

## Prophet Ibrahim

Sura An'am verses 74-79

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ لِأَبِيهِ آزَرَ أَتَتَّخِذُ أَصْنَامًا آلِهَةً ۗ إِنِّي أَرَاكَ وَقَوْمَكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ

*When Ibrahim said to Azar, his father, 'Do you take idols for gods? Surely I think that you and your people are in clear error.'*

وَكَذَلِكَ نُرِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلِيَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُوقِنِينَ

*Thus did We show Ibrahim the kingdom of the heavens and the earth that he might be of those who have certainty*

فَلَمَّا جَنَّ عَلَيْهِ اللَّيْلُ رَأَىٰ كَوْكَبًا ۗ قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي ۗ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَا أُحِبُّ  
الْأَفْلِينَ

*When night darkened over him, he saw a star and said, 'This is my Lord!' But when it set, he said, 'I do not like those who set.'*

فَلَمَّا رَأَى الْقَمَرَ بَازِعًا قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي ۗ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَئِن لَّمْ يَهْدِنِي رَبِّي  
لَأَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الضَّالِّينَ

*Then, when he saw the moon rising, he said, 'This is my Lord!' But when it set, he said, 'Had my Lord not guided me, I would surely have been among those gone astray.'*

فَلَمَّا رَأَى الشَّمْسَ بَازِغَةً قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي هَذَا أَكْبَرُ ۖ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَتْ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ  
إِنِّي بِرِيءٍ مِمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ

*Then, when he saw the sun rising, he said, 'This is my Lord! This is bigger!' But when it set, he said, 'O my people, indeed I disown what you take as Allah's partners*

إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا ۖ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ  
الْمُشْرِكِينَ

*Indeed I have turned my face toward Him who originated the heavens and the earth, as a Hanif, and I am not one of the polytheists.*

The Quran uses the example of Prophet Ibrahim in many places. Many stories in the Quran tell us about incidents from his life. There could be many reasons for this. Prophet Ibrahim is revered by all religions and is the father of monotheistic faiths. His story is accepted by all. He is also a strong believer of Tawhid who stood up for what he believed in. He tried to guide his community and reasoned with them in many different ways. He had not fear of people, even of Kings and those in authority. His sincerity and dedication to God are evident in many of his stories. They continue to inspire all those who read about it.

This passage from Sura An'am tells the story of how Prophet Ibrahim fought against idol worship. The verses show a comprehensive and perfect reflection of inner purity. A nature that wants to worship the One Pure God who is above any flaws and inadequacies. There is a desire in all human beings to seek a perfect being to worship. When this desire is not fulfilled in the right way, it is replaced with substitutes. Substitute gods cannot guide the human being to perfection in any way.

The passage demonstrates the spreading of belief in Tawhid and bringing people towards God. It shows how to resist wrong and confront it with reason and logic. How to negate polytheism by showing its flaws and weaknesses. The passage also shows the importance of reflection and self-analysis.

The story is brought forth for the Holy Prophet so that he and the Muslims can understand the struggle of Prophet Ibrahim in his society. When they confronted the idol worship of the Quraysh, the arguments of Prophet Ibrahim would be an inspiration for them. They would see how people in the past also had to be confronted and shown the error in what they were doing. There would be resistance and opposition, just as Prophet Ibrahim had faced.

In the first verse Prophet Ibrahim addresses his uncle Azar and asks him why he is worshipping idols as gods. Azar was his father's brother who later married his mother after his father's death (see notes on Introduction). During that time people used to carve stones and make idols for worship. These statues were considered as gods and they bowed and prayed before them. To Prophet Ibrahim it is clear that such man-made idols could not have the qualities of a God. He asked Azar to think about it. How could an idol be a god?

When Prophet Ibrahim rejected idol worship Allah showed him how He controlled the kingdom of the Heavens and the Earth. The word 'malakut' in the second verse of this passage is to emphasize the authority and control that Allah exercises over the heavens and earth. It comes from the word 'mulk'. The last two letters emphasize it to show complete kingship. There is no-one else who has any part in the control over the heavens and earth. This verse is a foreteller of the verses to come – the signs of control through the rising and setting of heavenly bodies will be shown to him. It summarizes what happened and then details it in the following verses.

The goal of showing him these signs is so that 'he might be of those who have certainty'. There was no doubt that Prophet Ibrahim was already at a stage of certainty (yaqin) gained through his fitrat and use of his aql. But showing him these signs would solidify his certainty and take it to the level of perfection.

In the next few verses Prophet Ibrahim reflects on what he sees and arrives at certain conclusions. Many people at that time worshipped heavenly bodies – the stars, the moon and the sun. Prophet Ibrahim proves to them that these do not have the qualities of a God and hence cannot be worshipped.

When it is night time and darkness covers the sky, Prophet Ibrahim looks at the stars and says maybe that is God. But when the star sets and is no longer visible he says it cannot be God. It does not have the qualities of God and he cannot accept it as God. God would be present all the time and is very close to His creatures at all times. He can also not be subject to change.

Again he looks at the sky and sees the moon. It shines brightly and appears big. He asks if that could be God. But when it vanishes behind the horizon he declares that it cannot be. God would not disappear like that. He says that had it not been for the guidance of God he could have erred by believing in the moon as God.

The night ended and daylight began. The sun spread its rays and radiated light and warmth. Prophet Ibrahim sees it and asks if that is God. It seems brighter and more powerful than the stars and the moon. But when the sun sets and its rays left the horizon Prophet Ibrahim turned to the people and said he disassociated himself from the beings they worshipped beside God. It was almost as though he was telling them he had considered all their objects of worship and none showed the necessary qualities that God would have. God was much greater than that He would come and go like the heavenly bodies.

In this story Prophet Ibrahim invites the polytheists towards a logical understanding of who or what cannot be a god. This passage shows that Prophet Ibrahim was very determined to counter idol - and nature-worshipping. He did not raise the possibility of the star, the moon and the sun being gods as a fact. He seemed to consider the possibility but proved how they could not be gods.

Then Prophet Ibrahim turns his face towards the God who controls all these aspects of nature. The one who originated them and sustains them. Turning of the face is symbolic of turning the self, to incline towards, to give complete attention to and focus on. Accepting that He is the Creator of all things entails two things; obedience and tawhid (refuting of polytheism). That is a natural result of understanding that God is the One who created us. He must have a purpose behind creation and to fulfill the purpose human beings need to obey the laws He has sent.

One of the du'as recommended after Iqamah before beginning salaah is based on this last verse and on verse 162 of the same sura. It says;

وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا مُسْلِمًا وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ  
 إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ  
 وَبِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful I have turned my face towards He who has originated the Heavens and the Earth, Believing, Submissive and I am not from the Polytheists Surely my prayer, my worship my life and my death are for the sake of Allah, the Lord of the worlds He has no partner and this [creed] I have been commanded to follow and I am from those who submit.

(Source: Adaab and Du'as for daily routine, Tayyiba Publishers)