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as a place of prayer. We commanded Ibrâheem and Ismâ'eel, that they should purify My House for those who circumambulate it or stay there [for worship], or bow or prostrate there.

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Here Allah tells us about His slave and close friend Ibrâheem (عليه السلام), whose leadership and virtue are universally acknowledged and whom all the groups of the People of the Book, and even the polytheists, claim as a leader. Allah tells us that He tried and tested him with certain commands and prohibitions, which is how Allah usually tests His slaves, to highlight those who are insincere and cannot be steadfast at the time of trial, and to demonstrate those who are sincere and will be elevated in status by means of the test, their deeds will be purified and they will be cleansed of sin. One of the greatest of them in this regard is Ibrâheem (عليه السلام).

He did what Allah commanded him to do, properly and perfectly. Allah appreciated that and He still appreciates it, as He said: ﴿I will make you a leader of people﴾ that is, they will follow your example and your guidance, and will walk behind you to their eternal bliss; you will be highly thought of forever, you will attain a great reward and you will be venerated by everyone.

This, surely, is the highest status for which people may compete and strive hard, the greatest achievement of the Messengers of firm resolve and each sincere follower of theirs who is calling to Allah and to His way.

When Ibrâheem attained that high status, he sought that for his descendants too, so that his status and that of his descendants would become even higher. This is also a reflection of his leadership, his sincerity towards the slaves of Allah and his desire to increase the numbers of those who lead others on the straight path; how great was his ambition and status.

Allah answered his prayer and told him of the reason why some may be prevented from attaining this status, as He said: ﴿My covenant