:

"So we gave him the good news of a boy, possessing forbearance." (37: 101)

That was Isma'il, through the womb of Hajar . Then a big ram was sent as a ransom for Isma'il.

And in a trustworthy hadith Imam says that if the meat of any other animal had been purer than that of the ram, Allah would have sent it as the ransom of Isma'il. One version of hadith mentions the name of Ishaq in place of Isma'il.

One more tradition from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq says that Ya'qub wrote to the 'Aziz (chief) of Egypt: We Ahl al-Bayt (People of the house) are prone to examinations and tests. Our forefather Ibrahim was tested by the fire and my father Ishaq was examined by the slaughter.

In a trustworthy source is mentioned a tradition from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq that he said, "Sarah told Ibrahim that he had become old. And had he invocated Allah to grant him a son to illuminate their eyes, the Almighty would have granted his request because he was the Khalil of Allah. Ibrahim prayed to Allah to grant him an intelligent son. The Almighty revealed that He would bestow upon him a wise son. And through him would examine Ibrahim's obedience towards Himself. After three years again Ibrahim received the glad-tidings of Isma'il.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq is quoted in a good tradition that when people asked who was taken for sacrifice, he replied, "It was Isma'il."

In a reliable tradition some people asked Imam about the period between the glad tiding of Isma'il and that of Ishaq

"There was a gap of five years," replied Imam. The Almighty said,

"So We gave him the good news of a boy, possessing forbearance." (37:101)

This was the 'good news' of Isma'il. And when Ishaq was born to Sarah and one day when he was three years and sitting in the lap of his father, Isma'il came and pushing him aside himself sat there. Sarah witnessed this and said, "Hajra's son pushes my son to sit in your lap. By Allah! Hajar and her son cannot live in the same town where I live. Take them away."

Ibrahim loved Sarah very much, and used to respect her rights. She was a descendant of Prophets and his cousin. But her demand was very difficult to fulfill. Ibrahim could not bear the separation of Isma'il. The same night an Angel appeared in his dream and commanded him to sacrifice Isma'il at Makkah during the hajj season. Ibrahim rose with a heavy heart next morning. The season of hajj neared. Ibrahim took Hajar and Isma'il from Syria to Makkah during the month of Dhu'l-hijjah, in order to slaughter Isma'il during the hajj. He raised the walls of the Ka'bah and with the intention of performing hajj headed for Mina. After completing the rituals of Mina he returned with Isma'il and performed the circumambulation (circumambulating) of the Ka'bah seven times. Then he turned his attention towards Safa and Marwa to complete the ritual of Say'. When he reached between Safa and Marwa he told Isma'il, "My son! I dreamt that I was slaughtering you during this hajj, so what do you say?"

"Father! Go ahead with whatever you have been sent for," said Isma'il.

After completing Say' he took Isma'il to Mina, and that was on the day of Sacrifice. As he lifted the knife he heard a voice, "O Ibrahim! You have fulfilled your dream, and obeyed My Command." Then a big ram was given in ransom of Isma'il and its meat donated to the poor and needy.

Imam al-Ridha was asked, "Why 'Mina' is called as 'Mina'?" Imam said that because it was here that Archangel Gabriel told Ibrahim to ask Allah for his wish (Tamanna). Hence Ibrahim expressed his wish for a ram that he can slaughter as the ransom of Isma'il. The Almighty accepted his wish. [12](#)

[1.](#) There is no contradiction in above traditions. Ibrahim was given the status of Khalil because he had all the perfect qualities. The traditions regarding the 'friendship' are mostly those that exhort the perfection of moral qualities.

[2.](#) According to the writer, this proves that the incident of Nimrod and the gnat is correct but he could not find it in a reliable tradition.

[3.](#) There is no contradiction in these traditions. It is possible that all this has occurred. Ibrahim must have recited the invocations and made the Holy Prophet and Imams as his intercessors. As a result, the Almighty sent for him the garment and ring and ordered the "Be Cool O! Fire."

[4.](#) It is well-known among the historians that Nimrod was also seated with his personal assistant in the box.

5. This part contains some controversial points and even though he has explained them in Behaarul Anwaar, it is necessary to mention them here also. The apparent meaning of the ayats is that Azar was the father of Ibrahim and the same is well-known among Sunnis. However, it is famous or rather a unanimous opinion of the Shi'ah scholars that Tarukh and not Azar was the father of Ibrahim. And the Tarukh was a Muslim. The greatest scholars of Shi'ahs have defended this opinion by the traditions that all the ancestors of the Holy Prophet until Adam were Monotheists. They were also either Prophets or their legates. Since Ibrahim is one of the ancestors of the Holy Prophet it is necessary that his father must be a Muslim too. The genealogists also agree that Ibrahim's father was Tarukh. Therefore whenever the Qur'an or hadith mention Azar as the father of Ibrahim, it is only a metaphor because he was the uncle of Ibrahim Referring to ones Uncle as father is an Arabian custom. It is also possible that Azar was Ibrahim's uncle and after his father's death married Ibrahim's mother. Since he brought up Ibrahim under his care, he is referred to as his father. Some of the traditions that cannot be justified may have been narrated under dissimulation (Taqiyyah). Secondly the Almighty says in the incident of Ibrahim.

“Then he looked at the stars, looking up once,

Then he said, Surely I am sick, (of your worshipping these).” According to the explanatory traditions when the people were leaving for celebrations Ibrahim looked at the stars and said he was sick. Then he broke the idols. Why did he make such a statement? Was it true or false? According to some Ibrahim had intermittent fever and thus looked at the stars and said, “It is the time for my repentance, I will be having fever and hence cannot go out. Others say that since the people were practitioners of astrology, Ibrahim also studied the stars before stating that he had fever, whether truly or just as an excuse. Because an untrue statement can be spoken as an allusion. With the intention of a true statement, it can be spoken as toriya. It is not considered a lie and is permissible. Rather in some demanding circumstances, it becomes obligatory to ward off danger to ones life or property. Some scholars have also explained the ayah in a way that Ibrahim looked at the stars, that are created by Allah and said that he was sick of the fact that people should worship the stars and idols. The apparent meaning of some authentic tradition shows that the statement of Ibrahim was spoken for some special reason. Ibrahim spoke by way of toriya and hence the people failed to understand the true meaning.

Thus some people asked Ja'far al-Sadiq as to how Ibrahim said, “I am sick.” Imam said that Ibrahim was not sick, but he did not lie. What he meant was that he was sick in finding a correct method to defeat the false religion of those people. Another tradition states that he said ‘I will be sick.’ And as a person is helpless in death, he is helpless in sickness also. In yet another narration it is said that when Ibrahim had the premonition of the tragedy of Imam al-Husayn he became sick of sorrow.

The third objection is that when it is proved that all Prophets are infallible from birth then how Ibrahim said ‘This is my Lord’, when he beheld the star. Because apparently it is disbelief (Kufr). What is the actual meaning of this statement? This can be justified in a number of ways. Firstly, there is something as contemplation. A person presumes something and wonders. ‘If it is so.’ Then he thinks upon it and takes a decision.

Thus we have an authentic tradition from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq wherein people asked him if Ibrahim committed Kufr when he saw the star and said ‘This is my Lord!’ Imam explained that the statement of Ibrahim cannot be called Kufr since he was in search of truth and wanted to expound the philosophy of Tawhid. And that, if any person were to make such a statement now, it would be Kufr.”

In another reliable tradition he says that if anyone says it in search of truth he would be like Ibrahim. Secondly, though it was an assertion it could be construed as an assumption. Moreover, Ibrahim said this because if he had right away testified to Allah's oneness the people might have abandoned him right away without allowing him to complete the proof. So he sought their support in the beginning and then proved that it cannot be so. This convinced the people. Lending support to this argument is the tradition of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq that he said the statement of Ibrahim was not his own but what people used to believe. He only repeated it.

Thirdly, the words of Ibrahim can be rhetorical. This is saying the opposite of what he means.

Al-Ma'mun asked Imam al-Riḍa the exegesis of the same ayah. Imam said, “At that time there were three kinds of people. Some worshipped Venus, some worshipped the moon and some deified the Sun. When Ibrahim came out of the cave where he was hidden since birth, the Sun had already set and Venus shone on the sky. He made a rhetorical statement, it was not an assertion. After Venus set he said, ‘I do not like those who set. Because setting and receding into concealment is a sign of a temporal being. It is not a sign of permanence and omniscience.’ Then he looked at the luminous moon and

said by way of rhetoric, 'This is my Lord?' When it has also set, he said, 'If my Lord had not guided me I would have gone astray.' Imam says, "He meant to say that if he had not been in the guidance of Almighty he would have been among the infidels."

When it was morning and the sun arose. Ibrahim said by way of rhetoric, 'Is this my Lord? For it is larger than Venus and larger than the Moon.'

When the Sun also set, he addressed the three groups and said, "O people! Keep away from those whom you associate with Allah. I have turned my face towards the One who originated the heavens and the earths. I am sincere in dissociating from all false beliefs. I am not a polytheist."

It is also possible that Ibrahim intended to convince the people of the fallacy of worshipping objects that had temporal characteristics of the Venus, Moon and Sun. Whereas the one who deserved to be worshipped is the one who created the heavens and the earth. The arguments that Ibrahim employed were revealed to him by the Almighty Himself. As we read at the conclusion of this incident that Allah says, "And this was Our argument which We gave to Ibrahim against his people;" (Surah Anaam 6:83).

After Imam al-Riḍā concluded his speech Al-Ma'mun said, "O son of the Messenger of Allah may Allah reward you for this. You have untied the knot in my heart."

In another authentic tradition it is mentioned that Ibrahim was born during the reign of Nimrod the son of Canaan. And those four kings have reigned over the entire earth. Two of them were believers: Sulayman and Dhu'l-Qarnayn and the other two were infidels: Nebuchadnezzar and Nimrod. Nimrod was informed that a male child was to be born that year. He would destroy him, his religion and his idols.

After securing this information, he appointed female spies for expectant ladies and ordered all newborn boys to be killed that year. The mother of Ibrahim was also pregnant that year. The Almighty fixed the foetus of Ibrahim of the back of his mother instead of the belly. When he was born, his mother hid him in a cave below the surface of the earth and closed the entrance. He grew up unlike other children and his mother visited him occasionally. Thus, when he came out of the cave for the first time, he saw Venus shining on the sky. He had not seen a more beautiful star. "This is my Lord," said he. The Moon arose after some time. When Ibrahim saw the moon, he said, "It is bigger. This is my Lord!" When the Moon set he said, "I do not associate with those who set." Then it was morning and the Sun appeared. "This is my Lord!" He said, "It is bigger than all the others." When the Sun also set, he turned away from all of them and faced the Lord of the worlds.

This hadith contains all the points of justifications. Moreover, there are some other reasons that I have explained in Behaarul Anwaar.

Ibrahim's statement upon the disappearance of Venus that he did not consider it as his Lord is significant for the fact that when a star rises, it is more luminous and bright but at the time of setting it loses its luster and becomes dull. Therefore, the people used to worship it at the time it arose. Ibrahim wanted to point out the fallacy of the people in worshipping something that is inconsistent. One should worship only that which is ever-present and able to benefit its creatures, without any conditions attached. Something that is constant in bestowing benefits. Also, that something which is subject to change is itself temporal. It is also possible that Ibrahim wanted to call their attention towards this particular phenomena because they were aware of the effect of the Star at the time of its rising and knew that it weakens by the time it is setting. Therefore Ibrahim presented a convincing argument that something which is itself imperfect cannot create perfect things.

Apart from these, there are also methods to prove the same points but they are beyond the scope of the present book. The fourth objection concerns the breaking of idols by Ibrahim and then claiming that the largest of them has done it. For it is a lie and a Prophet can never lie. This doubt can also be explained in a number of ways:

First of all the statement of Ibrahim was conditional because he said, "The biggest of them did it. Ask them if they can talk." (Surah Anbiya 21:63). It means that if they were capable of talking and deserving of worship they could have performed such an action. Actually, it was a great insult to the idols. That those who cannot talk and cannot protect themselves and neither cause benefit nor harm, then how foolish it is to worship them.

Accordingly when Ja'far al-Sadiq was asked for the tafsir of this ayah he said, "Ibrahim said, "If they could talk" at the conclusion of his statement. It means that if they can talk, the largest one has done it. Otherwise not." Hence Ibrahim did not make a false statement." Secondly, accusing the largest idol for the act was metaphor. Ibrahim had broken the idols because the people venerated them. Since they respected the largest idol more, it was entitled to greater blame. It is

common in Arabic language to associate the verb with something other than the doer of the action.

Thirdly, 'the biggest of them' is the second phrase of the ayah, preceded by 'he has done it'. The first phrase could mean 'one who did it, he has done it'. "If what you say is true that they are gods, the biggest of them is present, ask him who did it."

Fourthly, falsehood is a statement that is against reality and bereft of any wisdom. Ibrahim said that for hidden wisdom, to defeat the people in logical reasoning. Accordingly, there is an authentic tradition from Ja'far al-Sadiq that a person who says something untrue for the sake of correcting someone cannot be blamed for lying. Then Imam recited the above ayah and said, "By Allah! The idols didn't do it and neither Ibrahim uttered a lie." And in another tradition Imam says, "Allah likes the lie that is uttered like Ibrahim for reforming the people. He said, 'He had done it, the biggest of them,' for educating the people. He proved that they did not possess the power of reasoning."

6. Different traditions mention different species of birds. This could be due to dissimulation (Taqiyyah), and narrated on the times of Sunnis. It is also possible that the incident occurred more than once though its unlikely.

Secondly, how Ibrahim was the victim of doubt regarding the power of Allah to give life and death. This controversy can be cleared in a number of ways. First, he wanted to see the actual process though he believed in it. When some people asked Imam al-Riza, "Was Ibrahim in doubt when he said, But that may be at ease?" Imam replied, "No, he was not in doubt, but he wanted to increase his faith in the Almighty." Imam Musa al-Ka'im has also explained in the same way.

Second: Though he believed in the raising of dead, he wanted to witness the process with his own eyes.

Third: As mentioned in a tradition mentioned above, he wanted to be sure he was the appointed 'Khalil.;

Fourth: That Nimrod had challenged him to enliven the dead and warned him of dire consequences if he didn't. So Ibrahim desired to obtain his hearts' ease and also comply with Nimrod's challenge. But only two of the reasons are mostly likely ones. And Shaykh Muhammad bin Babawayh has related that Muhammad bin 'Abdullah bin Tayfoor told me regarding the ayah. "O Lord show me how you enliven the dead," that the Almighty told Ibrahim to visit one of his exalted servants.

When Ibrahim paid him a visit he said that there is a person by the name of Ibrahim and the Almighty has taken him as His Khalil. Ibrahim asked what was the proof of this. The man replied, "Allah will enliven the dead for him."

Ibrahim suspected that he himself was that Khalil, and to make sure requested Allah to give life to the dead. The Almighty asked him if no faith had in it. He replied that he had faith but wished to put his heart at ease. (that I am that Khalil) He also wished to have miracle as the other Prophets had. So he requested the Almighty to raise the dead to life. The Almighty ordered him to kill a living being. Ibrahim slaughtered his son Isma'il. The Almighty ordered him to slaughter four birds:

Peacock, pigeon, wild duck and a cock:

Peacock symbolized the embellishments of this world, pigeon stood for the increasing hopes, for it had a long life-span, the wild duck indicated jealousy and the cock was a symbol of sensuality. So the Almighty told him that if he wished to enliven his heart and put it to ease he must purify his heart from the four things and kill them by his self. Because even if one of them remains in the heart, it cannot be at ease. The Shaykh says that he asked him as to why the Almighty asked him, "Do you not believe?" When He was aware that Ibrahim was a believer. Muhammad bin 'Abdullah replied, "Because the request of Ibrahim apparently indicated doubt. And the Almighty wished to clear him of all blame. So Ibrahim said that he was not it doubt but wanted to strengthen his faith. Or other reasons as mentioned above.

Since the words of Ibn Tayfoor are not hadith they cannot be relied upon like we rely on authentic traditions. But since the Shaykh has mentioned them, I too quote the same.

7. It is despicable if one wishes for a long life merely to obtain the worldly pleasures. However, it is meritorious if he prays for a long life in order to perform good deeds that will benefit him in the Hereafter. It is the love for Almighty, an exclusive love for Him. Therefore, many supplications contain words asking for a long life. But the perfection of character lies in that a man should be satisfied with divine decree. If he knows that Allah wants death for him, he should similarly accept it. But if one does not know what Allah expects of him, he should pray for a long life so that he can gain the Almighty's recognition. It will signify his love for Allah. The Prophets prayed for a long life only until the time they knew Allah is satisfied with their entreaties. If they had preferred a long life more than Allah's satisfaction they would never have put themselves in perilous circumstances.

8. These traditions differ with regard to the age of Isma'il the disparity could be due to dissimulation (Taqiyyah) or the fact that some traditions were issued to correct others.

[9.](#) We have included some incidents from the life of Ibrahim, Isma'il and Ishaq in our account of Luṣ.

[10.](#) This hadith proves that the son Ibrahim took for slaughter and the incident that is mentioned in the Qur'an concerned Ishaq. There are vast differences among the Shi'ah and Sunni scholars regarding this matter. The Jews and Christians apparently believe it was Ishaq. The Shi'ah traditions mention both Isma'il and Ishaq and the majority of Shi'ah scholars believe it was Isma'il, because the majority of reports support this view. The apparent import of the Qur'anic Verse is also this as explained in the background of traditions. If there is no agreement who was taken for slaughter, we can reconcile the traditions by saying it happened for both of them. It seems that the name of Ishaq is mentioned on the basis of Taqiyyah or it had been the prevalent view among the scholars of opposing schools. The unanimity of the People of Book cannot be depended upon. Moreover, a Rabbi came to Umar Ibn Abdul 'Aziz who questioned him concerning this topic. He said the Jew and Christian scholars know that it was Isma'il but due to jealousy they deny it because Ishaq is their ancestor, whereas Isma'il is the ancestor of Arabs. They wish to confine the merit to their ancestor and not for yours.

[11.](#) The writer says: The second sacrifice was that of 'Abdullah as mentioned in the account of the Holy Prophet. Refer to volume II.

[12.](#) I have quoted only a few traditions that prove the Sacrifice of Isma'il (instead of Ishaq) in this chapter though there are many more. If Allah wills we shall see many other narrations in the account of Luṣ.

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