

# Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph (pbu them)

We talked about Ibrahim (Abraham, peace be upon him, pbuh) and we mentioned that after leaving his city and his people, he went to settle somewhere else. Ibrahim longed for a child. Ibrahim knew that being blessed with a child is a matter in the hands of God (Allah). Allah is the name of God in Arabic and Aramaic. Allah is pronounced with an emphatic “L” as the “L” in the word “luck”.

When angels visited Ibrahim, pbuh, he offered them a roasted calf. The angels do not eat, so they did not eat the food Ibrahim offered them. Ibrahim grew suspicious of them, and the angels calmed him down. How many were the angels? The Qur’an does not say. The Qur’an describes this moment, **“And Our envoys came to Ibrahim (Abraham) with good news. They said, ‘Peace.’ He said, ‘Peace.’ Soon after, he came with a roasted calf. But when he saw their hands not reaching towards it, he became suspicious of them and conceived fear of them. They said, ‘Do not fear, we are sent to the people of Lot.’ [Qur’an 11:69-70].** They were sent to Sodom and Gomorrah with the punishment they were warned of.

But what is the good news the angels gave to Ibrahim? The Qur’an continues, **“And his wife was standing by, so she laughed. Then We gave her good news of Isaac, and after Isaac, Jacob. She said, ‘Alas for me.**

**Would I give birth when I am an old woman, and this husband of mine is an old man? This is something strange. They said, ‘Do you marvel at Allah’s command? Allah’s mercy and His Blessings be upon you, O People of the Household! He is Praiseworthy and Glorious.’ [Qur’an 11:71-73].**

Sarah, standing nearby, likely observed her husband’s apprehension towards their unexpected guests. Her fear turned to relief upon realizing they meant no harm, and she laughed aloud. The angels heard her laughter and delivered joyous news: Sarah herself would become pregnant and give birth to a son, Isaac (Is’haq in Arabic, Yitzhak in Hebrew, pbuh), who in turn would father Jacob (Ya’qub in Arabic, Ya’akov in Hebrew, pbuh). This blessed announcement of a son and a grandson was conveyed directly to Sarah, not to Ibrahim (Abraham), who already had a son, Ishmael, pbuh, with his second wife, Hajar.

It is interesting to know that the name Isaac means “laugh or laughter” and Jacob means “who follows”.

It is also important to mention that after being calmed down, Ibrahim, pbuh, started to argue for Lut’s people! This is how the Prophets and Messengers are: they show mercy and care deeply for people’s affairs. What good is their punishment if they just follow the message? Ibrahim may



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have argued to give Lut’s people more time. The Qur’an described this exact moment: **“So when Abraham’s fear subsided, and the good news had reached him, he began pleading with Us concerning Lot’s people. Abraham was gentle, kind, and devout. O Abraham, refrain from this. The command of your Lord has come—they have incurred irreversible punishment.” [Qur’an 11:74-76]**

The Prophet Isaac was mentioned by name in the Qur’an sixteen (16) times. Mostly in association with his father, his son, and his descendants. Muslims revere Isaac, pbuh, and believe he was a Prophet and received the revelation from God through Gabriel, pbuh.

The Quran mentions only brief glimpses of Isaac (peace be upon him). It states that his birth was a miracle, glad tidings, and a great joy for his aged parents, Ibrahim (Abraham, pbuh) and Sarah. It filled Abraham’s household with delight and prompted him to prostrate in gratitude to his Lord. The news also included the name of his son, Jacob (meaning “the successor” or “who comes after”). The hearts of both Abraham and Sarah were gladdened by

the birth of Isaac, and then by the birth of his son Jacob. God praised Isaac as a prophet among the righteous.

God mentions Isaac in the Quran as a knowledgeable youth, and that he is among the chosen and the excellent. He is also described as being among those of strength and insight, and among the leaders who guide by God’s command. He is counted among God’s righteous prophets, and God made him a prophet. From his lineage came Jacob, and from Jacob came Joseph and the Tribes (or the descendants of Jacob’s sons). Among the verses of the Qur’an that mentions Isaac, **“Say, (Oh Muslims) ‘We believe in Allah, and in what was revealed to us, and in what was revealed to Ibrahim, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the Patriarchs, and in what was given to Moses and Jesus, and in what was given to the prophets from their Lord. We do not differentiate between any of them. And to Him, we surrender.’” [Qur’an 2:136].** And, **“Or do you say that Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes were Jews or Christians? Say, ‘Do you know better, or Allah?’ And who is more wrong-doing than he who conceals a testimony he has received from Allah? Allah is not unaware of what you do.” [Qur’an 2:140]** because Ibrahim (Abraham, pbuh) was not a Jew nor a Christian, as both Moses and Jesus only came thousands

of years after Ibrahim, pbuh. All other verses mention Isaac, pbuh, among his lineage and as a good example. The Qur’an says, **“We inspired you (revealed to you), as We inspired Noah and the prophets after him. And We inspired Ibrahim (Abraham), and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the Patriarchs (Descendants of Jacob), and Jesus, and Job, and Jonah, and Aaron, and Solomon. And to David, We gave the Psalms.” [Qur’an 4:163].**

This is Isaac in Islam. A revered, righteous, and a Prophet.

After Isaac, pbuh, came Jacob. Jacob’s story in Islam is interwoven and combined with the story of his son, Joseph (Yusuf in Arabic, pbuh). The Qur’an doesn’t delve much into the detailed life of Jacob (pbuh), but it does highlight certain interactions with his sons and his profound story with his son, Joseph. The Qur’an describes Jacob as being among the Muslims (those who submit to God’s will), the doers of good, and the righteous. God honored Jacob’s family and favored them above all peoples (of their time).

Jacob is also mentioned in the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah) of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). It’s narrated that the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said: *“The noble, son of the noble, son of the noble: (is) Joseph son of Jacob son of Isaac son of Ibrahim (Abraham, peace*

*be upon all of them).”*

This Hadith emphasizes the blessed lineage and inherent nobility of these Prophets. Jacob was also mentioned in the Qur’an with the name “Israel”, which means “servant of God”. As we read above, the Qur’an mentioned Jacob, pbuh, among the righteous, a noble person, and above all a Prophet from God, who received the revelation through the angel Gabriel, pbuh. Among the verses in which Jacob was mentioned is the one that contains a good news to Joseph that he will be a Prophet, **“And so (Oh Joseph) your Lord will choose you, and will teach you the interpretation of events, and will complete His favor upon you and upon the House of Jacob, just as He completed it before upon your forefathers Abraham and Isaac. Your Lord is Knowing and Wise.” [Qur’an 12:6].**

Qur’an delved into the life of Jacob through the story of Joseph, pbuh, who has a full chapter in Qur’an by his name “Surah Joseph” which is the twelfth chapter of the Qur’an. What’s interesting about this Surah is that it tells the whole life story of Joseph, pbuh. The Qur’an describes the story of Joseph as the best of narratives, the best of stories, and the one with the most wisdom. I encourage readers to read it themselves. We shall discuss Joseph next week.

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