

Prophet Ibrahim

Sura Nahl, verses 120-123

إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ كَانَ أُمَّةً قَانِتًا لِلَّهِ حَنِيفًا وَلَمْ يَكُ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

Indeed Abraham was a nation [all by himself], obedient to Allah, a Hanif, and he was not a polytheist.

شَاكِرًا لِّأَنْعَمِهِ ۖ اجْتَبَاهُ وَهَدَاهُ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ

Grateful for His blessings, He chose him and guided him to a straight path.

وَأَتَيْنَاهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً ۖ وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

We gave him good in this world, and in the Hereafter he will indeed be among the Righteous

ثُمَّ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ أَنْ اتَّبِعْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ۖ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

Thereafter We revealed to you, 'Follow the creed of Abraham, a Hanif, who was not a polytheist.'

In this passage Allah gives an example of a grateful servant so people learn about the importance of gratitude and the status of a grateful servant. The verses talk about the qualities of Prophet Ibrahim (a). His personality is an inspiration for all believers. His sincerity, his search for the truth, his firm stand against the polytheists, and his close relationship with Allah, all bear testimony to his great character.

In the first verse Allah describes four qualities of Prophet Ibrahim (a). He was:

a) **A Nation:** He – a single individual – is referred to as an Ummah. The following could be possible reasons he was referred to as an entire nation:

- i) His personality was so great that it was equivalent to that of a whole group of people. The rays of his personality reached far beyond that of a single person.
- ii) He was a leader and a teacher of humanity. Others followed him. As a leader he was the inspiration behind all their deeds and is thus regarded as a nation himself.
- iii) He was the only monotheist of his time – a nation of monotheism among a nation of idolaters.
- iv) He was the origin and source of the Muslim nation.

A Hadith in *Safīnatul Bihār* from the Ma'sūmīn (a) says about Prophet Muhammad's grandfather 'Abdul Muttalib, who was also a very great personality: *He will be raised on the Day of Judgment as one nation, on him will be the dignity of Kings and the characteristics of Prophets.* (2:139)

b) Obedient to Allah: He obeyed Allah in all matters – a true Muslim who submitted in its entirety to the will and pleasure of Allah.

c) Upright: the word *Hanīf* is used for showing the middle path, not leaning towards either extreme. It refers to one who stands up straight on the middle and balanced path which is right. The word is used more than six times in the Holy Quran to describe Ibrahim and his creed.

d) Not from the polytheists: It is one thing to say that someone is a monotheist. But to say that Ibrahim was *not from the polytheists* means he did not have an atom of polytheism in him; he was an absolute model of monotheism. Despite living in a society of idolaters he submitted to the One True God. He ordered his people to renounce the worship of idols. To convince them that the idols could not harm them nor do any good, he destroyed all the idols except the biggest of them. When asked about it he told them to ask the idols – if they could speak. The people had no answer for him. The Quran says: *They turned to themselves [inwards] and said: Surely you are the wrong doers. Then they hung their heads [and said]: Indeed you know they cannot speak.* (Q 21: 64-65). This was his way of showing the people the utter fallacy of their beliefs.

So many great qualities were combined in the personality of Prophet Ibrahim (a). Āyatullāh Nāsir Makārim Shirazī in his Tafsīr of this passage quotes an Arab poet who says:

It is not beyond Allah

To combine the world [of all good qualities] in one [person]

Prophet Ibrahim is an excellent example of one man who stood against the people and rituals of his time and established himself as the most praiseworthy leader of generations of believers to come. Human beings are wary of standing alone, afraid of the loneliness and isolation it brings, but it is necessary to do so when principles are at stake.

One more quality is mentioned in the second verse – grateful for His blessings. Gratitude to Allah is a key ingredient in being a good servant of Allah. It has a magical effect on the human spirit. Gratitude;

- 1) Connects us closer to Allah. When we appreciate His blessings, we appreciate Him. Our love for Him grows.
- 2) Makes us feel positive about our lives and removes negativity
- 3) Keeps us feeling happy, energetic and motivated
- 4) Improves our personalities, making us pleasant people to interact with. An unhappy person is miserable inside and makes others miserable.
- 5) Helps us handle difficulties in life. Being grateful makes us emotionally stronger and helps in coping with problems in life.

6) Increases our capacity to receive more blessings. Allah says: If you are thankful, I will increase it for you (Q₁₄:7)

Imam Ali (a) has said: When Allah bestows bounty upon a servant, no sooner does the latter feel thankful for it in his heart than he becomes deserving of increase therein before the expression of thanks has even reached his tongue. (Āmālī of al-Tūsī, p. 580, H. 1197)

Spending five minutes each day being grateful can enhance your well-being by more than 10% – the same impact of doubling your income (<http://happierhuman.com/benefits-of-gratitude/>).

Choose your own way of being grateful to God for a few minutes each day through remembering and counting some specific blessings each day. You may recite two rak'ats shukr salāt, perform sajdah of gratitude, recite with reflection Munājāt of Shākirīn (Supplication No. 74 in *Sahīfa Sajjādiyya*), being content with what you have, or anything else that works for you. Do it regularly.

Then Allah gives the results of the qualities of Prophet Ibrahim. How do they affect his status?

- he is chosen for Prophethood and to spread the mission of God. This is a great honor reserved for those who deserve it.
- he is guided towards the right path and protected from any form of deviation.
- he is granted good in the world – honor, dignity, a good family, strong morals and character. All these are from the blessings of the world.
- In the Hereafter he will have the status of the virtuous ones. It is an answer to his du'a - *My Lord! Grant me wisdom and join me with the Righteous.* (Q₂₆:83).

The last outstanding effect is that Prophet Ibrahim becomes a model not just for his own time but for all times to come. The Holy Prophet (s) is told in verse 123 to follow the path of Prophet Ibrahim. This shows the outstanding character of Prophet Ibrahim. The path of Islam is rooted in his history and the choices made by Prophet Ibrahim. The ritual of Hajj undertaken by millions of Muslims included a lot from Prophet Ibrahim and his family.