SAMPLE

Hajar: The Persevering Mother

Hajar in the Quran and the Ritual of the Sa'i

Aira Aurora

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Contents

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Introduction

Chapter 1: Hajar in the Quranic Landscape

Chapter 2: The Leaving — Ibrahim's Departure

Chapter 3: The Valley of Bakkah — The Barren Valley

Chapter 4: The Seven Runs — Hajar and the Search for Water

Chapter 5: The Well of Zamzam — The Miracle of the Desert

Chapter 6: Hajar and the Building of the Ka'bah

Chapter 7: Hajar, Isma'il, and the Sacrifice

Chapter 8: Hajar's Legacy — The Sa'i and the Hajj

Chapter 9: Lessons and Reflections

Chapter 11: The First House — 3:96-97's Bakkah-Charter and the Safe-Entry Clause

Chapter 12: The Ummah-Prayer — 2:128's Muslim-Seed and 2:133's Deathbed-Witness

Frequently Asked Questions

Glossary

This free sample contains the Introduction and Chapter 1. The complete book contains the full contents above.

Introduction

Hajar is one of the most important figures in the Islamic tradition, and yet the Quran does not tell her story directly. Her name does not appear in the Quran. Her actions are not narrated in the Quranic text. The events that define her — the leaving, the running, the well — are known through the Hadith and the prophetic tradition, not through the Quran.

And yet, every Muslim who performs the Hajj or the Umrah walks in the footsteps of Hajar. The Sa'i — the seven runs between Safa and Marwah — is a ritual that commemorates Hajar's search for water. The well of Zamzam — the water that has flowed in Makkah for millennia — is the well that Allah gave to

Hajar and her infant son. The entire Hajj pilgrimage, one of the five pillars of Islam, includes a ritual that is essentially the reenactment of Hajar's action.

This is remarkable. The Quran does not narrate the story of Hajar, but it enshrines her action as one of the obligatory acts of the Hajj. The Quran says: "Indeed, Safa and Marwah are among the symbols of Allah. So whoever makes Hajj to the House or performs Umrah — there is no blame upon him for walking between them" (2:158). The walking between Safa and Marwah is the Sa'i — the ritual that commemorates Hajar's seven runs. The Quran does not name Hajar, but it institutionalizes her action.

This book is the third in The Honored Ones sub-series. The first book explored Maryam — the model of purity and trust. The second explored Asiya — the model of faith under tyranny. This book explores Hajar — the model of perseverance and effort. Hajar's story is the story of a woman who was left alone in a barren valley with an infant son, who ran between two hills searching for water, who was answered by Allah with a well that still flows today, and whose action became a ritual that millions of Muslims perform every year.

Every year, millions of pilgrims walk between Safa and Marwah, reenacting the desperate search of a mother for water. They drink from a well that has not stopped flowing for thousands of years. They perform a ritual that the Quran calls one of the symbols of Allah. And behind the ritual, behind the well, behind the entire spiritual geography of Makkah, stands a woman whose name the Quran does not mention but whose action the Quran enshrines as sacred.

Hajar is not mentioned by name in the Quran, but her story is embedded in the Quranic landscape. The Quran mentions Ibrahim's leaving of his family in a barren valley (14:37), the building of the Ka'bah by Ibrahim and Isma'il (2:127), the sacrifice (37:102-107), and the ritual of Safa and Marwah (2:158).

These verses are the Quranic framework within which Hajar's story is understood. The Hadith fills in the details — the conversation between Ibrahim and Hajar, the running between the hills, the angel at the well. Together, the Quran and the Hadith give us the story of a woman whose faith, effort, and perseverance are immortalized in the rituals of Islam.

Chapter 1: Hajar in the Quranic Landscape

Hajar is not named in the Quran, but the Quran provides the framework for understanding her story. The key Quranic verses that frame Hajar's story are: the leaving of Ibrahim's family in the valley (14:37), the building of the Ka'bah (2:127), the sacrifice (37:102-107), and the ritual of Safa and Marwah (2:158).

The Verse of the Valley

The Quran says: "Our Lord, I have settled some of my descendants in an uncultivated valley near Your sacred House, our Lord, that they may establish prayer. So make the hearts of the people incline toward them and provide for them fruits, that they may be grateful" (14:37).

This verse is Ibrahim's prayer after leaving his family in the valley of Makkah. The "some of my descendants" refers to Isma'il and his mother — Hajar. The "uncultivated valley" is the valley of Bakkah (another name for Makkah), a barren valley with no water, no vegetation, and no inhabitants. Ibrahim left them there by Allah's command, and then he prayed — not for their safety (he trusted Allah for that) but for their spiritual purpose: that they may establish prayer, and that the hearts of people may incline toward them, and that they may be provided for.

The prayer was answered. Makkah became a city. The barren valley became the center of the Hajj pilgrimage. The hearts of billions of people have inclined toward the descendants of Ibrahim through Isma'il. And the fruits — both literal and spiritual — have been provided. The prayer of Ibrahim, spoken in the desert with his family behind him, was answered in ways that he could not have imagined. And the answer began with Hajar — the woman who stayed in the valley, who trusted the prayer of Ibrahim, and who was the first to experience the provision of Allah in that barren land.

The Verse of the Ka'bah

The Quran says: "And [mention] when Ibrahim was raising the foundations of the House and [with him] Isma'il, [saying]: Our Lord, accept this from us. Indeed, You are the Hearing, the Knowing" (2:127).

This verse mentions Ibrahim and Isma'il building the Ka'bah. Isma'il is a young man at this point — old enough to work alongside his father. But before he was a young man, he was an infant in the arms of Hajar, alone in the valley. The Ka'bah, the holiest site in Islam, was built by Ibrahim and the son that Hajar raised — the son she bore, nursed, protected, and persevered for in the barren valley. The Ka'bah stands on the foundation of Hajar's faith. Without her, there

is no Isma'il. Without Isma'il, there is no Ka'bah. Without the Ka'bah, there is no Hajj. The entire spiritual geography of Islam traces back, through Isma'il, to Hajar.

The Verse of the Sacrifice

The sacrifice — the trial of Ibrahim with Isma'il — is the culminating event of the Isma'il narrative. Isma'il, the son of Hajar, is the one whom Ibrahim is commanded to sacrifice. And Isma'il's response — "do as you are commanded" — is the response of a young man raised by a mother of faith. The steadfastness of Isma'il, his submission to the command of Allah, is the fruit of Hajar's perseverance. The woman who ran between the hills raised the son who walked to the sacrifice. The mother who searched for water raised the son who was willing to give his life.

The Verse of Safa and Marwah

The Quran says: "Indeed, Safa and Marwah are among the symbols of Allah. So whoever makes Hajj to the House or performs Umrah — there is no blame upon him for walking between them. And whoever volunteers good — then indeed, Allah is Appreciative and Knowing" (2:158).

This verse is the most direct Quranic reference to Hajar's action. The walking between Safa and Marwah — the Sa'i — is the ritual that commemorates Hajar's seven runs. The Quran calls Safa and Marwah "the symbols of Allah" — sha'air Allah. A symbol of Allah is a sign that points to Him, a ritual that connects the believer to the divine. The running of Hajar — a desperate search for water by a mother alone in the desert — is elevated by the Quran to the status of a divine symbol. The human action is transfigured into a sacred ritual.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aira Aurora is an independent researcher and writer specializing in Quranic studies. Her work focuses on close reading of the Quranic text, exploring its themes, narratives, and moral framework with attention to both the original Arabic and the broader human context.

The NurOne master series is her primary project -- a multi-sub-series exploration of the Quran covering prophets, people, places, events, lessons, commands, signs, the unseen, the hereafter, and everyday life. Each book is a close reading of the Quranic verses on a specific topic, presented in clear, accessible language.

Her work is published under the pen name Aira Aurora.

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