



THE CHARACTER OF HAZRAT ISMA'IL

Alaihis Salaam

The incident of Hazrat Ibrahim (Alaihis Salaam) sacrificing his son for the pleasure of Allah Ta'ala is well-known. Hereunder the focus will be on the character that Hazrat Isma'il (Alaihis Salaam) showed during this trial from Allah Ta'ala.

Hazrat Ibrahim (Alaihis Salaam) made Dua in the Court of Allah Ta'ala, "O My Lord, bestow upon me a righteous son." [Surah 37, Verse 100] Allah Ta'ala accepted this Dua as He says in the Holy Qur'an, "So We gave him good news of a prudent son." [Surah 37, Verse 101] A few years later, Hazrat Isma'il (Alaihis Salaam) was born from Hazrat Bibi Hajira (Radiallahu Ta'ala Anha).

The Arabic adjective "Haleem" (prudent) is not usually applied to children. However, as we shall see, Allah Ta'ala's use of this adjective to describe Hazrat Isma'il (Alaihis Salaam) indicated that he would not rebel against his father when the divine command came, but would display docility and obedience.

He was a gentle and learned child and had now reached the age of seven. Hazrat Ibrahim (Alaihis Salaam) took him along wherever he travelled, praising the Lord unceasingly and experienced all the joys of fatherhood as he observed his son's fine character, good behaviour and piety, heard him discussing important questions like a great scholar, and saw that he really was a righteous son and a gentle child with a docile nature.

When the command came for Hazrat Ibrahim (Alaihis Salaam) to sacrifice his son, he put aside his love for his son for the pleasure of Almighty Allah. After seeing the dream for three consecutive nights, on the morning of the 10th of Dhul Hijja, Hazrat Ibrahim (Alaihis Salaam) instructed Hazrat Bibi Hajira (Radiallahu Ta'ala Anha) to wash Hazrat Isma'il (Alaihis Salaam), comb his hair, make him wear new clothes and perfume him. Hazrat Isma'il (Alaihis Salaam) was a handsome sight and there was something quite special about him that day. He talked so nicely with his mother, gladdening her heart.

Hazrat Ibrahim (Alaihis Salaam) took his son by the hand and they set off together to a place called Mina. Hazrat Isma'il (Alaihis Salaam) kept running on in front of his father, hopping and skipping before him as they went. Sometimes he would turn around to ask his father something, and then they proceeded on their way. He was so different today, in such high spirits.

Iblees the accursed could not bear this act of sacrifice for the pleasure of Allah Ta'ala and tried to convince Hazrat Ibrahim (Alaihis Salaam) not to go ahead with it. After being unsuccessful, he went to Hazrat Bibi Hajira (Radiallahu Ta'ala Anha), but failed with her as well. Lastly, he went to Hazrat Isma'il (Alaihis Salaam), in an attempt to deceive a mere seven year old child and to get him to disobey his father. So he went up to Hazrat Isma'il (Alaihis Salaam) and said, "Do you know where your father is taking you? Have you not noticed that he is carrying a rope and knife? You just go on playing but your father is going to tie you up and slit your throat!" Hazrat Isma'il (Alaihis Salaam) snapped back at him, "Be off with you, you devil! When was a father ever known to cut his own son's throat? Besides, my father is a Prophet. How could he deliberately cut the throat of his own son, knowing him to be a Prophet also?" Iblees replied, "But he imagines he has been commanded by Allah." The venerable Hazrat Isma'il (Alaihis Salaam) then said to him, "How can one talk of a Prophet 'imagining' that a command has come from Allah? If such a command has come it must be right and true. There is no question of imagining. Therefore, if

such a command has reached my father, then I am ready to play my part.” The devil was taken aback on getting such unexpected answers from the young Hazrat Isma’il (Alaihis Salaam), whom he had supposed he could deceive. Unaware of what he was bringing upon himself, he decided to try one last trick, so he said to Hazrat Isma’il (Alaihis Salaam), “Let us suppose the command your father has received is true. Does that mean that you will really offer your neck?” But before he had time to finish, Hazrat Isma’il (Alaihis Salaam) started to get angry with the devil’s impertinence, saying, “If such a command exists, my father is quite capable of carrying it out. Nor am I one to disobey this command. If every atom of me is an Isma’il, let each of them be sacrificed for the sake of my Lord!” He then picked up a stone from the ground, flung it in the eye of the cursed Iblees and blinded him in the right eye (Shaitaan had appeared to all three of them in human form).

Shaitaan beat a retreat, his eye blinded by the stone. After they had walked a little further, Hazrat Ibrahim (Alaihis Salaam) said, “Let’s pause a moment, Isma’il.” Hazrat Isma’il (Alaihis Salaam) stopped and they sat by a large rock. Hazrat Ibrahim (Alaihis Salaam) started to talk, explaining why they had come to this desolate place: “O my son, I have dreamt that I am sacrificing you, now look, what is your opinion?” [*Surah 37, Verse 102*] Hazrat Isma’il (Alaihis Salaam) then responded, “O my father, do as you are commanded, Allah willing, you will find me steadfastly firm.” [*Surah 37, Verse 102*]

When Hazrat Ibrahim (Alaihis Salaam) heard these words, he praised Allah Ta’ala. This was indeed the gentle and learned son Allah Ta’ala had granted him in answer to his prayer. It was apparent from all his actions and words, even at a tender age, that he was a Prophet and the son of a Prophet. He said, “My dear and respected father, I have some advice to offer you before you execute this important command. Tie my hands and feet tightly lest in my mortal agony I should hurt you. When you come to sacrifice me, turn my face towards the ground and apply the knife to the back of my neck. It might happen that, if you saw my face, your hand would tremble and you would be unable to wield the knife; in that case you would not behave properly toward your Friend. Tuck up your robe so that my blood does not splatter it; I do not wish the reward I shall receive from Allah Ta’ala to be deficient in any of the virtues. Sharpen your knife well so that when you press it in to cut my throat, I may not feel the pangs of death too keenly. Give my salutation to my mother. Tell her to endure with patience the command of Allah, but do not tell her how you sacrificed me. If you happen to see children of my age, do not weep and do not be sad. If you or my mother were to be sad, or if you should weep, you would cause my soul much grief.”

When Hazrat Ibrahim (Alaihis Salaam) heard these moving, innocent, yet heart-rending words of his child, he said to him, “What a helper you have been to me in carrying out the command of Allah.” Hazrat Isma’il (Alaihis Salaam) then said imploringly, “Come my dear father, carry out the command you have been given.” Hazrat Ibrahim (Alaihis Salaam) laid his son down and performed two cycles of prayer, thereafter raising his blessed hands in complete reverential supplication.

Referring to this the Holy Qur’an states, “Then they both submitted to Allah’s command and he laid down his son on his forehead.” [*Surah 37, Verse 103*]

He then took the knife and was aiming it at the neck of Hazrat Isma’il (Alaihis Salaam), when the Glorified and Exalted Lord removed the veil of mysteries from all the angels of heaven and earth. When they saw that Hazrat Ibrahim (Alaihis Salaam), for the sake of Allah, had laid his son down

for sacrifice and was applying the knife with all his might to the neck of his son, they all prostrated themselves at once. Almighty Allah said, "My angels, did you see? Ibrahim, my special friend, did not shrink from sacrificing his own son in obedience to My command. Did you see My Isma'il? He did not shrink from sacrificing his own life to please Me." The angels fell in prostration, saying, "Our Lord! Your servant Ibrahim (Alaihis Salaam) is truly worthy to be Your special friend, while Isma'il (Alaihis Salaam) is truly obedient and compliant to Your exalted command, a servant of Yours who accepts Your decree. You are the Most Merciful of the merciful."

Although Hazrat Ibrahim (Alaihis Salaam) pressed the knife to Hazrat Isma'il's (Alaihis Salaam) throat, the knife did not cut the tender flesh. Amazed at this, he sharpened the knife and tried again. Still it would not cut. Again and again he tried, but to no avail. Far from cutting, he had not made even a mark on Hazrat Isma'il's (Alaihis Salaam) throat. How could it, when the Noor-e-Muhammadi was present in Hazrat Isma'il (Alaihis Salaam)?

Getting angry, he struck the knife against a rock and the rock split into two. More bewildered he said to himself, "Rock it will cut, but not soft flesh. How can this be?" At that very moment, the knife was endowed with speech by Allah Ta'ala and it said, "O special friend of Allah, you want to cut but it is my Lord who enables knives to cut, fire to burn and water to drown, and He tells me not to cut. How can I cut unless I am given permission? I am incapable of cutting so much as one strand of his hair, let alone his throat."

At that, Hazrat Isma'il (Alaihis Salaam) said, "My dear father, as you were putting the knife to my throat, I mentioned the name of Allah. You should likewise proclaim His supreme greatness, and then strike with the knife." Hazrat Ibrahim (Alaihi Salaam) recited, "*Allahu Akbar*," and as he was pressing the knife to Hazrat Isma'il's (Alaihis Salaam) throat, the sound of "*Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar*" was heard coming from heaven. This was the voice of Hazrat Jibra'eel (Alaihis Salaam).

Summoning Hazrat Jibra'eel (Alaihis Salaam), Allah Ta'ala created a ram as a substitute sacrifice for Hazrat Isma'il (Alaihis Salaam), and commanded Hazrat Jibra'eel (Alaihis Salaam) to take it to Hazrat Ibrahim (Alaihi Salaam). When Hazrat Ibrahim (Alaihis Salaam) heard the voice of Hazrat Jibra'eel (Alaihis Salaam) proclaiming the greatness of Allah, he realized his trial was over and in grateful response he glorified Allah Ta'ala in the words, "*Laa Ilaaha Illallaahu Wallaahu Akbar*." Hazrat Isma'il (Alaihis Salaam) lay there listening to these utterances and he also realized that the Mercy of the All-Compassionate Lord had come over-flowing and proclaimed, "*Allahu Akbar Walillaahil Hamd*."

Regarding this, Allah Ta'ala says in the Glorious Qur'an, "Most certainly, you have fulfilled your dream; thus do We reward the righteous. No doubt, it was a clear test. And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice. And We left a good name for him in all successive generations. Peace be upon Ibrahim. And thus do We reward the righteous. [Surah 37, Verse 105-110]"

May Allah Ta'ala grant us the Taufeeq to learn from the obedience and patience of Hazrat Isma'il (Alaihis Salaam) and the steadfastness of Hazrat Ibrahim (Alaihis Salaam) in pleasing Almighty Allah, Ameen.

[Compiled from *Irshad: Wisdom of a Sufi Master* by Shaikh Muzaffer Al Jerrahi]