

Radical Change – A Vision from a Spark of Revelation

Upon the Path of Ibrahim, peace be upon him

(Translated)

The story begins from the beginning; from when Allah, Glorified be He in His Highness, said: ﴿إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً﴾ **“Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority.”** [Al-Baqarah:30]. From here, the day Allah (swt) informed His angels about this new creation, the story of man on earth began. When Allah (swt) addressed the angels, He did not say to them Indeed I am making a “human”, nor did He name him to them; rather, He presented his function. Here is the summary of the matter: in Surah Al-Baqarah, which the Sahabah “Companions” used to call the tent of the Qur’an, Allah was nurturing the Islamic Ummah upon its mission for which He brought it into existence: succession. This noble function is a trust carried by man, which the heavens, the earth, and the mountains were unable to carry. Therefore we find that the Truth, at the beginning of the surah when He said about His Book: ﴿هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ﴾ **“A guidance for the righteous.”** [Al-Baqarah:2]. He mentioned the first quality of them, suitable to the context of the surah and its subject, which is succession, so He said: ﴿الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ﴾ **“Who believe in the unseen, establish prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them.”** [Al-Baqarah:3]. Allah presents belief in the unseen before establishing prayer and spending wealth, because belief in the unseen is the key of the believer in facing doubts, slackness, incapacity, desires, and everything that delays him from performing his mission as the bearer of a trust to realize the meaning of succession on earth. His faith illuminates the path for him and supplies him with courage and determination; his state resembles the state of the Prophet of Allah Ibrahim.

Allah (swt) said about our master Ibrahim: ﴿إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ كَانَ أُمَّةً قَانِتًا لِلَّهِ حَنِيفًا وَلَمْ يَكُ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ﴾ **“Indeed, Ibrahim was a nation, devoutly obedient to Allah, inclining toward truth, and he was not of the polytheists.”** [An-Nahl:120]. And Allah commanded the believers, saying: ﴿قُلْ صَدَقَ اللَّهُ فَاتَّبِعُوا مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ﴾ **“Say, ‘Allah has spoken the truth; so follow the religion of Ibrahim, inclining toward truth, and he was not of the polytheists.’”** [Aal-i ‘Imran:95].

But what is the relation between the subject of succession, belief in the unseen, and our master Ibrahim whom Allah took as a close friend?

The mention of His prophets in the Qur’an is for lesson: ﴿لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ﴾ **“There was certainly in their stories a lesson for those of understanding.”** [Yusuf :111]. Allah (swt) in His narration of stories in His Noble Book, was not narrating to us history nor recording the course of events in past ages. The one who looks at the Qur’anic method of presenting stories finds that the same subject differs in manner of narration according to the surah, and the focus each time suits the context of the surah in which the story appears. This narration is a narration of nurturing and educating the Muslim, not a narration of mere information or filling, Exalted is Allah.

When Allah (swt) informs us of the state of Ibrahim and repeats his mention 63 times in His Book, He wants the believer to study the person of Ibrahim, peace be upon him, and his mentality that qualified him for Allah to say about him: ﴿وَاتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ خَلِيلًا﴾ **“And Allah took Ibrahim as a close friend.”** [An-Nisa:125].

The Prophet of Allah, Ibrahim, peace be upon him, was always a point of dispute among the Jews and the Christians, and they used to argue concerning him. The Qur’an responded

to them: ﴿وَقَالُوا كُونُوا هُوداً أَوْ نَصَارَى تَهْتَدُوا قُلْ بَلْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفاً وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ﴾ **“And they say, ‘Be Jews or Christians [so] you will be guided.’ Say, ‘Rather, [we follow] the religion of Ibrahim, inclining toward truth, and he was not of the polytheists.’”** [Al-Baqarah:135]. Our master Ibrahim, the seeker of truth, carried a sound heart, sincere to Allah; He chose him and guided him to a straight path.

Our master Ibrahim is considered a Qur’anic model of the mind that seeks the truth, the certainty that does not waver, the steadfastness that is derived from certainty, the loyalty that does not deviate, and the eagerness to save people from darkness into light.

Ibrahim, peace be upon him, was raised in the house of Azar, who used to make *asnam* (idols) for his people to worship. A prophet is sent from the house of an idol-maker, so that Allah may teach us that the truth is more worthy to be followed, and that the arguments of the polytheists with which they used to confront the Messenger of Allah to evade the responsibility of thinking and believing: ﴿وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا﴾ **“We found our fathers [doing so].”** [Al-Anbiya:53] are a false argument with no weight when the heart perceives its path. The sincere seeker of the truth must inevitably arrive. And Ibrahim, who searched for his Lord and then disbelieved in the sun and the moon and in *asnam* that his father made, Allah granted him his right guidance: ﴿وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ رُشْدَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا بِهِ عَالِمِينَ﴾ **“And We had certainly given Ibrahim his sound judgement before, and We were of him well-Knowing.”** [Al-Anbiya:51].

When Ibrahim knew his Lord and believed, the first thing he did was break the *asnam* (idols). He could not bear that truth remain imprisoned in his heart; rather, he went forth arguing with his people, saying: ﴿قَالَ أَتَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ شَيْئاً وَلَا يَضُرُّكُمْ أَفِ لَكُمْ لَكُمْ وَلِمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ﴾ **“He said, ‘Then do you worship instead of Allah that which does not benefit you at all or harm you? Uff to you and to what you worship instead of Allah. Then will you not use reason?’”** [Al-Anbiya :66–67].

Our master Ibrahim represents the mentality of the Muslim who submits to Allah, surrendering to His command; he recognized the truth and adhered to it, remained firm upon it, and sacrificed in its path. It is a mentality that frees itself from the constraints of rigid thinking, blind imitation, and following desires. A personality that knew its worth despite his young age, yet he was, as the Qur’an described him, a nation by himself. When he argued with Nimrod concerning the Lord of the worlds, the decisive proof was his companion; his certainty in Allah was not merely a slogan, but an enlightened vision and insight that knew how to defend what he believed in.

When he became a prophet, his eagerness to guide others was present in all his stands. He (swt) says: ﴿وَإِذْ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي﴾ **“And [mention] when Ibrahim was tried by his Lord with commands and he fulfilled them. He said, ‘Indeed, I will make you a leader for the people.’ [Ibrahim] said, ‘And of my descendants?’ [Allah] said, ‘My covenant does not include the wrongdoers.’”** [Al-Baqarah:124]. And He (swt) says: ﴿وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا بَلَدًا آمِنًا وَارْزُقْ أَهْلَهُ﴾ **“And [mention] when Ibrahim said, ‘My Lord, make this a secure city and provide its people with fruits—whoever of them believes in Allah and the Last Day.’”** [Al-Baqarah:126]. And He (swt) says: ﴿وَوَصَّىٰ بِهَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ بَنِيهِ وَيَعْقُوبُ يَا بَنِيَّ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَىٰ لَكُمُ الدِّينَ فَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ﴾ **“And Ibrahim instructed his sons [to do the same] and [so did] Ya‘qub, [saying], ‘O my sons, indeed Allah has chosen for you this religion, so do not die except while you are Muslims.’”** [Al-Baqarah:132].

But this eagerness is the eagerness of the believer in his Lord, who works to support His religion, who allies for the sake of Allah and shows enmity for the sake of Allah. He (swt)

﴿وَمَا كَانَ اسْتِغْفَارُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ إِلَّا عَنْ مَوْعِدَةٍ وَعَدَهَا إِيَّاهُ فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ أَنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ لِلَّهِ تَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَأَوَّاهٌ حَلِيمٌ﴾

“And the request of forgiveness of Ibrahim for his father was only because of a promise he had promised him. But when it became clear to him that he was an enemy to Allah, he disassociated himself from him. Indeed, Ibrahim was compassionate and forbearing.” [At-Tawbah:114]. And He (swt) said: ﴿قَدْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ إِذْ قَالُوا

لِقَوْمِهِمْ إِنَّا بُرَءُ مِنْكُمْ وَمِمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ كَفَرْنَا بِكُمْ وَبَدَا بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةُ وَالْبَغْضَاءُ أَبَدًا حَتَّى تُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَحَدَهُ﴾

“There has already been for you an excellent example in Ibrahim and those with him, when they said to their people, ‘Indeed, we are disassociated from you and from whatever you worship other than Allah. We have denied you, and there has appeared between us and you animosity and hatred forever until you believe in Allah alone.’” [Al-Mumtahanah:4].

Thus the model of Ibrahim, peace be upon him, is a model that nurtures the believer to make faith the center of life—faith disciplined by revelation, faith arising from knowledge, awareness, and insight—which drives its bearer to be an “Ummah” in the face of the claims of falsehood, the people of falsehood, and any Nimrod who wishes to alter the religion of Allah and tempt people away from worshipping their Lord.

This faith is not generated except by constant return to the origin of the story: belief in the unseen—the unseen about which Allah informed His angels that He would place upon the earth a successive authority. Here I recall the response of Ibrahim, peace be upon him, to his people when they reproached him for worshipping Allah alone. He said: ﴿وَحَاجَّهُ قَوْمُهُ قَالَ أَتُحَاجُّونِي فِي اللَّهِ وَقَدْ هَدَانِ وَلَا أَخَافُ مَا تُشْرِكُونَ بِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ رَبِّي شَيْئًا وَسِعَ رَبِّي كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا أَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ وَكَيْفَ أَخَافُ مَا أَشْرَكْتُمْ وَلَا تَخَافُونَ أَنَّكُمْ أَشْرَكْتُمْ بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزَّلْ بِهِ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطَانًا فَأَيُّ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ أَحَقُّ بِالْأَمْنِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ﴾ “And his people argued with him. He said, ‘Do you argue with me concerning Allah while He has guided me? And I do not fear what you associate with Him except that my Lord should will something. My Lord encompasses all things in knowledge; then will you not remember? And how should I fear what you associate while you do not fear that you have associated with Allah that for which He has not sent down to you any authority? So which of the two parties has more right to security, if you should know?’” [Al-An‘am:80–81].

These two parties are not equal in example. How far apart is a mind that believes with awareness, holds fast with insight, acts with steadfastness, and sacrifices for a good return, from a mind whose entire argument is: ﴿قَالُوا بَلْ وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا كَذَلِكَ يَفْعَلُونَ﴾ “They said, ‘Rather, we found our fathers doing thus.’” [Ash-Shu‘ara:74] ﴿مَثَلُ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ كَالْأَعْمَى وَالْأَصَمِّ وَالْبَصِيرِ وَالسَّمِيعِ هَلْ يَسْتَوِيَانِ مَثَلًا أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ﴾ “The example of the two parties is like the blind and deaf and the seeing and hearing. Are they equal in example? Then will you not remember?” [Hud:24].

Finally, we ask Allah to make us firm, inspire us with our right guidance, and grant us a share in supporting His Deen.

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