

# With Abraham, the father of the prophets

## Where holiness meets miracles

> Text and photographs by  
Walid Abdul Amir Alwan

When Nimrod wanted to defy Abraham and his God, he built a high tower, and climbed it to start launching arrows towards the sky. One of those arrows turned over to him and covered with a red colour. He believed then that he achieved his goal. But soon he and his followers fell to the ground and got up shouting in an unrecognized language. They were hit by an earthquake which destroyed the tower. They were perplexed, not knowing what to do, not understanding anything said to them. Thus, the city was named Babel, which means confusion in language and thought. Its remains are still there in the town of Hallah, located nearly 102 km south of the Iraqi capital, Baghdad.

### The site and its name

Some 15 km in the district of Babel (Halla), (today in Al-Hammad area), the city of Borsippa, a suburb of Babel, was located approximately 4,000 years ago.

It was famous as a religious centre, where the Babylonian god Nebu was worshiped by the Iraqis of old who regarded him as the god of wisdom and knowledge; his son Marduk was the celebrated God of Babel. His temple was named Borsippa, a Sumerian word meaning "the Strong House". The city was prosperous during the reign of the dynasty of Chaldea's, in particular at the time of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. It was inhabited until the Arab-Islamic conquest of Iraq.

### The birth place of Prophet Abraham

When astrologists informed Nimrod of the birth of a person who would bring another religion the king feared losing his throne with the birth of the new-born baby, so he sent his men throughout the kingdom to watch over pregnant women and kill the male children. When one of them visited the mother of Abraham, and touched her right side, the foetus moved to the left; when he touched her left side, the foetus moved to the right. He left without being able to identify the pregnancy. Abraham's mother was so afraid that she took refuge in a cave



The shrine of Abraham

مقام النبي إبراهيم (ع)

close to the Cootha area and gave birth. She left the child there, and took care to carefully disguise the entrance of the cave. God provided for the new-born baby and his mother visited him daily. He remained

there until the age of 13, when he asked his mother to let him out. She agreed reluctantly. This took place around the 19th century before the Christian era.

The site of Abraham's birth is on a hill, in ▶



The writer at the Nimrod Palace الكاتب في قصر النمرود

the remains of the town of Cootha. The area is also known as "Abraham's Hill". Near the site is the shrine, which one can pass through an agricultural area.

One enters the site by a wooden door, above which a sign indicates the birthplace of Prophet Abraham. Inside is an esplanade of 50x50 m, surrounded by a hedge of average height and marble-covered ground. A wooden door provides access to a small alley which leads to a vast prayer hall, and includes a library containing Korans and other works. The caretaker sits in a corner behind a small table. Each visitor gives him a small coin and is given a piece of green fabric for blessing. On the right side of this hall is an 18-step stair case which makes it possible for the visitor to go down to the cave where Abraham was born.

On the left hall was a yellowish rock on which the Patriarch was delivered. It had two holes where there was water. A scented essence emanated from the rock which has now disappeared due to vandalism. There are two other holes, which did not contain water and had an oval form. The grid which surrounds this rock is covered with a shining metal, and the outside with wood, above which is a beautiful metal grid. On the right, there is a small door, where the visitor goes to receive the blessing, by offering some money. At the top, there is a sign outlining the rules to be followed during the visit.

Very close by, there is a carpeted space, ▶



Nimrod Palace

بقايا قصر النمرود



Nimrod Palace

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for prayers, for about ten people. Visitors feel an unrivalled calm and quietude in the cave where the father of the prophets lived for thirteen years. At the top, there is a 20m high dome, covered with the kashan tiles of Kerbela. They are mainly green with yellow lines dividing them into beautiful features.

### The Ziggurat

The ziggurat is located not far from this site in what was once the main street of the city. This site comprises the remains of the seven-level tower which rises 47 meters above the surrounding plain. It is one of the most important towers in Iraq. Above this tower was the catapult with which Abraham was thrown in the fire ditch to burn.

The traces of the fire which burned this tower are still visible as well as brick remainders of different sizes strewn on both sides. The tower was reportedly hit by lightning; perhaps a punishment against the tyrants and support for the Prophet Abraham. All that remains are parts of the ziggurat. Bricks useful for construction have remained well preserved. Many holes, whose use remains unknown, are found in the tower.

### The Burning Pit

A guide is required to find the place of the burning pit which is unknown even to some of the locals. It is found on a rugged



The area surrounding the burning pit

المنطقة القريبة من المحرقة

road, strewn with thorns, mud and holes. A large pit was filled with wood and all the inhabitants of the kingdom gathered in the area. Women even sold their wares to buy wood for the pit. Four thousand years later the pit has evolved into a small, grey, sandy hill.

Signs highlight the pit. A number of families once built their houses nearby but a fire engulfed and destroyed them after a few minutes. There were only two houses

in the area, known as Ishan Harkah. Ishan, means high land in local Iraqi dialect; and harkah, burning. The people remain because they have nowhere else to go. This holy place and its surroundings deserve more care and consideration. It is a site of great holiness which marks the birthplace of the father of prophets, Abraham. The ziggurat and the remains of the burning pit are also of great historical significance. ■



The remains of Nimrod Palace and the tower بقايا قصر النمرود والبرج الذي وضع فيه المنجنيق



Nimrod Palace

بقايا قصر النمرود