

Nuh (Noah)

Variation on the Birth of Noah

He was Noah Ibn Lamik, Ibn Mitoshilkh, Ibn Enoch, Ibn Yard, Ibn Mahlabeel, Ibn Qinan, Ibn Anoush, Ibn Seth, Ibn Adam the Father of Mankind.

According to the history of the People of the Book , ("People of the Book" refers to the Jews and Christians, so-called by Allah because they received Revealed Books, the Taurat, Zabur, and Injeel. These names are translated "Torah", "Psalms", and "Gospels", respectively, but the books that are extant are corrupt. Of the Revealed Books, only the Qur'an remains exactly as it was revealed) the period between the birth of Noah and the death of Adam was one hundred forty-six years (According to Genesis 5, New Revised Standard version, Noah was born one hundred twenty six years after the death of Adam).

Ibn Abbas narrated that Prophet Muhammad said: "The period between Adam and Noah was ten centuries." (According to Genesis 5, New Revised Standard version, Noah was born 1056 years after Adam's creation, or after he left the Garden of Eden. Thus, this hadith does not contradict the previous statement from the People of the Book, as it may first appear to do. The reader should keep in mind, however, that any statements or narratives taken from the People of the Book are not necessarily credible.)

Noah's People - Idolaters

For many generations Noah's people had been worshipping statues that they called gods. They believed that these gods would bring them good, protect them from evil, and provide all their needs. They gave their idols names such as Waddan, Suwaan, Yaghutha, Yaauga, and Nasran, according to the power they thought these gods possessed.

Allah the Almighty revealed: And they Idolaters have said: "You shall not leave your gods, nor shall you leave Wadd, nor Suwa, nor Yaghuth, nor Yauq nor Nasr (names of the idols). " Surah 71: 23

Originally these were the names of good people who had lived among them. After their deaths, statues of them were erected to keep their memories alive. After some time, however, people began to worship these statues. Later generations did not even know why they had been erected; they only knew their parents had prayed to them. That is how idol worshipping developed. Since they had no understanding of Allah the Almighty Who would punish them for their evil deeds, they became cruel and immoral.

Into this environment Allah sent Noah with His message to his people. Noah was the only intellectual not caught in the whirlpool of man's destruction which was caused by polytheism. Various Hadith describing the Origin of Idolatry

Ibn Abbas explained: "Following upon the death of those righteous men, Satan inspired their people to erect statues in the places where they used to sit. They did this, but these statues were not worshipped until the coming generations deviated from the right way of life. Then they worshipped them as their idols."

These idols represented, respectively, manly power; mutability, beauty; brute strength; swiftness; sharp sight, insight. (Source: A. Yusuf Ali, The Holy Quran: Translation and Commentary. Appendix XIII)

In his version, Ibn Jarir narrated: "There were righteous people who lived in the period between Adam and Noah and who had followers who held them as models. After their death, their friends who used to emulate them said: 'If we make statues of them, it will be more pleasing to us in our worship and will remind us of them.' So they built statues of them, and, after they had died and others came after them, Iblis crept into their minds saying: 'Your forefathers used to worship them, and through that worship they got rain.' So they worshipped them."

Ibn Abi Hatim related this story: "Waddan was a righteous man who was loved by his people. When he died, they withdrew to his grave in the land of Babylonia and were overwhelmed by sadness. When Iblis saw their sorrow caused by his death, he disguised himself in the form of a man saying: 'I have seen your sorrow because of this man's death; can I make a statue like him which could be put in your meeting place to make you remember him?' They said: 'Yes.' So he made the statue like him. They put it in their meeting place in order to be reminded of him. When Iblis saw their interest in remembering him, he said: 'Can I build a statue of him in the home of each one of you so that he would be in everyone's house and you could remember him?' They agreed. Their children learned about and saw what they were doing. They also learned about their remembrance of him, until they took him to be a deity and worshipped him instead of Allah. So the first to be worshipped instead of Allah was Waddan, the idol which they named thus."

It was narrated that 'Umm Salmah and 'Umm Habibah told Allah's Prophet Muhammad about the church called "Maria" which they had seen in the land of Abyssinia. They described its beauty and the pictures therein. He said: "Those are the people who build places of worship on the grave of every dead man who was righteous and then make therein those pictures. Those are the worst of creation unto Allah."

The essence of this point is that every idol from those earlier mentioned was worshipped by a certain group of people. It was mentioned that people made pictures and as the ages passed they made these pictures into statues, so that their forms could be fully recognized; afterwards they were worshipped instead of Allah.

Commentary - Idolatry

Worshipping anything other than Allah is a tragedy that results not only in the loss of freedom (by worshipping anything other than Allah, man becomes enslaved to Satan, who is himself a creature, and becomes harnessed to his own baser qualities); its serious effect reaches man's mind and destroys it as well. Almighty Allah created man and his mind with its purpose set on achieving knowledge, the most important of which is that Allah alone is the Creator and all the rest are worshipers (slaves). Therefore, disbelief in Allah, or polytheism, results in the loss of freedom, the destruction of the mind, and the absence of a noble target in life.

Noah's Reasoning with his People

Allah in His mercy sent His messenger Noah to guide his people. Noah was an excellent speaker and a very patient man. He pointed out to his people the mysteries of life and the wonders of the universe. He pointed out how the night is regularly followed by the day and that the balance between these opposites was designed by Allah the Almighty for our good. The night gives coolness and rest while the day gives warmth and awakens activity. The sun encourages growth, keeping all plants and animals alive, while the moon and stars assist in the reckoning of time, direction and seasons. He pointed out that the ownership of the heavens and the earth belongs only to the Divine Creator.

Therefore, he explained to his people, there cannot have been more than one deity. He clarified to them how the devil had deceived them for so long and that the time had come for this deceit to stop. Noah spoke to them of Allah's glorification of man, how He had created him and provided him with sustenance and the blessings of a mind. He told them that idol worshipping was a suffocating injustice to the mind. He warned them not to worship anyone but Allah and described the terrible punishment Allah would mete out if they continued in their evil ways.

Division Among Noah's People

The people listened to him in silence. His words were a shock to their stagnating minds, as it is a shock to a person who is asleep under a wall which is about to fall and who is vigorously awakened. This person may be alarmed and may even become angry although the aim was to save him.

Noah's people were divided into two groups after his warning. His words touched the hearts of the weak, the poor, and the miserable and soothed their wounds with its mercy. As for the rich, the strong, the mighty and the rulers, they looked upon the warning with cold distrust. They believed they would be better off if things stayed as they were. Therefore, they started their war of words against Noah.

The Disbelievers' Arguments

First they accused Noah of being only human like themselves. The chiefs of the disbelievers among his people said: "We see you but a man like ourselves."1 He, however, had never said anything other than that. He asserted that, indeed, he was only a human being: Allah had sent a human messenger because the earth was inhabited by humans. If it had been inhabited by angels Allah would have sent an angelic messenger.

The contest between the polytheists and Noah continued. The rulers had thought at first that Noah's call would soon fade on its own. When they found that his call attracted the poor, the helpless, and common laborers, they started to verbally attack and taunt him: 'You are only followed by the poor, the meek, and the worthless.'

Allah the Almighty told us: And indeed We sent Noah to his people (and he said): "I have come to you as a plain warner, that you worship none but Allah, surely, I fear for you the torment of a painful Day." The chiefs of the disbelievers among his people said: "We see you but a man like ourselves, nor do we see any follow you but the meanest among us and they (too) followed you without thinking. And we do not see in you any merit above us, in fact, we think you are liars." Surah 11: 27

The Disbelievers Attempt to Bargain

Thus the conflict between Noah and the heads of his people intensified. The disbelievers tried to bargain: "Listen, Noah, if you want us to believe in you, then dismiss your believers. They are meek and poor, while we are elite and rich; no faith can include us both." Noah listened to the heathens of his community and realized they were being obstinate. However, he was gentle in his response. He explained to his people that he could not dismiss the believers, as they were not his guests but Allah's.

Noah appealed to them: "And O my people! I ask of you no wealth for it, my reward is from none but Allah. I am not going to drive away those who have believed. Surely, they are going to meet their Lord, but I see that you are a people that are ignorant. And O my people! Who

will help me against Allah, if I drove them away? Will you not then give a thought? And I do not say to you that with me are the Treasures of Allah nor that I know the Ghaib (unseen); nor do I say I am an angel, and I do not say of those whom your eyes look down upon that Allah will not bestow any good on them. Allah knows what is in their inner-selves (as regards Belief etc.). In that case, I should, indeed be one of the Zalimeen (wrong-doers, oppressors, etc.). " Surah 11: 29-31

Noah refuted the arguments of the disbelievers with the noble knowledge of the prophets. It is the logic of intellect that rids itself of personal pride and interests.

The Disbelievers Remain Ignorant

The rulers were tired of Noah's arguments. Allah the Exalted related their attitude: They said: "O Noah! You have disputed with us and much have you prolonged the dispute with us, now bring upon us what you threaten us with, if you are of the truthful." He said: "Only Allah will bring it (the punishment) on you, if He will, and then you will escape not. And my advice will not profit you, even if I wish to give you counsel, if Allah's Will is to keep you astray. He is your Lord! And to Him you shall return." Surah 7: 32-32

The battle continued; the arguments between the disbelievers and Noah became prolonged. When all the refutations of the disbelievers collapsed and they had no more to say, they began to be rude and insulted Allah's prophet: The leaders of his people said: "Verily, we see you in plain error. " Surah 7: 60

Noah responded in the manner of the prophets: "O my people! There is no error in me, but I am a Messenger from the Lord of the Alamin (mankind, jinn and all that exists)! I convey unto you the Messages of my Lord and give sincere advice to you. And I know from Allah what you know not. " Surah 7: 61-62

Noah continued appealing to his people to believe in Allah hour after hour, day after day, year after year. He admonished his people and called them to Allah day and night, in secret and openly. He gave them examples, explained Allah's signs and illustrated Allah's ability in the formation of His creatures. But whenever he called them to Allah, they ran away from him. Whenever he urged them to ask Allah to forgive them, they put their fingers in their ears and became too proud to listen to the truth.

Noah's Appeal to His People

Allah the Almighty related what Noah faced: "Verily, We sent Noah to his people (saying): "Warn your people before there comes to them a painful torment."

He said: "O my people! Verily, I am a plain warner to you, that you should worship Allah (Alone), be dutiful to Him, and obey me. He (Allah) will forgive you of your sins and respite you to an appointed term. Verily, the term of Allah when it comes, cannot be delayed, if you but knew."

He said: "O my Lord! Verily, I have called my people night and day (i.e. secretly and openly to accept the doctrine of Islamic Monotheism), but all my calling added nothing but to (their) flight (from the truth). And verily! Every time I called unto them that You might forgive them, they thrust their fingers into their ears, covered themselves up with their garments, and persisted (in their refusal), and magnified themselves in pride. Then verily, I called to them openly (aloud); then verily, I proclaimed to them in public, and I have appealed to them in private, I said (to them): 'Ask forgiveness from your Lord; Verily, He is Oft-Forgiving; He

will send rain to you in abundance; and give you increase in wealth and children, and bestow on you gardens and bestow on you rivers.

What is the matter with you, that you fear not Allah (His Punishment), and you hope not for reward (from Allah or you believe not in His Oneness). While He has created you in (different) stages (first Nutfah, then Alaqa, and then Mudgha -see Surah 23: 13-14)

See you not how Allah has created the seven heavens one above another, and has made the moon a light therein, and made the sun a lamp? And Allah has brought you forth from the (dust of) earth. Afterwards He will return you into it (the earth), and bring you forth (again on the Day of Resurrection) And Allah has made for you the earth wide spread (an expanse) that you may go about therein in broad roads."

Noah said: "My Lord! They have disobeyed me, and followed one whose wealth and children give him no increase but only loss. And they have plotted a mighty plot. And they have said: 'You shall not leave your gods, nor shall you leave Wadd, nor Suwa, nor Yaghuth, nor Yauq nor Nasr (names of the idols). And indeed they have led many astray. And (O Allah)! Grant no increase to the Zalimeen (polytheists, wrong-doers, and disbelievers, etc.) save error."

Because of their sins they were drowned, then were made to enter the Fire, and they found none to help them instead of Allah. Surah 71: 1-25

The Length of Noah's Preaching

Noah continued to call his people to believe in Allah for nine hundred fifty years. Allah the Almighty said: And indeed We sent Noah to his people, and he stayed among them a thousand years less fifty years (inviting them to believe in the Oneness of Allah (Monotheism), and discard the false gods and other deities). Surah 29: 14

It happened that every passing generation admonished the succeeding one not to believe Noah and to wage war against him. The father used to teach his child about the matter that was between himself and Noah and counsel him to reject his call when he reached adulthood. Their natural disposition rejected believing and following the truth.

Noah saw that the number of believers was not increasing, while that of the disbelievers was. He was sad for his people, but he never reached the point of despair.

Noah Prays for the Disbelievers' End

There came a day when Allah revealed to Noah that no others would believe. Allah inspired him not to grieve for them, at which point Noah prayed that the disbelievers be destroyed. He said: 'My Lord! Leave not one of the disbelievers on the earth. If you leave them, they will mislead Your slaves, and they will beget none but wicked disbelievers.'" Surah 71:27

Allah accepted Noah's prayer. The case was closed, and He passed His judgment on the disbelievers in the form of a flood. Allah the Exalted ordered His worshiper Noah to build an ark with His knowledge and instructions, and with the help of angels. Almighty Allah commanded: "And construct the ship under Our Eyes and with Our Inspiration, and address Me not on behalf of those who did wrong; they are surely to be drowned." Surah 11: 37

Noah Builds the Ark

Noah chose a place outside the city, far from the sea. He collected wood and tools and began to work day and night to build the ark. The people's mockery continued: "O Noah! Does carpentry appeal to you more than prophethood? Why are you building an ark so far from the sea? Are you going to drag it to the water or is the wind going to carry it for you?" Noah replied: 'You will come to know who will be put to shame and suffer.'

Allah the Almighty narrated: And as he was constructing the ship, whenever the chiefs of his people passed by him, they made a mockery of him. He said: "If you mock at us, so do we mock at you likewise for your mocking. And you will know who it is on whom will come a torment that will cover him with disgrace and on whom will fall a lasting torment. " Surah 11:38-392

The Flood begins

The ship was constructed, and Noah sat waiting Allah's command. Allah revealed to him that when water miraculously gushed forth from the oven at Noah's house, that would be the sign of the start of the flood, the sign for Noah to act.

The terrible day arrived when the oven at Noah's house overflowed. Noah hurried to open the ark and summon the believers. He also took with him a pair, male and female, of every type of animal, bird and insect. Seeing him taking these creatures to the ark, the people laughed loudly: "Noah must have gone out of his head! What is he going to do with the animals?"

Almighty Allah narrated: (So it was) till then there came Our Command and the oven gushed forth (water like fountains from the earth). We said: "Embark therein, of each kind two (male and female), and your family, except him against whom the Word has already gone forth, and those who believe." And none believed him, except a few. Surah 11: 40

The Number of Believers

Noah's wife was not a believer with him, so she did not join him; neither did one of Noah's sons, who was secretly a disbeliever but had pretended faith in front of Noah. Likewise most of the people were disbelievers and did not go on board.

The scholars (Ulama) hold different opinions on the number of those who were with Noah on the ship. Ibn Abbas stated that there were eighty believers, while Ka'ab Al-Ahbar held that there were seventy-two. Others claimed that there were ten believers with Noah.

Description of the Flood

Water rose from the cracks in the earth; there was not a crack from which water did not rise. Rain poured from the sky in quantities never seen before on the earth. Water continued pouring from the sky and rising from the cracks; hour after hour the level rose. The seas and waves invaded the land. The interior of the earth moved in a strange way, and the ocean floors lifted suddenly, flooding the dry land. The earth, for the first time, was submerged.

Noah Appeals to his Son

Allah told the story thus: And he (Noah) said: "Embark therein, in the Name of Allah will be its moving course and its resting anchorage. Surely, my Lord is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." So it (the ship) sailed with them amidst the waves like mountains, and Noah called out to his son, who had separated himself (apart), "O my son! Embark with us and be not with the disbelievers." The son replied: "I will betake myself to a mountain, it will save me from the water." Noah said: "This day there is no savior from the Decree of Allah except him on whom He has mercy." And a wave came in between them, so he (the son) was among the drowned.

And Noah called upon his Lord and said, "O my Lord! Verily, my son is of my family! And certainly, Your Promise is true, and You are the Most Just of the judges." He said: "O Noah! Surely, he is not of your family; verily, his work is unrighteous, so ask not of Me that of which you have no knowledge! I admonish you, lest you be one of the ignorants."

Noah said: "O my Lord! I seek refuge with You from asking You that of which I have no knowledge. And unless You forgive me and have Mercy on me, I would indeed be one of the losers." Surah 11: 45-47

The Flood Ends

And it was said: "O earth! Swallow up your water, and O sky! Withhold (your rain)." And the water was diminished (made to subside) and the Decree (of Allah) was fulfilled (i.e. the destruction of the people of Noah). And it (the ship) rested on Mount Judi, and it was said: "Away with the people who are Zalimeen (polytheists and wrong-doing)!" Surah 11: 44

It was said: "O Noah! Come down (from the ship) with peace from Us and blessings on you and on the people who are with you (and on some of their offspring), but (there will be other) people to whom We shall grant their pleasures (for a time), but in the end a painful torment will reach them from Us." Surah 11:48

With the issue of the divine command, calm returned to earth, the water retreated, and the dry land shone once again in the rays of the sun. The flood had cleansed the earth of the disbelievers and polytheists.

The Believers Disembark

Noah released the birds and the beasts, which scattered over the earth. After that the believers disembarked. Noah put his forehead to the ground in prostration. The survivors kindled a fire and sat around it. Lighting a fire had been prohibited on board so as not to ignite the ship's wood and burn it up. None of them had eaten hot food during the entire period of the flood. Following the disembarkation there was a day of fasting in thanks to Allah.

Noah's Death

The Quran draws the curtain on Noah's story. We do not know how his affairs with his people continued. All we know or can ascertain is that on his deathbed, he requested his son to worship Allah alone. Noah then passed away.

Abdullah Ibn Amru Ibn Alaas narrated that Prophet Muhammad said: "When the death of the Messenger of Allah Noah approached, he admonished his sons: 'Indeed I would give you far-reaching advice, commanding you to do two things, and warning you against doing two as well. I charge you (to believe) that there is no god but Allah and that if the seven heavens and the seven earths were put on one side of a scale and the words 'There is no god but Allah' were put on the other, the latter would outweigh the former. And I warn you against associating partners with Allah and against pride.'"

Some traditions said that his grave is in the Sacred Mosque in Mecca (Makkah), while others said that he was buried in Baalabak, a city in Iraq.