

## Importance of the lineage of Prophet Ibrahim (A) and how the Banu Isra'il settled in Egypt

### *Learning objectives:*

- Learning about the importance of the lineage of Prophet Ibrahim (A)
- Understanding how and why the Banu Isra'il moved to Egypt

### **Who are the Banu Isra'il? Where are they from and why are they important?**

Banu Isra'il are the children of Prophet Yaqub (A). 'Isra'il' was a title given to Yaqub (A) because he worshipped Allah SWT sincerely.

The children of Isra'il or Banu Isra'il were a nomadic people and they used to live in the deserts of Palestine. They were an honoured community because they were from the lineage of Prophet Ibrahim (A). The status given to them was from the mercy of Allah (SWT) because Prophet Ibrahim (A) was a righteous person. Furthermore, Prophet Ibrahim (A) had prayed for his progeny and in answer to his prayer he was 'gifted' Prophet Ishaq (A), as well as his grandson, Prophet Yaqub, as a bonus. The following verses shed some light on the status of the lineage of Prophet Ibrahim (A) and why they hold such a high esteem.

#### **Verse 1:**

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ نَافِلَةً ۖ وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا صَالِحِينَ

*And We bestowed upon him Isaac and Jacob as an additional gift, making each of them righteous [21:72]*

#### **Verse 2:**

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ ۚ كُلًّا هَدَيْنَا ۚ وَنُوحًا هَدَيْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ ۖ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِ دَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُوسُفَ وَمُوسَى وَهَارُونَ ۚ وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ

*And We bestowed upon Abraham (offspring) Ishaq (Isaac) and Ya'qub (Jacob) and each of them did We guide to the right way as We had earlier guided Noah to the right way; and (of his descendants We guided) Da'ud (David) and Sulayman (Solomon), Ayyub (Job), Yusuf (Joseph), Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron). Thus do We reward those who do good. [6:84]*

#### **Verse 3:**

فَلَمَّا اعْتَزَلَهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ ۖ وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا نَبِيًّا

***Thereupon Abraham dissociated himself from his people and the deities they worshipped instead of Allah, and We bestowed upon him Isaac and Jacob and made each of them a Prophet;***

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُم مِّن رَّحْمَتِنَا وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ عَلِيًّا

***and We bestowed on them Our mercy, and granted them a truly lofty renown.***

وَإِذْ كُنَّا فِي الْكِتَابِ مُوسَى ۖ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مُخْلَصًا وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَّبِيًّا

***And recite in the Book the account of Moses. He was a chosen one, a Messenger, a Prophet. [19:49-51]***

**Verse 4:**

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي ذُرِّيَّتِهِ النُّبُوَّةَ وَالْكِتَابَ وَآتَيْنَاهُ أَجْرَهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا ۖ وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

***and We bestowed upon him (offspring like) Isaac and Jacob, and bestowed prophethood and the Book on his descendants and granted him his reward in this world; he will certainly be among the righteous in the Hereafter. [29:27]***

#### **How did the Banu Isra'il settle in Egypt?**

Prophet Yaqub (A) had 12 sons and one of those sons was Prophet Yusuf (A). Prophet Yaqub really loved Prophet Yusuf a lot. This made Prophet Yaqub's other sons (the brothers of Prophet Yusuf) very jealous of Prophet Yusuf (A). They made a plan to kill their brother. Eventually they changed their mind and threw him in a well instead. Prophet Yusuf (A) was found by a group of traders and he was sold as a slave to the governor of Egypt. This is how the journey of the Bani Isra'il began in Egypt. Prophet Yusuf were one of the chosen people from the lineage of Prophet Ibrahim as can be understood from the following verse:

وَكَذَلِكَ يَجْتَبِيكَ رَبُّكَ وَيُعَلِّمُكَ مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ وَيُتِمُّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَىٰ آلِ يَعْقُوبَ كَمَا أَتَمَّهَا عَلَىٰ أَبَوَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ

***That is how your Lord will choose you, and teach you the interpretation of dreams, and complete His blessing upon you and upon the house of Jacob, just as He completed it earlier for your fathers, Abraham and Isaac. Your Lord is indeed all-knowing and all-wise. [12:6]***

Once Prophet Yusuf became established in Egypt as a great advisor of the Pharaoh, the Pharaoh gave him a large piece of land and said that his entire family could immigrate to Egypt. This is when the Bani Isra'il immigrated to Egypt. This was all the plan of Allah (SWT) to get the Banu Isra'il to move and settle in Egypt.

وَكَذَلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَتَّبِعُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ يَشَاءُ ۚ نُصِيبُ بِرَحْمَتِنَا  
مَنْ نَشَاءُ ۖ وَلَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

*Thus did We establish Joseph in the land so that he could settle wherever he pleased. We bestow favour, out of Our Mercy, on whomsoever We please, and We do not cause the reward of those who do good to go to waste. [12:56]*

### Why did Bani Isra'il moved to Egypt?

On the surface, it may seem that the Banu Isra'il moved there because of draught and famine in Palestine. It may also seem that due to the status of Prophet Yusuf in Egypt. However, the most important reason why they moved to Egypt was because Allah (SWT) wanted the Banu Isra'il to move to Egypt. What was special about Egypt? Egypt was the cradle of civilization. It was the centre of learning at the time. Many knowledgeable people would come to discuss ideas. It was a hub of knowledge. These people excelled in worldly sciences, yet they did not have spiritual guidance. Therefore, Allah (SWT) sent Banu Isra'il to this heart of knowledge so that they could learn the different science and combine it with the guidance they received from Allah (SWT) making them have greater wisdom and understanding.

### The status of Banu Isra'il before the birth of Prophet Musa

#### *Learning objectives:*

- To understand the position of Banu Isra'il before the birth of Prophet Musa
- To understand the importance of gratitude
- To understand the shift in status of the Banu Isra'il that took place before the birth of Prophet Musa (A)

#### Banu Isra'il were very wealthy

After immigrating to Egypt, the Banu Isra'il were gifted a land where they could settle and build their homes. The land was given to Prophet Yusuf (A) as a gift from the Pharaoh of that time. This land was called 'Goshin'. Banu Isra'il were very intelligent people, they quickly learned the knowledge available to them and became part of the Egyptian civilization to the point that the whole Egyptian administration became dependent on them. This made Banu Isra'il a wealthy community.

The Qur'an expresses how much wealth one individual had within the Banu Isra'il. Qarun was amongst the wealthiest men from the Banu Isra'il. The Qur'an describes the keys of his safe:

وَأَتَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْكُنُوزِ مَا إِنَّ مَفَاتِحَهُ لَتَنُوءُ بِالْعُصْبَةِ أُولِي الْقُوَّةِ

*....We had bestowed on him such treasure that their very keys would have been raised with difficulty by a whole group of strong people... [28:76]*

Not only did Allah (SWT) bestow Banu Isra'il with wealth, He also honoured them with prophethood from within their community:

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ  
وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ

*Indeed We endowed the Children of Isra'il with the Book and Wisdom and Prophethood, and provided them with good things as sustenance, and exalted them above the peoples of the whole world. [45:16]*

**Why were the Banu Isra'il given so many blessings and 'exalted above all the people of the world'?**

The key to this answer lies with Prophet Ibrahim (A):

شَاكِرًا لِّلنَّعْمَةِ ۖ اجْتَبَاهُ وَهَدَاهُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ

*He showed his gratitude for the favours of Allah, who chose him, and guided him to a Straight Way. [16:12]*

Prophet Ibrahim was very grateful for all the blessing Allah (SWT) gave him. He is called 'Shakir' which means that he was a thankful person. However, when Allah (SWT) calls him 'Shakir' it means that he was not just thankful like you and I, he was thankful in the truest of ways.

Hence looking back at a verse discussed last week:

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي ذُرِّيَّتِهِ النُّبُوَّةَ وَالْكِتَابَ وَآتَيْنَاهُ أَجْرَهُ فِي  
الدُّنْيَا ۖ وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

*And We bestowed upon him (offspring like) Isaac and Jacob, and bestowed prophethood and the Book on his descendants and granted him his reward in this world; he will certainly be among the righteous in the Hereafter. [29:27]*

Prophet Ibrahim (A) was granted the above as a reward from Allah (SWT) for being such a grateful person. This also means that the Banu Isra'il were bestowed all their blessings because of Prophet Ibrahim (A)'s gratefulness.

**REFLECTION:** At this point it is important for us to reflect on how we can learn from the gratefulness of Prophet Ibrahim (A). How can we be grateful and show our gratitude to Allah (SWT)?

The answer is simple. Just know that whatever we have is from Allah (SWT). Every little thing from our ability to breathe unconsciously, to our parents and every other great blessing we take for granted. The first step is acknowledgement. Acknowledgement is considered gratitude on a very basic level. Once a person acknowledges the blessings granted to him/her, love of Allah (SWT) penetrates this person's heart. Through this blessing of acknowledgement, one becomes grateful. The more grateful a person is the closer they become to Allah (SWT).

Now that we have looked at the reason and the status the Banu Isra'il had before the birth of Prophet Musa (A). We now move to the story of Prophet Musa (A).

### The shift in status of the Banu Isra'il

The Banu Isra'il lived a respectable life alongside the Egyptian people for around 400 years. However, one day the Pharaoh decided that he wanted to divest Banu Isra'il of the power and status they held. The Pharaoh felt that Banu Isra'il had benefitted a lot from his country and economy and now it was time for them to give back all they had gained. They were all branded and treated as slaves, losing all their wealth and position to the native Egyptians. When this shift in status happened, many elders and leaders of the Banu Isra'il told their people to not become disheartened and that a saviour would come to free them from slavery. Banu Isra'il did not know who, when or how this saviour would come. These people were now waiting for a saviour.... just like we are waiting for the reappearance of our living Imam, Imam al-Mahdi (A).