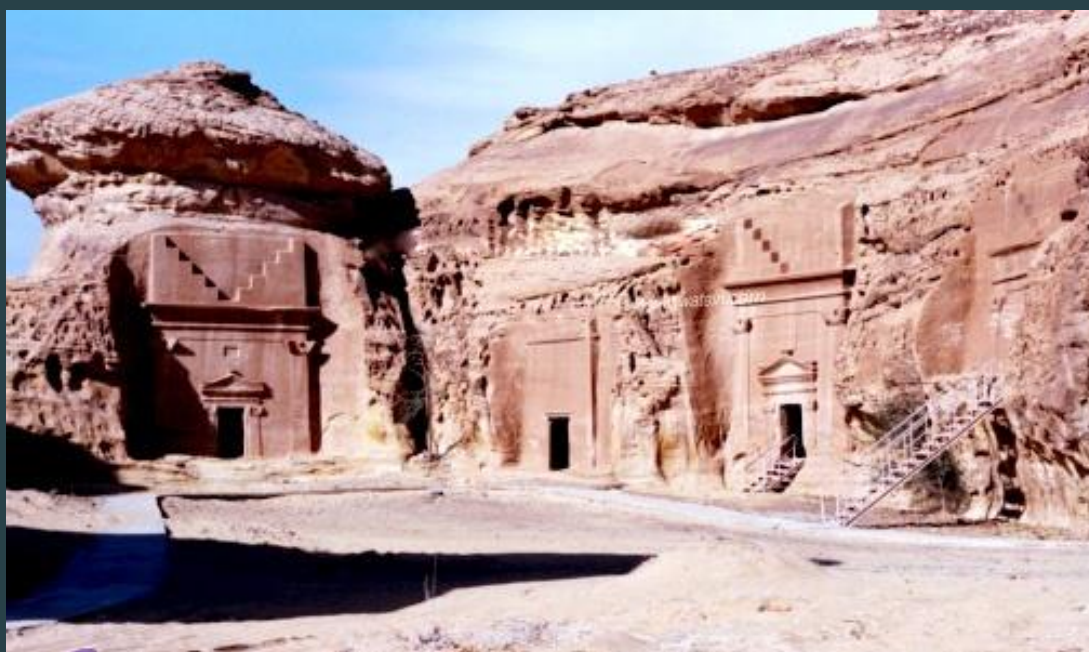


# *Stories of The Holy Prophets*



NOURESHAM BOOK CENTER   AL-FATIH ISLAMIC INSTITUTE

# *Stories of The Holy Prophets*

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## 8 - THE HOLY PROPHET ISMA‘IL (ISHMAEL)

*Bashar Bakkour*

Ishmael (Isma‘il) in Arabic or Hebrew means: 'God hears'<sup>61</sup>. He was Ibrahim's (Abraham's) eldest son, born by Hagar (Hager). He was referred in eight Chapters in the Holy Qur'an, namely: Al-Baqarah [2: 125, 127, 133, 136, 140], Âl 'Imran [3: 84], Al-Nisâ' [4: 163], Al-An'am [6: 86], Ibrahim [14: 39], Maryam [19: 54], Al-Anbiyâ' [21: 85] and Sâad [38: 48].

### **Ishmael in the Old Testament**

Sarah, Abraham's wife, had been barren. Therefore, she urged her husband to marry her Egyptian maid, Hagar, in hope of having children from her. Later on, when Hagar conceived, she began to despise Sarah for being barren. Sarah, in turn, cast Hagar out. Alone in the wilderness, Hagar was visited by the angel of the Lord, bidding her to return to her mistress, Sarah, and bringing her the glad tidings of having a son of her own, named Ishmael, who would produce numerous progeny and who would be a wild person, dwelling in the wilderness.<sup>62</sup> Abraham was 86 years old when Ishmael was born.

According to the Book of Genesis (17:24-27) at the age of ninety nine, Abraham and his son Ishmael, who was 13 years old, and every male among the men of his house were circumcised. After awhile, Isaac was born and a week later was circumcised. Since she had had a child, Sarah wanted to get rid of Hager and her son Ishmael. She asked Abraham to cast them out. To this effect, the Old Testament says: *“And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had borne unto Abraham, mocking. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, ‘Cast out this bondwoman and her son, for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.’ And the thing was very grievous in*

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<sup>61</sup> Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary, p 972.

<sup>62</sup> Qamous Al-Kitab Al-Mukaddas, p74.

*Abraham's sight because of his son. And God said unto Abraham, 'Let it not be grievous in thy sight, because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.'* (Genesis 21: 9-12)

The Above citation claims that Abraham should entirely submit to Sarah's desires and whims.

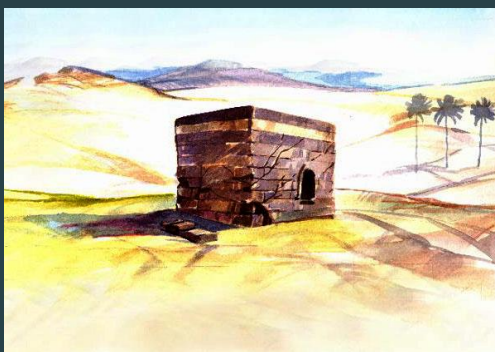
In order to satisfy Sarah's demand, Abraham sent Hagar and her son away. They wandered in the wilderness of Beer Sheba, southern Palestine. As they virtually died of raging thirst, the Lord showed Hagar a well of water, confirming his promise that he would make her son a great nation. From that time, Ishmael lived in the wilderness of Paran, and got married to an Egyptian woman.<sup>63</sup>

In the course of time, twelve sons were born to Ishmael who became, at a later date, ancestors of Arab nations. When Abraham passed away, Ishmael and Isaac buried him in Hebron.<sup>64</sup>

### **Ishmael in Islamic Tradition**

The Holy Qur'an describes Ishmael with several impressive traits: He is a Prophet, a Messenger, true to his promise, pleasing to his Lord, [19:54-55] mild-tempered [37:101], one of the righteous [6: 85-86].

It goes without saying that the birth of Ishmael created an extreme jealousy in Sarah's heart, resulting ultimately in expulsion of Hagar and her son. Abraham took them to the present-day site, Mecca.



An imaginary picture of the first structure of the Holy Ka'ba

The story of departure and suffering is elaborated in the following tradition:

“When Abraham had differences with his wife Sarah (because of her jealousy of Hagar, and Ishmael), he took Hagar and her son and went to the wilderness of Paran (the valley of Mecca). He gave them a leather bag containing some dates and a water-skin full of water and left them

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.