

Ibrahim (pbuh), Part 4, How it began?

Last week, we examined how Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham), peace be upon him (pbuh), engaged with his family in his call. We briefly noted that he addressed his father and paternal uncle, Azar. While the Qur'an does not explicitly state the nature of Azar's relationship to Ibrahim, there is near consensus among scholars that Azar was his uncle, not his biological father. The Qur'an recounts: **"And [mention] when Ibrahim said to his father, Azar: 'Do you take idols as gods? Indeed, I see you and your people in manifest error.'"** [Qur'an 6:74]. Scholars suggest that Azar was a sculptor who crafted idols from stone and sold them for worship, a central part of his uncle's income. This context highlights the potential economic disruption Ibrahim's message posed to his family's livelihood and the broader society.

But how did it all begin with Ibrahim? Interestingly, the answer to that question lies in another: Why did it begin?

As we've discussed in previous articles, Ibrahim (pbuh) was a young man when he began contemplating the universe and the many signs that pointed to the existence of a Creator. It was through deep reflection on the natural world, the stars, the moon, the sun, and all that surrounds us, that he came to believe in a higher power behind it all.

It is often the youth who ask the boldest questions. They challenge the status quo and think beyond inherited norms. Young people are not yet entangled in social obligations or bound by deep ties to those in power. Their dreams remain vivid, their ambitions unshaped by wealth or position. They still dare to take the first step, even if it goes against the tide. Ibrahim (pbuh) was no exception. His youthful clarity and courage sparked the journey that would define him as one of the greatest prophets in human history.

When Ibrahim's uncle did not care much about Ibrahim's remarks (remember he did not threaten any harm to Ibrahim, which is a good indicator that he did not take Ibrahim's remarks seriously, Ibrahim was not left alone. God (Allah) the Almighty was watching him and guiding him. *Allah is the name of God in Arabic and Aramaic. Aramaic is the language spoken by Jesus, pbuh, from which the Arabic language descended.*) The next verse says: **"Thus did we show Ibrahim (Abraham) the kingdom of the heavens and the earth that he be one of those who have Faith with certainty."** [Qur'an 6: 75]. The word "Thus" indicates that Ibrahim (pbuh) was not alone.

So what exactly happened that gave Ibrahim (pbuh) the deep faith in God? Ibrahim (pbuh), as a young man, started with what he had at hand. There must be



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a god, a Supreme Being, responsible for this creation. This Supreme Being must be worshiped. So the idea that there must be a god is already in Ibrahim's (pbuh) mind, and that god must be worshiped. But who and where is this god? Why did Ibrahim (pbuh) ask these two questions? Again, as a normal human being, he started from what he had at hand. His people worshiped many gods, and he believed the true god must be One, for he must not "need" anything, nor anyone, not even a partner or help. Surrounded by many statues, Ibrahim (pbuh) thought the true god must be seen!

The Quran describes Ibrahim's confusion: **"When the night fell over him, he saw a planet. He said, 'This is my lord!' But when it set, he said, 'I do not like those that set.' Then, when he saw the moon rising, he said, 'This is my lord!' But when it set, he said, 'If my Lord does not guide me, I will be of the misguided people.' Then, when he saw the sun rising, he said, 'This is my Lord!—it is the biggest.' But when it set, he said, 'O my people, I am innocent (have nothing to do) with your idolatry. I have turned**

my face (in worship) towards Him Who created the heavens and the earth—a monotheist—and I am not of the polytheists." [Qur'an 6: 76-79].

These verses are profoundly important in illustrating how a young man, Ibrahim (pbuh), was deeply engaged in searching for the true meaning of life. Unlike his people, who had been blindly following inherited traditions for generations, Ibrahim (pbuh) paused to question the very foundations of their beliefs. Not one among them seemed to ask: *What exactly are we doing? Does any of this make sense?*

Despite possessing intellect, reason, and the ability to reflect, human beings were carving idols out of stone, objects made by their own hands, and then worshiping them as gods. Ibrahim's awakening highlights the power of independent thought and the courage it takes to break free from cultural inertia in pursuit of truth.

Ibrahim (pbuh) began his journey by first seeking to prove to himself, before convincing others, that there must be a true Creator of this universe. He was actively searching for Him and for the right path that would lead to Him. Like anyone beginning such a journey, he imagined that this divine being must be unique, majestic, powerful, radiant, and high above everything.

So when he saw a bright celestial object, most likely

Venus or Jupiter, depending on the time of year, though the Qur'an does not specify, Ibrahim (pbuh) considered it a possible candidate for divinity. It was luminous, elevated, and seemed to watch over the world from the sky. Yet, he did not place full, true faith in this newly "discovered" god! A few hours later, the planet set. The disappearance of something thought to be divine didn't sit well with him. Could a god simply vanish? That, he reasoned, could not be right.

Then he saw the moon, likely full and bright, filling the night sky. Delighted by its appearance, he exclaimed in wonder and suspicion, "This is my Lord!" But the moon, too, stayed for only a while and then disappeared beyond the horizon. Once again, Ibrahim (pbuh) was unconvinced. A true God, he thought, cannot come and go.

Finally, the sun rose. Its sheer brightness and size must have struck him with awe. At that time, who wouldn't consider such a powerful celestial body to possess mysterious, possibly divine powers? Ibrahim (pbuh) declared, again in contemplation, "This is my Lord, this is bigger!" This statement reveals something profound: Ibrahim was sincerely looking for a god he could see. Perhaps he even hoped to communicate with him directly.

But, like the others, the sun eventually set. This

marked a turning point. Ibrahim (pbuh) concluded that none of these celestial objects, no matter how magnificent, could be the Creator. He turned to his people and said: **"O my people, I am free from what you associate with Allah."** [Qur'an 6:78] Ibrahim's words suggest that his people did worship the stars, moon, and sun, possibly through their physical representations as idols.

Ibrahim (pbuh) then made the most logical and heartfelt decision: **"Indeed, I have turned my face toward Him who created the heavens and the earth, inclining toward truth, and I am not of those who associate others with Allah."** [Qur'an 6:79] His journey is a model of honest inquiry, sincere reflection, and unwavering commitment to truth.

This story often prompts an important question: Did Ibrahim (pbuh) ever worship anything other than the One True God, Allah, before finding his way to the Lord of the heavens and the earth? The answer is a clear and emphatic: **No.** Ibrahim (pbuh) was never a worshiper of those celestial objects. Rather, he was searching, deeply and sincerely, for the Almighty. He never placed his faith in the stars, moon, or sun. There is powerful evidence for this interpretation, which we shall read next week.

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