

Lesson 5 - A Journey into the Desert

Learning Objectives

- To recognise the power of dua and the true essence of Tawakkul (reliance) upon Allah (swt)
- To identify the ritual of Sa'ee during Hajj as an emulation of the act of Lady Hajra

Prophet Ibrahim had been married to Lady Sarah, a woman of great honour, for several years. However, despite their longing for a child, Allah (swt) in His wisdom did not provide them with one. When Lady Sarah realised that she could no longer hope for a child due to her advanced age, she encouraged Prophet Ibrahim to remarry another woman of great honour – Lady Hajra. Prophet Ibrahim took her advice and soon he and Lady Hajra were blessed with a baby boy they named Ismail – who later became a prophet too.

The name, Ismail itself comes from the root word 'Samia' meaning 'to hear', because Allah heard and answered the invocation of Prophet Ibrahim as mentioned in the Holy Quran:

"My Lord! Grant me a child from amongst the righteous. So We gave him good tidings of a forbearing boy." - Surah as-Saffat 37:100-101

It has been reported that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) once said,

"Shall I introduce to you a weapon which will protect you both from the evils of enemies and increase your sustenance? They said: Yes, O Messenger of Allah. He said: Call your Lord day and night, for "Dua" is the weapon of a believer."

Thus, Prophet Ibrahim's dua was answered.

Prophet Ibrahim was then commanded by Allah to take Lady Hajra and their son to a far off land known as 'Bakkah' – a desert with no evidence of people, water or shelter. When they arrived there, Prophet Ibrahim settled his small family and gave them essentials of food and water. As he began to leave, Lady Hajra asked why he is leaving them in a land with nothing to offer. Prophet Ibrahim had nothing to respond to that. Lady Hajra then asked, "Did Allah (swt) order you to do this?" to which Prophet Ibrahim responded positively. She then, very calmly and eloquently said, "**Then we will not be lost.**"

As Prophet Ibrahim walked away, he turned and looked at his wife and son, and then prayed,

"Our Lord! I have settled some of my offspring in a barren valley by Your Sacred House so that they would perform the Prayer. Oh Lord, make the hearts of people yearn towards them and provide them with fruits for which they would give thanks." – Surah Ibrahim 14:37

Few days went by and eventually Lady Hajra ran out of food and water. Both she and Prophet Ismail became thirsty and quite unsettled especially due to the extreme heat. Prophet Ismail could no longer be consoled, so Lady Hajra set forth to look for water to alleviate their thirst. There was a high patch of land, known as the hill of Safa, which Lady Hajra climbed and looked down at the valley in the hope to spot some water, or even someone who could assist her.

She found no one but saw a mirage on the hill of Marwa at the opposite end. She descended from Safa back into the valley and then climbed Marwa to search for water but to no avail. She went back and forth between these two hills seven times in search for water.

On her last run, when she got back to Prophet Ismail, she noticed that a stream of water had sprung from beneath the foot of Prophet Ismail where his heel kept hitting the ground.

She cupped the water in her hand and quenched her son's thirst, along with herself. The water kept flowing so she commanded it to stop using the words, "Zam Zam!" However, the water never stopped and continues to flow till today and has in fact been named the spring of Zamzam fondly after the incident of Lady Hajra.

This action of Lady Hajra is also emulated in the ritual of Sa'ee during Hajj when people walk between the two hills of Safa and Marwa seven times in memory of this miracle that saved the lives of Lady Hajra and Prophet Ismail.

When Prophet Ibrahim returned he was amazed to see the valley. The water had made the place very fertile and a civilisation had begun with caravans and animals visiting there as a resting place between their journeys and some even making their home in the now prosperous land of Bakkah.

The migration of Lady Hajra and Prophet Ismail to Bakkah, and the miracle of the well of Zamzam paved the way to invite people towards the Kaaba – the House of Allah.

Discussion:

- Ponder upon and recall examples in history when a person trusted and followed a commandment by Allah (swt) even though it had no apparent logic at that time. [*Prophet Nuh – the ark, Prophet Musa – the basket, Lady Maryam – fast from speech...*]
- Why do you think Allah (swt) makes us experience trials and difficulties? [*Test of faith, bring one closer to Allah (swt), avenue to seek forgiveness...*]