

Ibrahim

'Ibrahim was truly an example: devoutly obedient to God and true in faith' (Q. 16:120)

Ibrahim was an earlier adopter of monotheism, unusual in a polytheistic world. His loyalty to the idea of One God never wavered, even when God tested his faith. For this reason he is revered by Jews, Christians and Muslims, the so-called Abrahamic faiths. In Islam he is called 'Khalilullah', or 'friend of God'. The Qur'an refers to written sources revealed to Ibrahim by God, now lost. These are referred to as the 'scrolls' of Ibrahim.

Ibrahim's great test came when God asked him to sacrifice his son to signify his submission. Ibrahim prepared to commit this act. At the last-minute God stopped him, but his obedience had been demonstrated.

In the Jewish myth, Abraham sacrifices his son Isaac. In the Islamic myth, Ibrahim sacrifices his son Ismail. Both Jews and Muslims agree that Ibrahim had two sons by two different women; Isaac by Sara, and Ismail by Hajar. While Jews take their descent from Isaac, Muslims take theirs from Ismail. Muslims remember Ibrahim's sacrifice each year at Eid ul-Adha, the feast of sacrifice.

Events of Ibrahim and his family's life are recreated each year at Hajj. For example, Hajar and Ismail were alone in the desert. Desperate for water, Hajar ran seven times between the stones of Safa and Marwa. She noticed the baby poking at the ground at the spot where the angel Jibril's wing had touched. There the spring of Zam Zam appeared and saved them. The twin stones of Safa and Marwa, and the spring of Zam Zam are elements of Hajj today.

The angel Jibril revealed a stone from heaven. It was white but has absorbed the sin of humanity. Touching it helps cleanse humans of sin. It was given to Adam and Hawa to be the first altar to God but was lost and forgotten. Jibril revealed the black stone to Ibrahim who asked Ismail to lay the stone as a sign of devotion to God. This is the black stone of the Ka'aba, the centre of Hajj.

Adam

Adam was the first human., established by God as the first Khalif, or steward, of creation.

God breathed 'spirit into' Adam (Q. 15: 29), enabling Adam to have free will, to make choices of his own and know right from wrong. Adam had a wife, Hawa, and together they lived in a garden paradise. They were commanded not to eat fruit from a certain tree.

God ordered all angelic beings to obey Adam, but one, Iblis, refused. He later became known as the Shaytan, the tempter. Iblis caused Adam and Hawa to forget God's command and they ate the forbidden fruit. God threw them out of paradise to earth, although later they were forgiven. Unlike in Christianity, this is not seen as an original sin inherited by all subsequent generations. All humans are born essentially good in Islam, capable of making their own choices.