

The Story of Umm Ismaa'eel and her Little Boy

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Ibraaheem *`alayhis-salaam* was one of Allaah's Messengers. Thousands of years ago Allaah sent him to tell the people that they should worship only Allaah, and not worship anything else. Ibraaheem *`alayhis-salaam* did just that. He told the people to worship only Allaah.

This is a true story about Ibraaheem *`alayhis-salaam* and his family. A true story is a story that really happened. The last Messenger, Muhammad *sallAllaahu `alayhi wa sallam* told this story to the people who were with him. It was then written down and now we are going to tell you about it! Let us start then:

Ibraaheem *`alayhis-salaam* had a wife whose name was Haajar. In this story we will call her Umm Ismaa'eel, which means the mother of Ismaa'eel. Ibraaheem *`alayhis-salaam* and Umm Ismaa'eel had a little boy. Can you guess what the boy's name was? Yes, that's right! He was called Ismaa'eel! One day Ibraaheem *`alayhis-salaam* took Umm Ismaa'eel and their little boy to a far off place in Arabia called Makkah. Even though Makkah is a busy city nowadays, in those days Makkah was just a hot, open desert. Have you ever seen a desert? Deserts can look something like this:

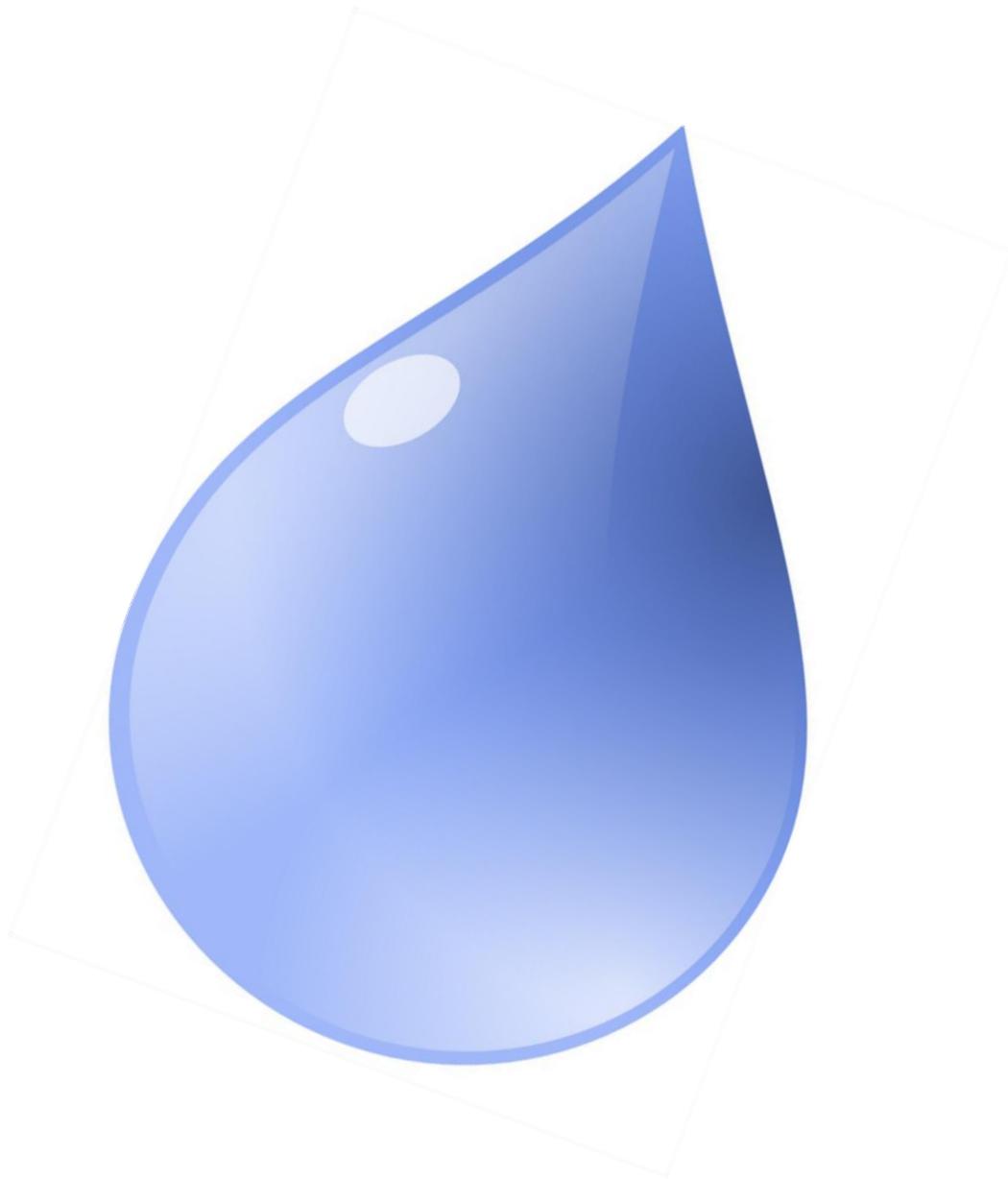


Picture by Salvatore Vuono www.freedigitalphotos.com

¹ Compiled from a combination of two hadeeths in Saheehul-Bukhaaree no.3364 and no. 3365 using the explanation Fat.hul-Baaree of al-Haafiz ibn Hajar al-`Asqalaanee and `Umdatul-Qaaree of Badrud-Deen al-`Aynee

So Makkah was an empty desert. No-one lived there in those days because there was no water there. We can't live without water, nor can animals. If a person doesn't drink anything for a long time then he will die. Even plants die if they don't have any water. This happens more quickly if the weather is hot like it is in Makkah.

So there was no water in Makkah, no animals to milk, no houses or buildings and there was no-one else there.



Ibraaheem *'alayhis-salaam* brought Umm Ismaa`eel and the little boy to sit under a big tree² and placed near them a food bag³ with some dates in it and a small water skin with some water in it. Here's a picture of one type of dates.



Picture by winnond www.freedigitalphotos.com

So then Ibraaheem *'alayhis-salaam* set off back home to Shaam.⁴ At first Umm Ismaa`eel didn't know why Ibraaheem *'alayhis-salaam* was leaving them in such a place on their own. What would happen when the small amount of water ran out? What would they drink and how would they live? So Umm Ismaa`eel followed Ibraaheem and caught up with him.⁵

She said to Ibraaheem *'alayhis-salaam*, "O Ibraaheem! Where are you going, leaving us in this valley⁶ where there is not a single person⁷, nor is there anything at all?"



² this place is where the Zamzam well is, near the Ka`bah

³ `Umdatul-Qaaree 15/352

⁴ The saying of Ibn Is.haaq (`Umdatul-Qaaree 15/352) and also mentioned by Ibn Hajar in al-Fat.h

⁵ The saying of Ibn Jurayh (Umdatul-Qaaree 15/352)

⁶ The word 'valley' may need explaining: It is the low land between hills and mountains

⁷ Umdatul-Qaaree 15/350 and Fat.hul-Baaree

She asked him three times⁸, and then she said,

Did Allaah order you to
do this?

Ibraaheem *`alayhis-salaam* replied,

Yes.

She knew then that Allaah had told Ibraaheem *`alayhis-salaam* to leave them there and that Ibraaheem was only doing what Allaah had told him to do. She said, "Then He will not leave us to die." She knew that Allaah would take care of her and the little boy, even in an empty place like that. Allaah is very kind and everything is easy for Allaah to do. When Allaah tells us to do things, it is always for a good reason. So she was happy with that and went back and began drinking the water that Ibraaheem *`alayhis-salaam* had left there.

Ibraaheem *`alayhis-salaam* carried on towards his home and when he reached a place from where they couldn't see him anymore, he raised up his hands, faced towards the place where the Ka`bah is today and made *du`aa* to Allaah saying:

O our Lord, I have made some of my children live
in a valley where people cannot grow food, by
Your Sacred House so that they can do the
Prayer, O our Lord. So put love for them in the
hearts of people and give them fruits - so that
they might give thanks

⁸ Sa'eed ibn Jubayr reports, "She called him three times, and he replied to her on the third. So she said to him, "Who commanded you with this?" He said, "Allaah." (Fat.hul-Baaree)

So Umm Ismaa`eel and the little boy Ismaa`eel stayed in that place until the water ran out and Umm Ismaa`eel became thirsty. The little boy became thirsty too. She looked at him rolling around and kicking the ground⁹ from thirst. Umm Ismaa`eel didn't like to look at the boy looking so unhappy, so she left him there in that spot and went to look for some people who could help.

The nearest mountain to her was a mountain called as-Safaa. She went up the mountain and stood on it looking down at the valley to see if she could see anyone who could help, but she couldn't see anyone. So she came down from as-Safaa, and when she reached the valley at the bottom of the mountain, she tucked up the edge of her robe and ran like a person who is upset and worried. Then she reached a mountain called al-Marwah and stood on it, looking to see if she could see anyone who could help, but she couldn't see anyone at all. She went back to the mountains as-Safaa and then al-Marwah again and again, looking to see if she could find someone who could help, but she couldn't see anyone at all.

She then decided to go back and check on little Ismaa`eel. When she saw him he looked as if he was going to die from not having enough to drink. It was hard for her to see him like that. She didn't give up and said, "If I go and look I may find somebody." So again she went up as-Safaa and she looked and she looked but she couldn't see anyone at all. She went between as-Safaa and al-Marwah seven times altogether.

This is why when Muslims go to Makkah to do Hajj they go between as-Safaa and al-Marwah seven times, just like Umm Ismaa`eel did when she was looking for someone to help her and her little boy.

⁹ As mentioned in Fat.hul-Baaree in explanation of the word يتلبط .

Al-`Aynee mentions that it is rolling in the dust and hitting himself on the ground. He quotes ad-Daawoodee who says it means to move the tongue and the lips as if he is dying. He also mentions that Ibn Durayd explained that when Ismaa`eel became thirsty, he began to hit the ground with his heels. (Umdatul- Qaaree)

When Umm Ismaa`eel reached al-Marwah for the last time she heard a sound and said to herself "Quiet!" and listened carefully. Again she heard the sound and then said, "Help, if you can offer any help."

Then she saw an angel in the place of Zamzam, digging¹⁰ its heel on the ground. It was Jibreel `alayhis-salaam. Water gushed out from the ground and Umm Ismaa`eel was amazed. She began to dig and scoop the water into her container. The Prophet Muhammad *sallAllaahu `alayhi wa sallam*, who told us this story, said that if she had let the water just flow when it came out from the ground then it would have become a stream flowing on top of the ground!

So Umm Ismaa`eel drank the water and then her little boy had enough to drink too. The angel said to Umm Ismaa`eel, "Don't be afraid of being left to die¹¹ because this is the House of Allaah which this boy and his father will build. And Allaah never lets His people be ruined."



This story was rewritten by Madeehah bint Nafees Ahmad with some help from Nasser ibn Najam Alvi. He also helped in writing the extra bits of information under the line at the bottom of some of the pages (the footnotes). It was then checked by Aboo Ismaa`eel Mustafa George.

¹⁰ As mentioned in `Umdatul-Qaaree, "It is as if he was digging with the end part of his leg."

¹¹ Or "Do not fear that the water will run out," and it is narrated, "Do not fear thirst for the people of this valley," and that it is a spring of water from which the two guests of Allaah drink. (`Umdatul-Qaaree)

How much of this story can you remember?

Let's have a quiz!

If you like you can read through the story again, or ask someone to read it for you before you try the quiz. And don't worry if you can't remember any of the answers; just go back to the story to find them! Easy!

Here are the questions:

1. Is this story about Umm Ismaa`eel and her little boy Ismaa`eel a true story?
2. Was Makkah a busy city full of people at the time of this story?
3. Why did Ibraaheem *`alayhis-salaam* leave Umm Ismaa`eel and their little boy in Makkah and go back home? Put a tick next to the right answer.

He left them there because:

- a) he was cross with them
- b) Allaah had told him to do that
- c) he forgot to take them with him

4. What did Umm Ismaa`eel do when she realised that Ibraaheem `alayhis-salaam was really going to leave them in Makkah and go back home without them? Put a tick next to the right answer.

a) she became angry and started screaming

b) she became sad couldn't stop crying

c) she knew Allaah would help them and went back

5. What did Umm Ismaa`eel do when the little boy got very thirsty?

6. What happened at the mountain called al-Marwah when Umm Ismaa`eel reached there for the last time?

7. Do you know what as-Safaa and al-Marwah and the area in between look like these days? Can you find out and draw a picture of it? Or maybe you could ask a grown up to help you make a model of it.

Answers:

1. yes

2. no

3. b)

4. c)

5. When the boy got very thirsty Umm Ismaa`eel went to see if she could find anyone to help. She went up mount as-Safaa, looked around, then came down and ran across to al-Marwah. She then climbed up al-Marwah to see if she could see anyone. She ran between as-Safaa and al-Marwah seven times altogether trying to find someone who could help.

6. When she reached al-Marwah for the last time she heard a voice and told herself to be quiet. Then she saw Angel Jibreel *`alayhis-salaam* digging his heel in the ground. Water came out from that place in the ground and she began to scoop it into her container. Jibreel *`alayhis-salaam* told her not to be afraid and that Ismaa`eel *`alayhis-salaam* and his father Ibraaheem *`alayhis-salaam* would one day build Allaah's House (the Ka`bah) there.