

An Account of the sons of Ishmael who were the Arabs of Ḥijāz, and of events of the jāhiliyya period up to the time of the Mission.

We have already, in a previous work,¹⁹ given an account of Ishmael, upon whom be peace, along with the Prophets. It tells of how his father Abraham, upon whom be blessings and peace, bore him away with his wife Hājar and made them to dwell in the Mecca valley between the mountains of Fārān, an unpleasant and desolate place. Ishmael was still unweaned at the time. Then Abraham went away and left them there, God having commanded him to do so. Ishmael's mother had nothing except a leather bag containing dates and a skin-bottle with water in it. When that was exhausted, God made the well *zamzam* flow for Hājar, it being a tasty sustenance for the hungry and a cure for the sick, as is related in the long *ḥadīth* of Ibn 'Abbās recorded by al-Bukhārī, God have mercy on him.

Later, Jurhum, who were a group of the original Arabs who were descended from the ancient Arab tribes, settled near Hājar in Mecca, with no right to the water except for their own drinking and use. Hājar felt comfortable and secure with them.

Abraham, peace be upon him, kept an eye on them all the time; it is said he would ride his horse, al-Burāq, on his journeys to and from Jerusalem.

Later, when the boy became a youth and he would busy himself with his father, the issue of making sacrifice arose, the sacrifice being in reality Ishmael.

When Ishmael grew up, he married a woman from Jurhum, then left her and married another, the daughter of Muḍāḍ b. 'Amr al-Jurhumī. She bore him 12 sons whose names have been mentioned before. These were: Nābit, Qaydhar, Adhbul, Misha, Misma', Mashī, Dimmā, Adhar, Yaḥūr, Nabsh, Ṭīmā, and Qaydhumā. These are as given by Muḥammad b. Ishāq and others using written sources. He also had one daughter whose name was Nasma; it was she he married to his nephew al-ʿIṣū b. Ishāq b. Abraham. From her were born to him al-Rūm and Fāris, and also al-Ashbān, in one of the two accounts.

The Arabs of Ḥijāz, with all their different tribes, are traced in their genealogy to Ishmael's two sons Nābit and Qaydhar. After Ishmael, the governor and ruler-in-chief of Mecca and the custodian of the temple and of the well *zamzam* was Nābit, cousin through his mother to the Jurhumites.

Later the Jurhumites gained control over *al-bayt* (the *ka'ba*), being jealous of their relatives, and ruled in Mecca and the areas around it for a long time in place of Ishmael's line. The first to gain control after Nābit was Muḍāḍ b. 'Amr b. Sa'd b. al-Raqīb b. 'Aybar b. Nabit b. Jurhum.

19. Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya* (*The Beginning and the End*), Vol. 1.

Jurhum was the son of Qaḥṭān. His line was also given as Jurhum b. Yaḥṭun b. 'Aybar b. Shālikh b. Arafkshud b. Sām b. Nuḥ al-Jurhumī. The Jurhumites settled in the heights of Mecca, at al-Qu'ayqi'ān.

Al-Samayda', leader of Qaṭūrā' had settled with his people in the lower part of Mecca. The Jurhumites and Qaṭūrā', charged a tax on all who passed by them on their ways to Mecca.

Ultimately warfare broke out between the tribes of Jurhum and Qaṭūrā'. Al-Samayda' was killed, and full power over Mecca and *al-bayt* thus were gained by Muḍāḍ. The descendants of Ishmael did not contend with him despite their large numbers, respected position, and the diversity of their locations throughout Mecca and its surroundings; this was due to their family ties to them and to the majesty of the sacred *bayt*.

After Muḍāḍ, power went to his son al-Ḥārith and then to his son, 'Amr.

Later Jurhum acted wrongfully in Mecca and corruption there spread. People came to disrespect the sacred mosque. It is even said that one of their men, named Isāf b. Baghī, and a woman named Nā'ila, daughter of Wa'il, met inside the *ka'ba* and that he committed fornication with her. And so God turned them into two rocks which the people set up near the temple as a warning to others. After a great deal of time had passed, these two rocks became the object of worship aside from God, during the period of Khuzā'a. This will be further explained later. These became two idols set on high and named Isāf and Nā'ila.

When the misdeeds of Jurhum in the sacred land grew worse, Khuzā'a, who had settled near the sanctuary, arose against them. They, Khuzā'a, were of the line of 'Amr b. 'Āmir who had left Yemen because of what he expected would occur with the 'Arim torrent, as we have related above. It is also said that Khuzā'a traced their descent to Ishmael's sons. God knows best.

Anyway, Khuzā'a did join together to fight Jurhum and they engaged in battle; the descendants of Ishmael sided with neither party.

Khuzā'a, being the tribe of Bakr b. 'Abd Manāt and Ghubshān, gained victory and ousted them from the *ka'ba*.

'Amr b. al-Ḥārith b. Muḍāḍ al-Jurhumī, their leader, made off with the *ka'ba*'s two gazelles, made of gold, the cornerstone, the 'black stone' that is, as well as decorated swords and other items, and buried them all in the well *zamzam*, which he filled with earth. Then he and his people moved out, back to Yemen.

On this subject 'Amr b. al-Ḥārith b. Muḍāḍ composed the following:

"Her tears flowing and her eyes red and sore, in grief she said

'It's as though between al-Ḥajūn and al-Ṣafā there has never been a friend, and no evening pleasure in Mecca.'

So I told her, my heart made to flutter as though by a bird between my ribs:

‘Yes indeed; we were its people but changing times and evil misfortunes destroyed us,

We were custodians of the *kaʿba* after Nābit, circling it around, our fine state clear.

We took charge of the temple after Nābit with dignity, the wealthy gaining no favour with us.

We had power and prestige, so be proud of our reign, no tribe there more proud than us.

Did you not marry a woman to Ishmael, the finest man I knew, so his descendants are from us, and we are his relatives?’

So what if the world turn against us? Life has its turns and tribulations

It was the king, the almighty ruler, who used his power to oust us; thus, O people, do the fates decree.

If the carefree sleep and I not rest, then I say, ‘O enthroned one, why did Suhayl and ʿAmir die?’

In exchange for them I got faces I dislike, tribes including Ḥimyar and Yuhābir.

We were despised, after having been in delight, passing years thus biting us.

Tears flowed from eyes weeping for a land with a secure and sacred place and shrines,

Weeping for a place whose pigeons are left unharmed, living safe there, and sparrows too.

In it wild animals are safe and may leave it without fear – they would never be attacked.”

According to Ibn Ishāq, ʿAmr b. al-Ḥārith b. Muḏāḏ also spoke as follows addressing Banū Bakr and Ghubshān who came to power after themselves in Mecca:

“O people, move along; your end is that one day you will not be able to move.

Urge on your mounts, release their reins before your death, and do with us what you will do.

We were people as you were; fate changed us; you will become as we became.”

Ibn Hishām stated that these verses were the ones he found to be genuine. And a certain authority on poetry told me that these verses are the first poems spoken by the Arabs and that they were discovered inscribed on rocks in Yemen, their author’s name not being given.

Al-Suhaylī recorded companion verses to this poetry, telling along with them a strange tale and peculiar chants. He said that Abū al-Walid al-Azraqī, in his book *Faḏāʾil Mecca (The Virtues of Mecca)*, added to the above-mentioned verses by ʿAmr b. al-Ḥārith b. Muḏāḏ the following:

“Fate has turned against us and destroyed us through injustice there, our people plundering others.

Ask about the deeds of others before you, so that the path of disgrace be made clear. Once before you we were kings over people, living resident in God’s sanctuary.”