

The Noble Life of The

Prophet

Peace be upon him



Vol.1

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CONTENTS

Introduction	9
From, Some Important Historical Events Before The Advent Of Islam, Until, The Beginning Of Revelation	21
The Dominant Empires Of The World Prior To The Advent Of Islam	23
The Roman Empire	23
The Persian Empire	24
India	24
A Synopsis Of The Dominant Religions Of The World Prior To The Advent Of Islam	25
The Early Arabs And Their Civilizations	29
The Early Arabs	29
The Civilizations Of The Early Arabs	32
Politics, Religion, Economics, And The Overall Condition Of Arabs Prior To Islam	36
Religion	36
The Political Situation Of The Arabian Peninsula	39
The Economic Situation Of The Arabian Peninsula	41
Arab Society	44
The Manners And Morals Of Arabs	56
Some Important Events That Took Place Before The Birth Of The Prophet ﷺ	63
'Abdul-Muttalib Digs The Well Of <i>Zamzam</i>	63
The People Of The Elephant	67
From The Birth Of The Noble Prophet ﷺ Until The <i>Fudool</i> Confederacy	77
The Lineage Of The Prophet ﷺ	77
'Abdullah Ibn 'Abdul-Muttalib's Marriage To Aaminah Bint Wahb, And Aaminah's Dream	79
The Birth Of The Prophet ﷺ	82
His Wet Nurses	82
The Death Of His Mother, And Then His Living Under The Care Of His Grandfather And Uncle	90
Working As A Shepherd	92
How Allah ﷻ Protected The Prophet ﷺ During The Early Years Of His Life	96
Buhairah The Monk Meets With The Messenger Of Allah ﷺ	98
The <i>Fijaar</i> War	101
The <i>Fudool</i> Alliance	102
The Prophet's ﷺ Marriage To Khadeejah ﷻ, And Some Important Events That Took Place Prior To Prophethood	106
The Prophet's Marriage To Khadeejah ﷻ	106

The Important Role That The Prophet ﷺ Played In The Rebuilding Of The Ka'bah	110
How People Were Being Prepared To Accept The Prophethood Of Muhammad ﷺ	115
The General State Of Affairs Prior To The Advent Of Islam	123
The Signs Of Prophethood That The Prophet ﷺ Witnessed	124
Revelation Descends, And The Phase Of Secret Preaching Begins	127
Revelation Descends To The Prophet ﷺ For The First Time	129
The Good Dream	131
Isolation Having Been Made Beloved To Him, The Prophet ﷺ Would Seek Out Solitude In The Cave Of Hira	133
When The Truth Came To Him In The Cave Of Hira	134
The Intensity And Fatigue That Accompanied The First Revelation	136
The Different Ways In Which The Prophet ﷺ Received Revelation	140
The Positive Impact, A Righteous Woman Can Have In Serving The Religion	144
The Prophet's Loyalty To Khadeejah ؓ	147
It Was The Way Of All Nations For People To Disbelieve In The Messengers That Were Sent To Them	148
'And Revelation Let Up (For A While)'	150
Secret Preaching	152
A Command From Allah ﷻ To Convey His Message	152
The Early Stages Of Secret Calling	153
The Messenger Of Allah ﷺ Continues His <i>Da'wah</i> Efforts	163
Some Of The Main Qualities And Merits Of The First Generation Of Muslims	168
The Personality Of The Prophet ﷺ	172
The Subject Of Study In The House Of Al-Arqam	174
Why The House Of Al-Arqam?	175
Some Of The Qualities Of The Prophet's Early Companions ؓ	176
The Spreading Of The <i>Da'wah</i> Among The Subtribes Of The Quraish, And The Universality Of Islam's Message	180
Laying The Foundations For Islamic Beliefs During The Makkan Era	183
The Prophet's Profound Understanding In Dealing With Universal Laws	183
The <i>Sunnah</i> Of Change, And Its Relation To Laying Down The Foundations Of Correct Beliefs	186
Correcting The Beliefs Of The Companions ؓ	188
A Description Of Paradise In The Noble Qur'an And The Effect It Had On The Companions ؓ	200
A Description Of The Hellfire In The Noble Qur'an And The Effect That Had On The Prophet's Companions ؓ	219

Faith In Divine Preordainment (<i>Al-Qadaa Wal-Qadr</i>)	236
The Companions ﷺ Understood The Reality Of Man's Worth And Role In The Universe	240
What The Companions ﷺ Learned From The Story Of Adam ﷺ And <i>Iblis</i>	248
The Companions' Outlook On Life, The Universe, And Certain Created Beings	265
Laying The Foundations For Worship And Manners During The Makkan Period Of The Prophet's Life	274
Purifying The Souls Of The Companions ﷺ Through Various Acts Of Worship	274
Cultivation Of The Mind	289
Cultivation Of The Body	294
Cultivating The Manners Of The Companions ﷺ	299
Cultivating The Manners Of The Prophet's Companions ﷺ Through The Stories Of The Qur'an	315
Open Preaching, And The Means Employed By The Polytheists To Oppose The Prophet's <i>Da'wah</i>	325
Open Preaching	327
What The Polytheists Rejected	331
Islamic Monotheism	331
Faith In The Hereafter	334
Belief In The Prophethood And Messengership Of Muhammad ﷺ	339
Belief In The Noble Qur'an	343
Some Of The Reasons Why Most Of The Quraish Rejected The Message Of Islam	347
Trials And Tribulations	355
The Wisdom Behind And The Benefits Of Affliction	356
Some Of The Ways In Which The Polytheists Waged War Against Islam	360
The Quraish made frequent attempts to dissuade Abu Taalib from helping and protecting the Messenger of Allah ﷺ	360
An Attempt To Discredit The Prophet ﷺ	363
The Different Ways In Which The Messenger Of Allah ﷺ Was Persecuted	381
Some Of The Ways In Which The Prophet's Companions ﷺ Were Persecuted	388
The Wisdom Behind Passive Resistance In Makkah; And How, While In Makkah, The Prophet ﷺ Concentrated Mainly On Spiritual Development	416
The Effect The Noble Qur'an Had In Terms Of Raising The Morale Of The Companions ﷺ	426
Negotiations	432
Debating The Polytheists	441

The Role The Jews Played During The Makkan Era Of The Prophet's Biography	451
The Siege And Embargo That Occurred At The End Of The Seventh Year Of Prophethood	463
Migration To Abyssinia, The Ordeal Of Taaif, And The Gift Of <i>Al-Israa</i> (The Night Journey)	477
Working In Harmony With The Law Of Cause And Effect	479
Migration To Abyssinia	485
The First Migration To Abyssinia	486
Why Muslims Returned To Makkah From Abyssinia	495
The Year Of Grief, And The Trial Of At-Taaif	518
The Year Of Grief	518
<i>Al-Israa Wal-Mai'raaj</i> (The Prophet's Miraculous Night Journey First To Jerusalem And Then To The Heavens) The Greatest Bestowal Of Honours	543
The Story Of <i>Al-Israa</i> And <i>Al-Mai'raaj</i>	546
The Prophet ﷺ Seeks Support From Other Tribes, And The Companions ﷺ Later Begin Migrating To Al-Madeenah	567
The Prophet ﷺ Seeks Support From Other Tribes	569
Counteracting The Effects Of Abu Jahl And Abu Lahab's Smear Campaign	571
Negotiations With Banu 'Aamir	572
Negotiations With The Tribe Of Banu Shaibaan	573
Positive Developments In Al-Madeenah	580
Early Contacts With The <i>Ansaar</i> During The <i>Hajj</i> And ' <i>Umrah</i> Seasons	581
The Native Dwellers Of Al-Madeenah Begin To Embrace Islam	582
The Story Of How Usaid Ibn Hudair ﷺ And Sa'd Ibn Mu'aadh ﷺ Embraced Islam	587
The Second Pledge Of Al-'Aqabah	595
The Migration To Al-Madeenah	607
Paving The Way Towards Migration	607
Reflections On Certain Verses Of <i>Soorah Al-'Ankaboot</i>	610
The First Group Of Migrants	614
What The Quraish Did To Harm Those Who Wanted To Migrate To Al-Madeenah, And The Difficulties That Some Companions ﷺ Consequently Faced	616
Wonderful Hospitality	627
Why Al-Madeenah Was Chosen As The Starting Point And Capital City Of The Muslim Nation	630
Some Of The Merits And Virtues Of Al-Madeenah	632

The Migration Of The Prophet ﷺ And Of His Companion, Abu Bakr As-Siddeeq ؓ	649
The Failed Plans Of The Polytheists, And The Prophet's Preparations For Migration	651
The Abortive Attempt Of The Polytheists To Assassinate the Prophet ﷺ	651
The Prophet ﷺ Prepares To Migrate	653
The Messenger ﷺ Leaves For The Cave	656
The Prophet's Supplication When He Left Makkah	656
Allah's Care And Protection Of His Messenger ﷺ	658
The Tent Of Umm Ma'bad On The Path Towards Al-Madeenah	662
Suraaqah Ibn Maalik Joins In The Hunt For The Messenger Of Allah ﷺ	664
He Whom Allah Guides None Can Lead Astray;	
A Final Word On Suraaqah Ibn Malik ؓ	667
The <i>Ansaar</i> Gather To Welcome The Messenger Of Allah ﷺ	668
Native Makkan Muslims: Those Among Them That Migrated And Those Among Them That Remained Behind	697
The <i>Muhaajiroon</i> Are Praised For Their Good Qualities And Deeds	698
The Rewards That Are Promised To The <i>Muhaajiroon</i>	711
Threat Of Punishment For Those Who Remained Behind From The <i>Hijrah</i>	719
The Pillars Of The New Islamic Country In Al-Madeenah	725
The Pillars Of The New Islamic Country In Al-Madeenah	727
The First Pillar: The Construction Of The Prophet's <i>Masjid</i>	729
The Apartments Of The Prophet ﷺ	730
The Call To Prayer In Al-Madeenah	731
The First Sermon That The Messenger Of Allah ﷺ Delivered In Al-Madeenah	733
<i>As-Suffah</i>	734
Establishing Bonds Of Brotherhood Between The <i>Muhaajiroon</i> And The <i>Ansaar</i>	755
The Bonds Of Brotherhood That Were Established In Al-Madeenah	758
“The Book” Or “The Scroll” Or “The Constitution”	787
The Lessons And Morals We Learn From The “The Document”	788
The Status And Position Of The Jewish Dwellers Of Al-Madeenah	803
Did The Jews Abide By The Terms Of The Agreement They Made With The Prophet ﷺ?	847
“And If Allah Did Not Check One Set Of People By Means Of Another, The Earth Would Indeed Be Full Of Mischief”	849
The Universal Law Of Checking One Set Of People By Means Of Another	849
Some Of The Goals Of Performing <i>Jihaad</i> In The Way Of Allah ﷻ	860
The Most Important Military Missions That Preceded The Battle Of Badr	874
Lessons And Morals And Other Issues Of Interest	881
The Moral And Spiritual Training Of the Prophet's Companions ؓ Continued In Al-Madeenah	898

The Manners Of The Companions When They Were Listening To The Prophet ﷺ	915
Important Events And Legislations	923
Tackling The Economic Crisis	923
Manners That Pertain To The Marketplace	925
Some of the Benefits of <i>Zakaat</i> and Some of the Effects that Giving <i>Zakaat</i>	937
The Greater Battle Of Badr	945
The Period That Preceded The Battle	947
Some Events That Took Place On The Way To Badr	949
The Decision In Makkah To Confront The Muslims At Badr	951
The Prophet ﷺ Consults His Companions ﷺ	953
Advancing Towards The Enemy And Gathering Intelligence About Them	955
The Counsel Of Al-Hubaab Ibn Al-Mundhir ﷺ At Badr	958
A Qur'anic Description Of The Departure Of The Polytheists From Makkah	960
The Attitude Of Polytheists When They Arrived At Badr	961
A Qur'anic Description Of The Positions Of Both Forces On The Battlefield	966
The Prophet ﷺ And The Muslims On The Battlefield	968
Erecting A Structure That Would Act As A Command Post For The Muslim Leadership	968
How Allah ﷻ Blessed The Muslims Prior To The Commencement Of The Battle	969
The Prophet's Strategy	971
The Story Of Sawwaad Ibn Ghaziyyah ﷺ	973
The Prophet ﷺ Exhorts His Companions ﷺ To Fight	974
The Prophet's Supplication	976
The Battle Begins In Earnest	979
Allah ﷻ Sends Angels To Help The Muslims	983
The Muslims Defeat The Polytheists, And The Messenger Of Allah ﷻ Talks To The People Of Al-Qaleeb (i.e., The Well)	987
Some Interesting Events That Took Place During The Battle Of Badr	991
The Death Of Many Of Makkah's Chieftains	991
Some Of The Martyrs And Heroes Of Badr	1001
Disagreement Concerning The Spoils And The Prisoners	1005
The Prisoners	1013
The Messenger Of Allah ﷺ Honours The Memory Of Al-Mut'im Ibn 'Adee	1016
The Executions Of 'Uqbah Ibn Abee Mu'ait And An-Nadr Ibn Al-Haarith	1017
More Than Humane Treatment Of The Prisoners	1019
Buying the Freedom Of Al-'Abbaas ﷺ, Uncle of the Prophet ﷺ	1021
Abul-'Aas ibn Ar-Rabee', Husband of the Prophet's Daughter, Zainab ﷺ	1023
Abu 'Uzzah 'Amr Ibn 'Abdullah Al-Jumhee	1025
Suhail Ibn 'Amr	1026
Another Form of Ransom Payment Teaching Muslims How to Read and Write	1027
The Ruling On Prisoners	1028
The Aftermath Of The Battle Of Badr, And An Attempt Made On The Life Of The Prophet ﷺ	1029
An Attempt Made On The Prophet's Life, And 'Umair Ibn Wahb ﷺ Embraces Islam	1034
Some Of The Lessons And Morals We Learn From The Battle Of Badr	1040

Victory Comes Only From Allah ﷻ	1040
“The Day Of Criterion”	1042
Loyalty For The Sake Of Allah ﷻ	1045
The Miracles That Occurred Around The Time Of And During The Battle Of Badr	1048
A Miracle Of Another Kind	1053
The Ruling Of Taking Help From Polytheists	1054
Hudhaifah Ibn Al-Yamaan ؓ And Usaid Ibn Al-Hudair ؓ	1055
The Media War	1056
The Most Important Events That Took Place Between The Battles Of Badr & Uhud	1058
The Expeditions That The Prophet ﷺ Led And That Occurred After Badr And Before Uhud	1059
The Battle Of Banu Qainuqaa’	1064
Going After Incendiary Elements	1073
Some Social Occasions Of Interest	1085
The Battle Of Uhud	1091
The Events That Took Place Prior To The Actual Battle	1093
The Main Reasons Why The Battle Occurred	1093
The Army Of The Quraish Begins Its Journey To Al-Madeenah	1097
Consulting With His Companions ؓ	1100
The Muslim Army Heads For Uhud	1105
The Prophet’s Strategy For The Impending Battle	1113
In The Heat Of The Battle	1117
The Early Stages Of The Battles – Things Go Well For The Muslims	1117
The Archers Disobey The Prophet’s Command	1120
The Prophet’s Strategy To Reunite And Reassemble His Army, And The Brave Men ؓ Who Defended Him	1126
Some Of The Martyrs Of Uhud	1129
Some Miracles And Proofs Of Prophethood	1154
The Aftermath Of The Battle	1157
An Exchange Of Words Between Abu Sufyaan And The Muslims	1157
The Messenger Of Allah ﷺ Concerns Himself With The Martyrs Of That Day	1159
The Prophet’s Supplication On The Day Of Uhud	1161
Finding Out What Direction The Polytheists Were Heading Towards	1162
The Battle Of Hamraa Al-Asad	1163
The Participation Of Muslim Women In The Battle Of Uhud	1171
Female Companions ؓ Show The True Meaning Of Patience	1176
Umm Sa’d ibn Mu’aadh ؓ	1179
Some Lessons And Morals	1181
Inviting The Believers To Increase Their Faith And Reminding Them About Universal Laws That Apply To All Nations	1182
Comforting The Believers And Explaining The Wisdom Behind What Happened At Uhud	1183
How To Correct Mistakes	1187
Giving the Example Of Previous <i>Mujahideen</i>	1189
Disobeying A Leader’s Command Results In Failure	1191

The Dangers Of Giving Precedence To This World Over The Hereafter	1194
Adhering To The Teachings Of Islam	1196
How The Prophet ﷺ Dealt With The Archers Who Disobeyed Him And The Hypocrites Who Betrayed Him	1202
Uhud Is A Mountain That Loves Us And That Is Loved By Us	1205
The Angels At Uhud	1206
The Laws Of Victory And Defeat, As Derived From The Chapters: <i>Al-Anfaal</i> And <i>Aal 'Imraan</i>	1207
The Superiority Of Martyrs, And What Allah ﷻ Has Prepared For Them In Terms Of Bliss And Reward	1212
A Media Campaign Against The Polytheists	1214
The Most Important Events That Took Place Between Uhud And Al-Khandaq	1217
The Quraish Tries To Bring About Instability In Al-Madeenah	1219
The Tribe Of Banu Asad	1220
'Abdullah Ibn Unais ﷺ Confronts Khaalid Ibn Sufyaan Al-Hudhalee	1221
The Deception Of The 'Adul And Al-Qaarrah Tribes, And The Tragedy Of Ar-Rajee'	1226
'Aamir Ibn At-Tufail And The Tragedy Of Bair Ma'oonah (4 H.)	1234
The Prophet's Marriage To The Mother Of Poor People ﷺ And To Umm Salamah ﷺ; Also, Other Events Worthy Of Mention	1245
Zainab Bint Khuzaimah ﷺ, "Mother Of Poor People"	1245
The Prophet ﷺ Marries Umm Salamah ﷺ	1245
The Birth Of Al-Hasan Ibn 'Alee ﷺ	1252
In The Year 4 H, Zaid Ibn Thaabit ﷺ Learns The Language Of The Jews	1254
The Expulsion Of The Banu An-Nadeer Tribe	1256
The History Behind And The Causes Of The Confrontation Between The Muslims And Banu An-Nadeer	1257
Warning Banu An-Nadeer About Their Imminent Expulsion From Al-Madeenah, And The Siege That Followed	1261
The Battle Of Dhaat Ar-Riqaa'	1287
Its History, Its Causes, And The Reason For Its Name	1287
The Prayer Of Fear, Guarding The Front Lines, And The Bravery Of The Prophet ﷺ	1290
The Prophet's Dealings With Jaabir Ibn 'Abdullah ﷺ	1295
The Battles Of Badr Al-Mau'id And Daumatul-Jandal	1298
The Battle Of Badr Al-Mau'id	1298
Daumatul-Jandal	1300
The Battle Of Banu Al-Mustaliq	1306
Who Were The People Of Banu Al-Mustaliq?	1306
The Prophet's Marriage To Juwairiyyah Bint Al-Haarith ﷺ	1310
During The Return Journey From Al-Muraisee',	1313
The Chapter Of The Qur'an ThatThe Battle Of Banu Al-Mustaliq	1320
The Hypocrites Attempt To Stain The Honour	1324
The More Important Lessons, Morals, Legislations,	1333
The Lessons And Morals Of The "Great Lie" Incident And Of The Battle Of Banu Al-Mustaliq	1341

The Battle Of The Confederates (5 H)	1353
The History Of the Battle, Its Causes, And The Events That Transpired During It	1355
The Muslims Learn About The Confederate Army	1358
The Prophet ﷺ Makes Sure That Everything.....Inside Al-Madeenah	1361
The Muslims Face Many Hardships	1366
The Jews Of Banu Al-Quraidah Violate The Termstheir Army	1366
The Siege Continues And The Hypocrites Withdraw From The Muslim Army	1368
The Prophet ﷺ Tries To Improve Matters By Making.....The Ghatfaan	1373
Allah's Help Arrives, And A Qur'anic Description Of The Battle Of The Confederates	1380
Watching For The Departure Of The Confederate Army	1383
A Qur'anic Description Of The Battle Of The Confederates And Of Its Results	1386
Eliminating Banu Quraizah	1391
Lessons And Morals	1395
Allah ﷻ Blesses The Prophet ﷺ With Some Miracles During	1395
The Difference Between Reality And Imagination	1398
"Salmaan is From Us, The People Of (My) House" & The Middle Prayer	1400
The Bravery Of Safiyyah ؓ, The Prophet's Aunt	1401
The Falseness Of What Has Been Related Regarding Hassaan ؓ	1402
The First Muslim Military Hospital	1403
Some Of The Virtues Of Sa'd Ibn Mu'aadh ؓ	1407
The Deaths Of Huyai Ibn Akhtab And Ka'ab Ibn Asad	1412
Thaabit Ibn Qais ؓ Intercedes For Az-Zubair..... Riffaa'ah Ibn Samaa'al	1416
The Manners Of Disagreeing	1418
Distributing The Spoils Won From Banu Quraizah,Raihaanah Bint 'Amr	1420
The Period Between The Battle Of The Confederates And Hudaibiyah	1423
The Prophet's Marriage To Zainab Bint Jahsh ؓ	1425
Her Marriage To Zaid Ibn Haarithah ؓ	1427
Zaid ؓ Divorces Zainab ؓ	1428
The Wisdom Behind The Prophet's Marriage To Zainab ؓ	1429
The Story Of The Prophet's Marriage To Zainab ؓ	1435
"Now, We Will Attack Them, And They Will No Longer Attack Us"	1447
The Military Unit Of Muhammad Ibn Maslamah	1448
Abu 'Ubaidah Ibn Al-Jarraah's Unit That Was Sent To <i>Saif-ul-Bahr</i>	1452
The Military Unit Of Abdur-Rahmaan Ibn 'Auf ؓ	1460
Punishing Treacherous Tribes: The Battle Of Banu Laihyaan	1466
The Unit Of Kurz Ibn Jaabir Al-Faiheree ؓ Is Sent To The 'Irniyyeen	1473
Eliminating The Most Vocal And Active Of Islam's Enemies	1479

The Military Unit Of 'Abdullah Ibn 'Ateek ؓ	1479
The Unit Of 'Abdullah Ibn Rawaahah ؓ	1485
The Manifest Conquest The Treaty Of Al-Hudaibiyah	1487
Its History, Its Causes, And The Prophet's Departure For Makkah	1489
The Prophet ﷺ Reaches 'Asfaan	1492
The Messenger Of Allah ﷺ Changes Direction.....At Al-Hudaibiyah	1493
"Al-Qaswaa (The Prophet's Camel) Did Not Kneel Down	1495
Negotiations Between The Messenger Of Allah ﷺ And The Quraish	1499
The Delegations That The Prophet ﷺ Sent To The Quraish	1509
The Pledge Of Ar-Ridwaan	1514
The Treaty Of Al-Hudaibiyah And Some Events That Resulted From Its Signing	1523
Suhail Ibn 'Amr's Negotiations With The Messenger Of Allah ﷺ	1523
Abu Jandal's Sad Predicament	1531
Respecting Someone For Raising An Objection Based On Sincere Motives	1534
Officially Ending The Pilgrimage, And The Advice Of Umm Salamah ؓ	1537
The Return Journey To Al-Madeenah And The Revelation Of Chapter <i>Al-Fath</i>	1540
The Story Of Abu Baseer ؓ	1550
The Prophet's Refusal To Send Back Muslim Women	1556
Lessons And Morals	1561
Rulings That Pertain To Beliefs	1561
Rulings That Pertain To Jurisprudence And To The Principles Of Jurisprudence	1566
Examples Of How The Prophet ﷺ TrainedAnd Personalities	1575
The Most Important Events That Took Place Between Al-Hudaibiyah And The Conquest Of Makkah	1577
The Battle Of KhaibarIts Background And Causes	1579
The Muslim Army Marches Towards Khaibar	1582
A Description Of The Battle Of Khaibar	1585
A Bedouin Is Martyred, The Story Of A Black Shepherd,	1589
Ja'far Ibn Abee Taalib ؓ And Other Companions ؓ Return From Abyssinia	1592
Dividing The Spoils	1595
The Messenger Of Allah ﷺ Marries Safiyyah Bint Huyai Ibn Akhtab ؓ	1599
Some Jews Try To Kill The Prophet ﷺ By Feeding Him A Poisoned Sheep	1604
The Story Of Al-Hajjaaj Ibn 'Ilaat As-Salamee ؓ	1606
Some Legal Rulings That Pertain To The Battle Of Khaibar	1609
An Invitation To Kings And Rulers	1615
The Treaty Of Al-Hudaibiyah Signaled The Beginning Of The Expansion	1615
The Compensatory 'Umrah	1629
Precautionary Measures	1629
Entering Makkah And Performing The <i>Tawaaf</i> And The <i>Sa'ee</i>	1631
The Prophet's Marriage To Maimoonah Bint Al-Haarith ؓ	1633
Hamzah Ibn 'Abdul-Muttalib's Daughter Leaves Makkah	1635
The Impact Of The Compensatory 'Umrah On The Quraish;	1637

The Mo'tah Expedition (8 H)Its Causes And Its History	1648
Bidding Farewell To The Muslim Army	1651
The Army Reaches Ma'aan, And The Three Appointed Leaders	1652
The Muslims Choose Khaalid Ibn Al-Waleed ؓ To Lead Them	1656
Allah ﷻ Blesses The Prophet ﷺ With A Miracle,	1658
The Lessons And Morals Of The Battle Of Mo'tah	1660
The Dhaat As-Salaasil Expedition	1668
The Conquest Of Makkah	1675
Its Causes And Its Early Stages	1677
The Muslim Army Prepares To Depart From Al-Madeenah	1681
Their Departure, And Some Events That Transpired During Their Journey	1690
The Prophet's Plan To Enter And Conquer Makkah	1700
Distributing Duties Among The Various Leaders Of His Army	1700
A Humble Entry Into Makkah	1704
The Announcement Of A Universal Pardon (With A Few Exceptions)	1709
Khaalid Ibn Al-Waleed ؓ Is Sent To The Banu Jadheemah Tribe	1716
Destroying The Houses of Idols	1718
Lessons And MoralsThe <i>Tafseer</i> Of Chapter <i>An-Nasr</i> ,	1723
Stories Of Individuals Who Finally Came Around And Embraced Islam	1726
Are You Trying To Talk Me Out Of Applying One Of The Punishments Of Allah	1737
O Umm Haanee, We Grant Protection To Whomsoever You Grant Protection	1739
"It Is Not Befitting For A Prophet To Have Deceptive Eyes"	1740
"I Will Live Among You And Die Among You"	1741
'Abdullah Ibn Az-Zab'aree ؓ, The Poet Of The Quraish	1742
Some Rulings Of Jurisprudence ThatThe Makkah Conquest	1744
Some Of The Consequences Of The Makkah Conquest	1746
The Battles Of Hunain And At-Taaif (8 H)	1749
The Battles Of Hunain And At-Taaif (8 H).....Its Causes And Events	1751
The Most Important Events That Took Place During The Battle Of Hunain	1752
The Sound Military Strategy Of Maalik Ibn 'Auf	1752
Steps The Messenger Of Allah ﷺ Took To Achieve Victory Over Maalik's Army	1755
Enemy Fighters Are Pursued All The Way Until Autaaas And At-Taaif	1758
Lessons And Morals	1764
Lessons And Morals	1780
The Verses Of The Qur'an That Were Revealed About The Battle Of Hunain	1780
The Causes Of Defeat And Victory At Hunain	1783
Islamic Rulings And Laws That Were Legislated During The Course	1785
The Stories Of Some Companions ؓ	1792
The Poet Ka'ab Ibn Zuhair ؓ Embraces Islam	1796
Some Of The Results And Consequences Of The Battles Of Hunain And At-Taaif	1797
The Most Important Events That Took Place Between Hunain And Tabook	1798
Organizing The Collection And Distribution Of <i>Zakaat</i> And <i>Jizyah</i>	1798

The Most Important Military Units That Were Sent Out During This Period	1800
‘Adee Ibn Haatim ؓ Embraces Islam	1803
Other Events That Took Place In The Year 8 H	1808
The Tabook Expedition (9 H), Which Is Also Known As The “The Expedition Of Distress”	1809
The History Of The Battle, Its Names, And Its Causes	1811
The Causes Of The Expedition	1813
The Wealth That Was Contributed To Equip The Muslim Army,	1815
The Hypocrites	1821
The Announcement To Depart Is Made	1827
What Took Place During The Journey; And Finally Arriving At Tabook	1833
The Story Of Abu Dharr Al-Ghafaaree ؓ	1833
The Story Of Abu Khaithamah ؓ	1836
Arriving At Tabook	1839
The Muslims Pass By The Land That The People Of Thamood	1841
The Death Of The Companion ‘Abdullah (Dhul-Bijaadain) ؓ	1843
Some Of The Miracles That Occurred During The Tabook Expedition	1845
The Return From Tabook To Al-Madeenah; And The Noble Qur’an Discusses	1854
Those Who Had Valid Islamic Excuses	1855
Bedouin Hypocrites Who Lived In The Lands That Surrounded Al-Madeenah	1859
<i>Masjid Diraar</i>	1862
The Story Of The Three Who Stayed Behind From The Tabook Expedition	1871
Lessons And Morals	1888
The Mutual Consultation That Took Place During The Tabook Expedition	1891
Rigorous And Harsh Training	1893
The Most Important Consequences Of The Tabook Expedition	1894
The Most Important Events That Took Place Between The Battle Of Tabook And The Farewell Pilgrimage And The Delegation Of Thaqeef	1897
The Death Of The Hypocrites, ‘Abdullah Ibn Ubai Ibn Salool	1905
The Prophet ﷺ Gives His Wives An Important Choice To Make	1910
Abu Bakr ؓ Leads The People In their Pilgrimage To Makkah	1917
The Year Of The Delegations (9 H)	1922
The Messenger Of Allah ﷺ Sends out Delegations Of His Own,	1932
The Farewell Pilgrimage (10 H)	1941
How The Prophet ﷺ Performed <i>Hajj</i>	1943
The Prophet’s Final Illness And His Subsequent Death	1967
Verses Of The Qur’an And <i>Ahaadeeth</i>	1968
The Final Illness Of The Messenger Of Allah ﷺ	1974
Abu Bakr ؓ Leads The Muslims In Prayer	1980
The Final Hours Of The Prophet’s Life	1981
Epilogue	1992
Bibliography	1993

INTRODUCTION

Indeed, all praise is for Allah; we praise Him, repent to Him, and seek His forgiveness and help. We seek refuge in Allah from the evil of our own selves and of our wicked deeds. Whomsoever Allah guides, none can lead astray; and whomsoever Allah leads astray, none can guide. And I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah alone, and He has no partner; and I bear witness that our Prophet Muhammad is His slave and Messenger.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾﴾

“O you who believe! Fear Allah (by doing all that He has ordered and by abstaining from all that He has forbidden) as He should be feared. (Obey Him, be thankful to Him, and remember Him always), and die not except in the state of Islam (as Muslims) (with complete submission to Allah).” (Qur’an 3: 102)

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا ﴿١﴾﴾

“O mankind be dutiful to your Lord, who created you from a single person (Adam), and from him (Adam) He created his wife [Hawwa (Eve)], and from them both He created many men and women and fear Allah through Whom you demand your mutual (rights), and (do not cut the relations of) the wombs (kinship). Surely, Allah is Ever and All-Watcher over you.” (Qur’an 4:1)

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا ﴿٧٠﴾ يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٧١﴾﴾

“O you who believe! Keep your duty to Allah and fear Him, and speak (always) the truth. He will direct you to do righteous good

deeds and will forgive you your sins. And whosoever obeys Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ) he has indeed achieved a great achievement (i.e. he will be saved from the Hellfire and made to enter Paradise).'' (Qur'an 33: 70, 71)

Male or female, adult or child, scholar or commoner, businessman or laborer – all Muslims need to study the biography of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. In fact, the fulfillment of many of our Islamic duties hinges upon our knowledge of the Prophet's life. For example, every Muslim should love the Prophet ﷺ; yet how can one love him without knowing him. We were not alive when the Prophet ﷺ was preaching the message of Islam to the Quraish, so the only way we have left to become intimately acquainted with the Prophet ﷺ, and consequently to love him, is to study his sayings and deeds, which give us partial glimpses of his life, or to study his biography, which fits the pieces of his life together, so that we can have an overall view of his ideal character. And how are we to follow the Prophet ﷺ if we do not know his sayings and deeds, or – which is more relevant to his biography – the context in which his sayings and deeds occurred. Thus we are all in dire need of acquainting ourselves with the life of the Prophet ﷺ.

Through the study of the *Seerah* (the Prophet's biography), we are able to appreciate how the Prophet ﷺ was an ideal husband, ideal father, ideal leader, ideal ruler, ideal educator, ideal judge, and so on. So regardless of our situation and who we are, we benefit from studying the Prophet's life. If one has dedicated at least some part of his life to inviting others to Islam (which makes him a *Daa'ee* – a word I will henceforward use – one who invites others to the teachings of Islam), then the Prophet's biography is for him an indispensable guidebook. Through studying the Prophet's *Seerah*, the *Daa'ee* learns about the Prophet's methodology for inviting others to Islam; furthermore, he learns about how the Prophet ﷺ dealt with those who refused to embrace Islam and how he ﷺ was patient when he was made to suffer at their hands, not to mention the countless other lessons and morals he learns from the *Seerah*.

If one is an educator – of children at home or school, or of adults at a community level – one learns how the best educator mankind has ever known raised a generation of true Muslims, who went on to develop the most wonderful civilization that mankind has ever known. The early converts to Islam were educated in the world's finest institution of higher learning – the House of Al-Arqam (the house wherein Muslims secretly met in the early days of Islam) – where the Prophet ﷺ taught them the Qur'an, Islamic beliefs, the manners of Islam, and so on. His students graduated with flying colours, becoming leaders and educators of the following generation of Muslims.

If one is a leader, one learns true qualities of leadership from the Prophet's *Seerah*, in terms of how the Prophet ﷺ was just; how he united the Muslims; how he ﷺ dealt with subversive elements of society, namely the hypocrites, who were headed by 'Abdullah ibn Ubai ibn Salool; and how he ﷺ constantly strove for the betterment of the Muslim nation.

If one is a scholar, one relies on the *Seerah* to understand the Qur'an, for the Prophet's actions represent a practical application of the teachings of the Qur'an. Furthermore, the revelation of many Verses was prompted by actual events that took place during the Prophet's lifetime; a scholar can only understand such Verses if he understands the events for which they were revealed. And in fact (as we will *In Sha Allah* see throughout this book) knowledge of all Islamic sciences – such as '*Aqeedah* (beliefs), jurisprudence, and *Tafseer* – hinges frequently upon knowledge of some aspect of the Prophet's *Seerah*.

If a Muslim inclines towards *Zuhd* (to abstain from worldly pleasures for the sake of Allah ﷻ), he can learn, through the study of the *Seerah*, the difference between true *Zuhd* and extremism, for the correct way to live is the balanced life that the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions ﷺ led. If a Muslim is afflicted by calamity, he can find consolation in the *Seerah*, for no one was afflicted with as much hardship as was the Messenger of Allah ﷺ; beyond consolation, the afflicted person becomes encouraged to follow

the example of the Prophet ﷺ and patiently await for his reward from Allah ﷻ. In short, there are valuable lessons to be found in the *Seerah* for every single Muslim.

Not just the Muslim individual, but also the Muslim nation as a whole needs to benefit from the lessons that are available in the Prophet's *Seerah*. Nations rise and fall not through coincidence or through a set of arbitrary occurrences, but through universal laws that have been set in place by Allah ﷻ. At least once in our history, Muslims have succeeded in building a wonderful and stable civilization, and that was during the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ and his rightly guided Caliphs; and even if Muslims prospered in later centuries, they never prospered as much as they did in the early golden years of Islam. Now we come back to the universal laws I mentioned above: The Prophet ﷺ and his Companions ﷺ established a stable and prosperous nation not by chance, but by living in harmony with the said universal laws. What this means is that there is a pattern: If we want to now repeat the success that was achieved by the Muslims during the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ, we need to be in harmony with the same set of laws, and in doing so, we have an ideal blueprint to follow – the lives of the Prophet ﷺ and his noble Companions ﷺ.

Allah ﷻ said:

﴿قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْهِ مَا حُمِّلَ وَعَلَيْكُمْ مَا حُمِّلْتُمْ وَإِن تُطِيعُوهُ تَهْتَدُوا وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا أَلْبَانُ الْمَيْتِ ﴿٥٤﴾﴾

“Say: ‘Obey Allah and obey the Messenger, but if you turn away, he (the Messenger Muhammad ﷺ) is only responsible for the duty placed on him (i.e., to convey Allah’s Message) and you for that placed on you. If you obey him, you shall be on the right guidance. The Messenger’s duty is only to convey (the message) in a clear way (i.e., to preach in a plain way).” (Qur’an 24: 54)

This Verse clearly indicates that success lies in following the way of the Prophet ﷺ; the following two Verses discuss some of the conditions that Muslims must fulfill if they hope to achieve

prosperity and stability as a nation:

﴿وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مِنكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا
 اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَىٰ لَهُمْ
 وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُم مِّن بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا وَمَن
 كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ
 وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾﴾

“Allah has promised those among you who believe, and do righteous good deeds, that He will certainly grant them succession to (the present rulers) in the earth, as He granted it to those before them, and that He will grant them the authority to practice their religion, that which He has chosen for them (i.e., Islam). And He will surely give them in exchange a safe security after their fear (provided) they (believers) worship Me and do not associate anything (in worship) with Me. But whoever disbelieved after this, they are the Faasiqoon (rebellious, disobedient to Allah). And perform As-Salaat (Iqamat-as-Salaat), and give Zakaat and obey the Messenger (Muhammad ﷺ) that you may receive mercy (from Allah).” (Qur’an 24: 55, 56)

We do not have the right to say that it was due to the fact that they were supported by miracles that the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions ﷺ were successful in establishing a Muslim country. We do not have that right for the very fact that the first generation of Muslims struggled and suffered and strove and sacrificed – and thus earned their success. They fulfilled the conditions that are discussed in the above-mentioned Verses; or in other words, they lived in harmony with those universal laws that apply to the rise and fall of nations. Consider the Prophet’s migration to Al-Madeenah. Allah ﷻ could have made the journey a miraculous one-night journey, as He ﷻ had previously done regarding the Prophet’s night journey to Jerusalem and then to the heavens. But He ﷻ didn’t, and the Prophet ﷺ subsequently faced all of the hardships that came with his remarkable

migration to Al-Madeenah, thus showing us that victory comes with sacrifice and struggle.

The Prophet ﷺ and his Companions ﷺ realized *Eemaan* (faith) both in terms of belief and action. They strove day and night to perform good deeds; they made each and every part of their lives an act of worship; they fought against all forms of polytheism. At an individual and societal level, they took all of the material steps that are needed to form a country. Then, they actually did form their own country in Al-Madeenah, and from there, they spread Allah's religion to the farthest corners of the earth.

That we as a nation are behind today is a logical consequence of our not doing what the first generation of Muslims did to achieve success. Unwilling to change, to struggle, to reform, and to sacrifice, we think that we can achieve success and prosperity as a nation; but since that is contrary to the universal laws outlined above, we shouldn't hold our breaths, expecting some sudden change from the outside. The change must begin from within.

Weakness of faith, lack of spirituality, incorrect thinking, inner confusion and anxiety – these are the results of the great gap that exists between us as a nation and between the Noble Qur'an, the guidance of the Prophet ﷺ, and the piety of Muslims during the era of the rightly guided Caliphs.

That gap is nowhere as palpable as it is in regards to those who, though they are as far away as possible from the teachings of the Qur'an, the guidance of the Prophet ﷺ, and the way of the rightly guided Caliphs, claim that they are the representatives of Islam. They speak for hours on end, but show no understanding of Allah's universal laws that apply to the rise and fall of nations. They will speak interminably about the sayings of philosophers, politicians and others of their ilk, but they hardly bother to refer to revealed sources – the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. I do not say that one should not benefit from the experiences and knowledge of others, for wisdom is the goal of the believer: wherever he finds it, he is most worthy of it. But I do most vehemently oppose those who are enamored by the words of intellectuals, but do not heed the

words of Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ; do not contemplate the history of our own nation, especially the part of it when its civilization reached its zenith during the first generation of Islam; and then aspire for positions of leadership among the Muslim nation, so that when they do become leaders, they lead according to their whims and desires, and not according to the teachings of the Qur'an and *Sunnah*.

The events that took place during the Prophet's lifetime did not occur in a vacuum; they occurred in the real world, which means that we need to study the methodology of the Prophet's *Da'wah* if we are to repeat, at least to some degree, the success achieved by the first generation of Islam. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ
الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا ۝۲۱﴾

"Indeed in the Messenger of Allah (Muhammad ﷺ) you have a good example to follow for him who hopes in (the Meeting with) Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah much." (Qur'an 33: 21)

What did the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions ﷺ do that we need to repeat? The answer to this question would require a very long list of details, but let us at least consider a few examples. First, the Prophet ﷺ followed an ideal methodology for educating his Companions ﷺ and for establishing the foundations of a stable country. He ﷺ did not call for an instant revolution, but instead strove for gradual change. He ﷺ began with what is most important: instilling correct beliefs into the hearts of his Companions ﷺ. That a movement, if it is to achieve success and stability, needs to advance forward with studied gradual steps; that, before achieving stability, the members of a given movement need to first patiently endure hardships; that, first and foremost, correct beliefs must be cemented into the hearts of Muslims: these are just a few examples of Allah's universal laws that the Prophet ﷺ submitted to, was in harmony with, and applied. His

Companions ﷺ did their part as well, trying their utmost to learn from him ﷺ and follow his instructions to the letter, so much so that if one of them was unable to spend a given day with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, he would send someone in his stead, and then later ask him what he learned that day. And some people – such as is related about ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattaab ﷺ and his companion ﷺ – would take turns going to the Prophet ﷺ; one would spend the day with the Prophet ﷺ, and the other would take care of both of their businesses. In every small and great matter, the Companions ﷺ followed the example of the Prophet ﷺ; it is no surprise, therefore, that they were able to spread the message of Islam to the far corners of the earth.

In this book, I discuss the events of the Prophet’s life, from the day he ﷺ was born – and even before that day for background information – until the day he ﷺ died. Beyond enumerating the events of the Prophet’s life, I have endeavoured to draw lessons and morals from those events, by pointing out to the reader, among other things, the significance of an event, the wisdom behind one of the Prophet’s actions or deeds, the Islamic ruling that is derived from a particular incident, and the impact that a given event should have on our character or choice of deeds.

Furthermore, I have attempted to remedy the problem of how the *Seerah* has been reduced to a limited subject of study in certain schools and among many students of knowledge. This problem resulted from a misuse and misunderstanding of valuable *Seerah* books, books that have been written in recent decades and that have gained widespread acceptance among the reading public – such as *Ar-Raheeq Al-Makhtoom*, by Safee-ur-Rahmaan Al-Mubarakpooree; *Fiqh-us-Seerah*, by Al-Ghazaalee; *Fiqh-us-Seerah An-Nabawiyyah* by Al-Bootee; and *As-Seerah An-Nabawiyyah* by Abul-Hasan An-Nadwee. Some of these books summarize the events of the Prophet’s life; others either deal with certain aspects of his life or with some of the lessons that can be derived from his life; the point is that none of the above-mentioned authors claims that he has written a comprehensive book on the Prophet’s life.

Some universities use the above-mentioned books as textbooks, and many students have, as a result, come under the impression that those books are comprehensive works on the Prophet's biography. This notion, which is of course dangerous and false, has even gained acceptance among some Imams and leaders of Islamic movements. As a result of this widespread misunderstanding, many people have a very limited and defective understanding of the Prophet's biography. At the end of his book, *Fiqh-us-Seerah*, Shaikh Muhammad Al-Ghazaalee warned about this very notion, saying, "You might think that you have studied the life of Muhammad ﷺ if you have followed the events of his life from his birth until his death. This is a grave mistake, for you will not gain a true understanding of the *Seerah* unless you have studied the Noble Qur'an and the pure *Sunnah* (of the Prophet ﷺ)"

I spent a number of years of my life studying the Noble Qur'an and the Prophet's biography. Those years consisted of some of the best days of my life; deeply immersed in study, I forgot about the pains associated with being away from home. Pearls of wisdom I came across, lessons I learned, and valuable insights I was blessed to perceive – these enjoyments sustained me. It was during that period of my life that I gathered, organized, and composed the contents of this book.

Throughout my research, I noticed how each author of a *Seerah* book mentioned lessons and benefits that other authors did not mention. It sometimes occurred that Ibn Hishaam mentioned a relevant point that Adh-Dhahabee did not mention, or that Ibn Katheer, a more recent scholar, mentioned what the compilers of the "Six Books" did not mention. As for present day authors, As-Sibaa'ee might have appreciated a point that Al-Ghazaalee was not aware of – or at least did not write about; the examples of this phenomenon are endless. The point is that Allah ﷻ honoured me with the opportunity to gather and combine the findings of past and present authors; the result of that effort is this book.

In bringing this work to fruition, many people from various

countries - Libya, Yemen, Iraq, Egypt, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Syria - have made valuable contributions, through discussions, correspondences, and meetings at seminars. Some provided me with rare manuscripts; others provided valuable advice on what themes I should stress; and yet others made various contributions, each in his unique way.

To be sure, I do not claim to have surpassed my predecessors. The stature of the Prophet ﷺ is great indeed; to comprehensively discuss just some aspects of his wonderful character and life requires a researcher with more time, stronger faith, a deeper understanding, and a greater intelligence than I possess. Nor do I claim infallibility, for Allah's protection from error is specific to the Messengers ﷺ and Prophets ﷺ. Whoever thinks that he has all knowledge, even of a particular subject of study, is ignorant of his own self. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا﴾ (٨٥)

"And they ask you (O Muhammad ﷺ) concerning the Rooh (the spirit); Say: "The Rooh (the spirit): it is one of the things, the knowledge of which is only with my Lord. And of knowledge, you (mankind) have been given only a little." (Qur'an 17: 85)

Knowledge is an ocean that has no shore. Ath-Tha'aalabee said, "Whenever anyone writes a book, he wishes on every day other than the day on which he completed it, to add to it, or to delete from it. That is the effect that one night has; then how about a number of years!" Conveying a similar sentiment, Al-'Imaad Al-Asbahaanee said, "I noticed that whenever someone finishes writing a book, he says on the day after he completed it, 'Had this been changed, it (the book) would have been better. Had this been added, that would have been a welcome (change). Had this been brought forward, it (the book) would have been better. Had this been left off, it would have been more beautiful.' This

(phenomenon) is one of the greatest of lessons (for mankind), for it proves that imperfection has a strong hold over human beings."

I hope from Allah ﷻ that I have done this work sincerely for His Countenance. I ask Him ﷻ to make this book beneficial to His slaves, to reward me for every letter that I wrote, to place this effort in my scale of good deeds, and to reward my brothers who untiringly helped me to finish this book.

"How perfect You are O Allah, and I praise You. I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except you. I seek Your forgiveness and turn to You in repentance."

One who is in dire need of his Lord's forgiveness and Good Pleasure.

'Alee Muhammad As-Sallaabee

2001 - 1422H



**From, Some Important Historical
Events Before The Advent Of Islam,
Until, The Beginning Of Revelation**



I

The Dominant Empires Of The World Prior To The Advent Of Islam

The Roman Empire

The eastern part of the Roman Empire was known as the Byzantine Empire, which ruled over, among other lands: Asia, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and Northern Africa; and its capital was Constantinople. It was a wicked Empire that subjected its citizens to oppression and wrongdoing. As is almost always the case when an occupying foreign force rules over the native inhabitants of a land, violent tactics were employed to bring the population under control. The empire showed no mercy to the populations they ruled. So desperate did the economic situation become for Syria's inhabitants that people would sell their children and use the proceeds of the sale to pay off their debts.

The Byzantines lived lives that were replete with contradictions. On the one hand, religion was deeply ingrained in people's minds and monasticism was widespread. In fact, it was not uncommon for a common man to enter into deeply arcane religious research. But on the other hand, the population had become engrossed in frivolous, and often outright evil, forms of entertainment. Stadiums that could accommodate 80,000 spectators were built. The main sporting events that took place in them consisted of gladiators fighting one another to the death, and at times gladiators were even pitted against predatory animals. While

such sport was the entertainment of the common man, and while unspeakably cruel punishment was his lot if he committed an offence, the rulers and higher classes lived lives of opulence and decadence.

The Persian Empire

The Persian Empire was greater and stronger than the Byzantine Empire. False religions, such as Zoroastrianism and Mithraism, dominated the lands of Persia. The kings of Persia – the crown would pass from father to son – were extremely corrupt; they acted with impunity because they believed themselves to have been descended from their gods. Anything that was produced in Persia became the property of the kings, who would spend what came to them with almost unimaginable extravagance.

Many farmers left their lands and sought refuge in places of worship, fleeing either from exorbitant taxes or forced entry into the army. For the people of Persia were used as mere pawns in the wars that would intermittently be waged between the Persian Empire and the Byzantine Empire; and of course, the citizens had nothing to benefit from such wars; it was only the kings who stood to gain profit.

India

Before the advent of Islam, at around the beginning of the sixth century of the Christian calendar, India was immersed in ignorance. Obscene acts, which were considered holy by India's inhabitants, were perpetrated in houses of worship. Women were considered to be of no value. That many women would burn themselves to death upon the death of their husbands clearly indicated their standing in society. And if a woman did live on after her husband's death, it was forbidden for her to remarry. India was isolated from the world, which of course led to widespread ignorance. Its inhabitants forced upon themselves absurdly strict dietary rules. And those who were considered outcasts in society were forced to live outside the boundaries of the city.

Supported by political and religious law, the caste system made a clear distinction between the various classes of society. At the top of the hierarchy were the Brahmans - priests and scholars; then the Kshatriyas - warriors and rulers; the Vaisyas - merchants, traders, and farmers; and lastly the Sudras - artisans, laborers, servants, and slaves. The law gave the Brahmans the right to act with impunity; as for the Sudras, they didn't have the right to own property, to sit alongside Brahmans, or to read religious books. There was another caste whose members were ranked beneath the Sudras; they were called the 'untouchables,' and they were forced to do hard, menial, and highly unpleasant labor.

A Synopsis Of The Dominant Religions Of The World Prior To The Advent Of Islam

Before the advent of Islam, human beings were living through one of the worst periods of human history. The line of Prophets from the descendants of Ishaq ﷺ had come to an end with the ascension of Jesus ﷺ to the heavens. In the centuries that followed, belief in the trinity gained more and more acceptance among Christians, until, around the beginning of the sixth century, only a handful of people still believed in the Islamically Monotheistic teachings of Jesus ﷺ.

The entire world was engulfed in darkness. Describing the period prior to his Prophethood, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Verily, Allah looked at the inhabitants of the world and despised them, both the Arabs and foreigners among them, except for some remnants from the People of the Book (i.e., those among them who still believed in pure Islamic Monotheism)." Polytheism and idol worship had become widespread. Some people apostatized from their religion; others didn't follow any religion at all, other than ritualistic acts of worship they performed to idols; and others believed in a distorted form of a divinely revealed religion. In short, almost all of the inhabitants of earth were living in a state of darkness and ignorance.

As for the Jews, their religion had become a soulless set of rituals; and they had become greatly influenced by neighbouring nations or by nations that had subjugated them. And so the Jews took from them many of their polytheistic beliefs and practices. As one Jewish scholar put it, "That the Prophets were constantly furious about idol worship proves that the concepts of idol worship and polytheism had crept their way into the souls of the Children of Israel. They were a people who entertained superstitious and polytheistic beliefs. And the Talmud attests to the fact that the Jews were strongly attracted to the idea of idol worship." Judaism had reached its nadir just prior to the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ. The revealed scriptures that Jews had with them had become greatly distorted and, as a result, contained many false notions about Allah ﷻ.

As for Christianity, distortions and false interpretations corrupted its pristine teachings, so that it no longer remained a religion of pure Monotheism. Many polytheistic practices, with the concept of trinity of course at the forefront, became established Christian doctrine. Jesus ﷺ came to invite people to the worship of Allah ﷻ alone, but polytheism was deeply ingrained in the souls of the people to whom he ﷺ was sent, so that soon after his time various polytheistic beliefs were being disseminated, all in the name of Christianity. If a Christian man was martyred, others attributed divine qualities to him and built little statue of him. People began to worship saints and martyrs. Holding a status not very different from the idols of the Quraish, saints were considered to be intermediaries between Christians and God. It was in the fourth century that the trinity became the official doctrine of the church; but it is only recently – in the latter half of the nineteenth century – that the process through which trinity became doctrine was made public.

Magianism was also widespread at the beginning of the sixth century. Magians were known to have worshipped the elements – mainly fire. Houses of fire worship had been built in various places. Inside those houses, people would pray and follow a strict

set of guidelines and etiquettes; outside, they were free to do as they pleased, so that, in essence, there was no real difference between Magians and people who did not adhere to any religion.

The duties of Magian priests involved worshipping the sun four times a day; they also worshipped the moon, fire, and water. As priests, they followed a strict code of hygiene; it was their task to make sure that the fires in houses of worship never became extinguished and never came in contact with water.

The Magians of Iran turned towards fire when they prayed. And the last of their kings, Yazdgard, once swore by the sun and said, "I swear by the sun, which is the greatest god." Although Magianism is clouded by a great deal of mystery, it seems that one unifying belief among Magians of all centuries is belief in two gods, one being the god of light or goodness, and the other being the god of darkness or evil.

Buddhism was practiced in India and middle Asia. Adherents of Buddhism carried idols wherever they went, and they were known for having built many temples. Anywhere that Buddha traveled, statues were erected in his honour. The original religion of India was Brahmanism, which was an ancient form of Hinduism. Without a doubt, both Hinduism and Buddhism were, and are, polytheistic religions.

Around the time when the Prophet ﷺ was about to be sent to mankind as a warner and bearer of glad tidings, the people of the world were drowning in the mires of polytheism. It was as if members of each religion – Christians, Jews, Buddhists, and Brahmans – were competing with one another to see who could best glorify false deities.

The Prophet ﷺ alluded to that widespread state of ignorance during one of his sermons:

"Lo, verily, my Lord commanded me to teach you what you are ignorant of, from that which He has taught me on this day of mine: 'All of the wealth that I have bestowed upon a slave (of Mine) is lawful. And I have indeed created My slaves *Hunafaa*

(i.e., as Muslims, as people who are inherently inclined towards *Tawheed* and away from polytheism). Devils indeed came to them; have taken them away from their religion, and have made forbidden upon them that which I have made lawful for them; and have ordered them to associate as partner to Me that with which I have not sent down any authority.' And indeed, Allah looked at the inhabitants of earth and despised them, both the Arabs and foreigners among them, except for some remnants from the People of the Book (i.e., those who still believed in Islamic Monotheism)."^[1]

^[1] *Saheeh Muslim*, "The Book of Paradise," chapter, "The Qualities by which the People of Paradise and the People of the Hellfire are Distinguished in this World." *Hadeeth* Number: 2865.

2

The Early Arabs And Their Civilizations

The Early Arabs

Based on the different descendants of today's Arabs, historians have classified early Arabs into three categories:

1) **The *Al-Baaidah* Arabs**

They are from the tribes of 'Aad, Thamood, Al-'Amaaliqah, Tasm, Jadees, Umaim, Jurhum, Hadramoot, and those that are closely linked with them. Prior to the advent of Islam, the *Al-Baaidah* Arabs were wiped off of the face of the earth, leaving no descendents behind. But while they did roam the earth, they had kings whose dominions extended to Ash-Sham (Syria and surrounding regions) and Egypt.

2) **The *Al-'Aaribah* Arabs**

These are the Arabs who are descended from the line of Ya'rob ibn Yashjub ibn Qahtaan; they are called the *Al-Qahtaaniyyah* Arabs, and they are also known as the Southern Arabs. The kings of Yemen were *Al-'Aaribah* Arabs, as were the people from the kingdoms of Ma'een, Saba, and Himyar.

3) **The *'Adnaaniyyah* Arabs**

They are called the *'Adnaaniyyah* because they are descended from

'Adnaan, who in turn was descended from the line of Ismaa'eel ibn Ibraaheem ﷺ. They are known as the Arabized Arabs, which alludes to the fact that non-Arab blood entered into their lineage. When that first happened, Arabic became the language of the new racial mix.

The *'Adnaaniyyah* Arabs are the Arabs of the north. Their original homeland was Makkah, and they are descended from Ismaa'eel ﷺ, his children, and the Jurhum tribe, for after Ibraaheem ﷺ left Haajar ﷺ and Ismaa'eel ﷺ in Makkah, Ismaa'eel ﷺ was raised among the Jurhum, learned Arabic from them, and married one of their women. Thus his children were raised as Arabs.

The most noteworthy of Ismaa'eel's early descendants was 'Adnaan, who was a direct forebear of the Prophet ﷺ. It is to 'Adnaan that the major Arab tribes and subtribes ascribe themselves. After 'Adnaan came his son Ma'ad, and then Nizaar, and then his two children, Mudar and Rabee'ah.

As for Rabee'ah, the son of Nizaar, his descendants settled in the east: 'Abdul-Qais settled in Bahrain; Haneefah, in Yamaamah; the children of Bakr ibn Waail, somewhere between Bahrain and Yamaamah; Tameem, in the Baadiyah of Basrah; and Taghlab, in the land of the (Arabian) Peninsula, between the Dijlah and the Euphrates, after having first crossed the latter river.

And as for the descendants of Mudar, Saleem settled near Al-Madeenah; Thaqeef, in Taaif; the rest of the Hawaazin, east of Makkah; (the children of) Asad, from Eastern Taimaa until Western Kufah; (the children of) Dhubyaan and 'Abs, from Taimaa until Hawaraan. Most genealogists and other scholars classify Arabs into two categories: *Qahtaaniyyah* and *'Adnaaniyyah*; however, there are some scholars who maintain that all Arabs are *'Adnaaniyyah*, for the *Qahtaaniyyah*, they say, are also from the descendants of Ismaa'eel ﷺ. Al-Bukhaaree titled a chapter of his *Saheeh* based on this latter opinion: "Chapter: The Relation Of (The People Of) Yemen (i.e., the *Qahtaaniyyah*) To Ismaa'eel ﷺ." In that chapter, he related a

Hadeeth from Salamah ؓ, who said, "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ went to a people who, at the time, were competing against one another in archery. The Prophet ﷺ said, 'Fire (your arrows), O children of Ismaa'eel; and I am with the children of - such and such person.' One of the two groups restrained their hands (i.e., they didn't fire any arrows). The Prophet ﷺ said, 'What is the matter with you?' They said, 'How can we fire, when you are with the children of - such and such person.' The Prophet ﷺ said, "Fire (your arrows), for I am with you all."^[1] And according to some of the narrations of this *Hadeeth*, the Prophet ﷺ said, "Fire (your arrows), O children of Ismaa'eel, for your father was an archer."

Bukhaaree said, "Aslam ibn Afsaa ibn Haarithah ibn 'Amr ibn 'Aamir was from the Khuzaa'ah." What this means is that the Khuzaa'ah is one of the groups who was separated from the tribes of Saba when Allah ﷻ sent upon them the flood of Al-'Arim.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is from the descendants of Mudar. Bukhaaree related that Kaleeb ibn Waail once asked Zainab bint Abu Salamah ؓ, "Do you think that the Prophet ﷺ was from (the descendants of) Mudar?" She answered, "Who was he from if not from Mudar (i.e., he ﷺ was definitely descended from Mudar)? (He was) from the children of An-Nadr ibn Kinaanah."^[2]

The Quraish were the descendants of Kinaanah, through one of his great-grandsons, Faihr ibn (son of) Maalik ibn An-Nadr ibn Kinaanah. The Quraish tribe was divided into various subtribes, the most famous of them being as follows: Jumh, Sahn, 'Adee (so for example, the members of this sub-tribe were called Banu 'Adee, the children of 'Adee), Makhzoom, Taim, and Zuhrah; and more importantly, there were the subtribes of Qusai ibn Kilaab: 'Abdud-Daar ibn Qusai, Asad ibn 'Abdul-'Uzzah ibn Qusai, and 'Abd-Manaaf ibn Qusai. 'Abd-Manaaf was then divided into four subgroups, which were respectively ascribed to 'Abd-Shams,

^[1] *Saheeh Bukhaaree*, "The Book of Virtues"; chapter, "Yemen Being Ascribed to Ismaa'eel ؓ." *Hadeeth* number: 3507

^[2] *Saheeh Bukhaaree*, "The Book of Virtues." *Hadeeth* number: 3491.

Naufal, Al-Muttalib, and Haashim. It was from the household of Al-Muttalib that Allah ﷻ chose our beloved Prophet, Muhammad ibn ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abdul-Muttalib ibn Haashim. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Indeed, Allah chose Kinaanah from the children of Ismaa’eel; He chose Quraish from Kinaanah; He chose the children of Haashim from Quraish; and He chose me from the children of Haashim.”^[1]

The Civilizations Of The Early Arabs

1) The civilization of Saba (Sheeba) in Yemen

It was in Yemen that the people of this civilization lived and prospered, benefiting greatly from the copious rainfall that Allah ﷻ blessed them with. Using great engineering skill, they built dams, the most famous of them being the Ma’rib dam. They used the water that was held up to irrigate their fields; they had gardens in which grew all kinds of trees, vegetation, and luscious fruits. But they were ungrateful to Allah ﷻ, Who then punished them with a great flood. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿لَقَدْ كَانَ لِسَبَإٍ فِي مَسْكِنِهِمْ آيَةٌ جَنَّتَانِ عَنْ يَمِينٍ وَشِمَالٍ كُلُوا مِنْ رِزْقِ رَبِّكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لَهُمْ بَلَدَةٌ طَيِّبَةٌ وَرَبُّ غَفُورٌ ﴿١٥﴾ فَأَعْرَضُوا فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَيْلَ الْعَرِمِ وَبَدَّلْنَاهُمْ بِجَنَّتَيْهِمْ جَنَّتَيْنِ ذَوَاتِ أُكُلٍ خَمْطٍ وَأَثَلٍ وَشَيْءٍ مِّن سِدْرٍ قَلِيلٍ ﴿١٦﴾ ذَلِكَ جَزَيْنَاهُمْ بِمَا كَفَرُوا وَهَلْ يُجْزَىٰ إِلَّا الْكُفُورَ ﴿١٧﴾﴾

“Indeed there was for Saba’ (Sheba) a sign in their dwelling-place, – two gardens on the right hand and on the left (and it was said to them) “Eat of the provision of your Lord, and be grateful to Him, a fair land and an Oft-Forgiving Lord. But they turned away (from the obedience of Allah), so We sent against them Sail Al-‘Arim (flood released from the dam), and We converted their two gardens into gardens producing bitter bad fruit, and

^[1] Saheeh Muslim, “The Book of Virtues”; chapter, “The Superiority of the Prophet’s Lineage.” Hadeeth number: 2276.

tamarisks, and some few lote trees. Like this We requited them because they were ungrateful disbelievers. And never do We requite in such a way except those who are ungrateful, (disbelievers).'' (Qur'an 34: 15-17)

It is indicated in the Qur'an that, in past times, there were a series of inhabited cities or villages that extended from Yemen to the lands of Al-Hijaz (Makkah, Al-Madeenah, Taa'if, etc.), and then continued further northwards to the lands of Ash-Sham (Syria and surrounding regions). Consequently, trading caravans that traveled from Yemen to the lands of Ash-Sham always had plentiful supplies of shade, water, and food along the way. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ وَبَيْنَ الْقُرَىٰ الَّتِي بَرَكْنَا فِيهَا قُرَىٰ ظَهْرًا وَقَدَرْنَا فِيهَا السَّيْرَ سِيرُوا فِيهَا لَيَالِيَ وَأَيَّامًا ءَامِنِينَ ﴿١٨﴾ فَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا بَعِدْ بَيْنَ أَسْفَارِنَا وَظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَحَادِيثَ وَمَزَقْنَاهُمْ كُلَّ مُمَرِّقٍ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ ﴿١٩﴾﴾

“And We placed between them and the towns which We had blessed, towns easy to be seen, and We made the stages (of journey) between them easy (saying): “Travel in them safely both by night and day.” But they said: “Our Lord! Make the stages between our journey longer,” and they wronged themselves, so We made them as tales (in the land), and We dispersed them all, totally. Verily, in this are indeed signs for every steadfast grateful (person).'' (Qur'an 34: 18, 19)

2) The civilization of 'Ad

The people of 'Ad lived in the northern part of Hadramoont. They lived in lofty buildings, were skilled in various trades, and were blessed with springs, fields, and gardens. And it was to them that Allah ﷻ sent Prophet Hood ﷺ. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿كَذَّبَتْ عَادُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٧٣﴾ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ هُودٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٧٤﴾ إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ﴾

﴿١٢٥﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا ١٢٦ ﴿١٢٦﴾ وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ
 الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٢٧﴾ أَتَبْنُونَ بِكُلِّ رِيعٍ مَائَةً تَعْبَثُونَ ﴿١٢٨﴾ وَتَتَّخِذُونَ مَصَانِعَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَخْلُدُونَ
 ﴿١٢٩﴾ وَإِذَا بَطَشْتُمْ بَطَشْتُمْ جَبَّارِينَ ﴿١٣٠﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا ١٣١ ﴿١٣١﴾ وَاتَّقُوا الَّذِي أَمَدَّكُمْ بِمَا
 تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٣٢﴾ أَمَدَّكُمْ بِاتِّعَامِهِ وَبَيْنَ ١٣٣ ﴿١٣٣﴾ وَحَنَّتِ وَعُيُونِ ﴿١٣٤﴾ ﴿١٣٤﴾

“Ad (people) denied the Messengers. When their brother Hood said to them: “Will you not fear Allah and obey Him? Verily! I am a trustworthy Messenger to you. So fear Allah, keep your duty to Him, and obey me. No reward do I ask of you for it (my Message of Islamic Monotheism), my reward is only from the Lord of the ‘Alamin (mankind, jinns, and all that exists). Do you build high palaces on every high place, while you do not live in them? And do you get for yourselves palaces (fine buildings) as if you will live therein forever.? And when you seize, seize you as tyrants? So fear Allah, keep your duty to Him, and obey me. And keep your duty to Him, fear Him Who has aided you with all (good things) that you know. He has aided you with cattle and children. And gardens and springs.” (Qur’an 26: 123-134)

3) The Civilization of Thamood

The Qur’an referred to the people of Thamood, who lived in the lands of Al-Hijr and were endowed with the ability to carve houses for themselves high up on mountains. Like the people of ‘Ad, the people of Thamood were blessed with many springs, fields, and copious gardens. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٤١﴾ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ صَالِحٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٤٢﴾ إِنِّي لَكُمْ
 رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿١٤٣﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا ١٤٤ ﴿١٤٤﴾ وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى
 رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٤٥﴾ أَتُتْرَكُونَ فِي مَا هُنَّآءَ ءَامِنِينَ ﴿١٤٦﴾ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ ﴿١٤٧﴾ وَزُرُوعٍ
 وَيَخْلُجٍ طَلْعُهَا هَضِيمٌ ﴿١٤٨﴾ وَتَنجِيحُونَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ يَوْمًا قَرِهِينَ ﴿١٤٩﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ
 وَأَطِيعُوا ١٥٠ ﴿١٥٠﴾﴾

“Thamood (people) denied the Messengers. When their brother Saalih (Saaleh) said to them: ‘Will you not fear Allah and obey Him? I am a trustworthy Messenger to you. So fear Allah, keep your duty to Him, and obey me. No reward do I ask of you for it (my Message of Islamic Monotheism), my reward is only from the Lord of the ‘Alamin (mankind, jinns, and all that exists). Will you be left secure in that which you have here? In gardens and springs. And green crops (fields, etc.) and date palms with soft spadix. And you carve houses out of mountains with great skill. So fear Allah, keep your duty to Him, and obey me.’ (Qur’an 26: 141-150)

And He ﷻ said in another Verse:

﴿وَأَذْكُرُوا إِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ مِنْ بَعْدِ عَادٍ وَبَوَّأَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ
تَنْجِدُونَ مِنْ سُهُولِهَا قُصُورًا وَتَنْجِتُونَ الْجِبَالَ بُيُوتًا فَأَذْكُرُوا آيَاتِ
اللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْتُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٧٤﴾﴾

“And remember when He made you successors after ‘Ad (people) and gave you habitations in the land, you build for yourselves palaces in plains, and carve out homes in the mountains. So remember the graces (bestowed upon you) from Allah, and do not go about making mischief on the earth.” (Qur’an 7: 74)

The peoples of ‘Ad and Thamood were destroyed long ago. Only mounds and rubble and vestiges of their structures remain. Their trees dwindled away, and their springs dried up. What were once beautiful gardens and fields exist no more; all that remains now is barren land.

3

Politics, Religion, Economics, And The Overall Condition Of Arabs Prior to Islam

Religion

Overall, the world status of Arabs prior to Islam was nothing to boast about; at best, they deserved a mention only in the footnotes section of a historical study of the era. The political and legal structure of Arab societies was in chaos; the belief system was absurd. At the best of times, they were no better than underlings of either the Persian or Roman Empire.

Arabs glorified and blindly followed the religion of their fathers and grandfathers, no matter how misguided and superstitious their beliefs were. And so they faithfully worshipped idols. Every tribe had its own idol: Hudhail ibn Mudrikah worshipped Suwaa'; the tribe of Kalb worshipped Wadd; Mudhaj worshipped Yahghooth; Khayawaan worshipped Ya'ooq; and Himyar worshipped Nasr. Both the Khuzaa'ah and Quraish tribes worshipped Isaaf and Naailah. The idol Manaaf was situated on the seashore, and was glorified by all Arabs in general, and by the Aus and Khazraj tribes in particular. The idol Al-Laat was in Thaqeef, and Al-'Uzzaa was situated above Dhaat 'Ariq; these latter two idols were considered by the Quraish to be the greatest of idols.

Other than these main idols, Arabs worshipped a countless number of lesser idols - idols that individuals could take along on journeys

and that were small enough to be carried around or placed in homes. In his *Saheeh Bukhaaree* related that Abu Rajaa Al-Utaaridee said, "We used to worship a stone. If we found a better stone, we would shoot the first one away and take the second one (as an idol). And if we could find no stone, we would gather a mound of earth; then we would bring a sheep and milk it over (the mound). And then we would walk around it (as an act of worship)."^[1]

Such polytheistic practices prevented Arabs from knowing Allah ﷻ, glorifying Him, and having faith in Him ﷻ. They claimed that the idols were only intermediaries between them and Allah ﷻ, but that was of course an unacceptable excuse, if they even meant it is an excuse. Their idols and the practice of idol worship controlled their hearts, deeds, and all aspects of their lives, thus leaving little room in their hearts for the glorification of Allah ﷻ. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿ إِنَّمَا يَسْتَجِيبُ الَّذِينَ يَسْمَعُونَ وَالْمَوْتَىٰ يَبْعَثُهُمُ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُونَ ﴾ (36)

"It is only those who listen (to the Message of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ), will respond (benefit from it), but as for the dead (disbelievers), Allah will raise them up, then to Him they will be returned (for their recompense)." (Qur'an 6: 36)

Only remnants of the religion of Ibraaheem ﷺ – which had reigned supreme in the early days of Makkah – remained, and even those remnants were subject to distortion. True, Arabs performed pilgrimage to Makkah; but they came to worship idols, and the pilgrimage season was a time not of piety, but of mutual boasting over worldly glories. As for the purely Monotheistic beliefs of Ibraaheem ﷺ, Arabs added superstition and falsehood to them, thus making it very hard to see in the new beliefs the original teachings of Islamic Monotheism. And as such, Arabs had cut off all religious ties to Ibraaheem ﷺ; in fact, they were closest in their beliefs and practices not to the People of the Book, but to the polytheistic Brahmans and Buddhists of India.

^[1] *Saheeh Bukhaaree*, "The Book of Battles"; chapter, "The Delegates of Banu Haneefah, and the Hadeeth of Thumaamah ibn Uthaal." *Hadeeth* number: 4376.

Despite widespread ignorance and polytheism, there were some individuals, albeit very few in number, who refused to worship idols, and instead worshipped Allah ﷻ alone. They are now known as the *Hunafaa*, which is the plural of the word *Haneef*, a person who is a pure Islamic Monotheist. They are called *Hunafaa* because they were following the religion of Ibraaheem ؑ, whom Allah ﷻ referred to in the Qur'an as being *Haneef*. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿ مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَكِنْ كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُّسْلِمًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴾ (١٧)

“Ibraaheem (Abraham) was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was a true Muslim Hanifaa (Islamic Monotheism – to worship none but Allah Alone) and he was not of the Al-Mushrikun.”
(Qur'an 3: 67)

One such *Haneef* was Zaid ibn 'Amr ibn Nufail – may Allah have mercy on him – who refused to worship idols and to eat Islamically unlawful food, such as blood, an animal that is slaughtered by other than Allah's Name, or an animal that is not slaughtered but dies of natural causes.

Another example of a *Haneef* – a pure Monotheist who followed the religion of Ibraaheem ؑ and Ismaa'eel ؑ – was Qiss ibn Saa'idah Al-Iyaadee. Qiss worshipped Allah alone, without associating any partner with Him in worship; and he was known for his intelligence, wisdom, insight, and noble character. He believed in resurrection after death, and would, prior to the advent of Islam, give glad tidings about the coming of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. In *Dalaail An-Nubuwwah*, Abu Nu'aim related that Ibn 'Abbaas ؓ said, “Verily, Qiss ibn Saa'idah would preach to his people in the marketplace (‘Ukaadh); he said in one of his sermons, ‘The truth shall become known from this direction,’ and he pointed with his hands towards Makkah. They (i.e., the people gathered around him) said, ‘And what is this truth (or who is the bearer of this truth)?’ He said, ‘A man from

the children of Luai ibn Ghaalib will invite you to the Word of Sincerity (the phrase of *Tawheed*), to the eternal life, and to bliss and happiness that never ends. So when he invites you, answer him (by accepting his message). Were I to know that I will live until the time he is sent, I (would consequently know that I) will be the first who will hasten to him (in order to become a follower).” Qiss did end up being a contemporary of the Prophet ﷺ, but he died before the Prophet ﷺ received revelation for the first time.

Some Arabs became Christians; others became Jews; but neither Christianity nor Judaism had a substantial number of followers in the Arabian Peninsula. For that matter, even planet worship and Magianism caught on to a very limited degree among Arabs. Despite the presence of minority religious groups in the Arabian Peninsula, the vast majority of Arabs were – until the advent of Islam – die - hard idol worshippers.

The Political Situation Of The Arabian Peninsula

The inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula were of two kinds: the nomadic desert dweller (Bedouin) and the city dweller. Tribal laws and customs prevailed all over Arabia, even among the more civilized kingdoms of that region, such as the kingdom of Yemen in the south, the kingdom of Al-Heerah in the northeast, and the kingdom of Al-Ghasaasinah in the northwest.

A tribe was a group of people who were linked to one another through blood relation. It was the laws and customs of each tribe that dictated the relation between the individual and the group as well as the rights that were due to and obligatory upon – depending on the case – each member of the tribe. For example, the chief of a tribe had many rights over his people, but they too had rights over him. There were a number of factors that made a tribe member suitable for the position of chief – his status, generosity, character, bravery, and so on. The chief of a given tribe had the right to be honoured and obeyed by his people; if there was a dispute, his judgment was final. He had monetary rights as

well: one-quarter of the spoils of war belonged to him; before the distribution of the spoils of war, he had the right to choose specific items for himself; whatever was taken from an enemy before battle belonged to him; whatever form of wealth (from the spoils of war) could not be distributed, belonged to him. These rights did not come without a price; the chief had many duties that he had to fulfill, some of which effectively nullified the benefits of the aforementioned monetary rights. During times of peace, he was expected to be very generous to his fellow tribesmen. And in war, he was expected to fight in the frontlines; also, it was his duty and right to enact peace agreements when doing so was for the benefit of the tribe.

Living under tribal laws and customs, the average tribesman lived a life of freedom, having to answer to no one, as long as he harmed no one. And as such, it became a part of the nature of Arabs to love freedom, and to hate injustice and subservience. Every individual member of a given tribe fought for all of the other members; more honour for the tribe meant more honour for the individual tribesman. On the downside of this arrangement, one automatically supported his fellow tribesmen, regardless of whether they were in the right or in the wrong. Thus in some regards, the individual tribesman was considered more as a member of the tribe than as an individual.

Each individual tribe had its own status and political reality, and depending on its situation, it waged war against or formed alliances with other tribes. War was a constant reality among Arabs; among the most famous of wars in their history was the War of Fijaar. But other than major wars, minor skirmishes or attacks were commonplaces. A member of one tribe might attack a member of another tribe for personal motives, such as revenge; or one tribe might attack another tribe for profit; the livelihood of some tribes actually depended upon the practice of attacking other tribes and taking all of their possessions by force. After such ruthless attacks took place, homes and entire villages were left empty, as if no one had lived there the day before.

The Economic Situation Of The Arabian Peninsula

Since most of the Arabian Peninsula consists of vast desert land, its inhabitants did not work in agriculture, except in the extreme borders of the Peninsula – particularly in Yemen, to the south, and Syria, to the north – and in the odd scattered oases found in central Arabia. Without much vegetation in Arabia, it was sheep and camels that made for the livelihood of both desert and city dwellers. Tribes would go from place to place with their herds, looking for pastureland.

As for industry and manufacturing, Arabs were far, far behind other nations; they practically refused to work in those fields, instead allowing foreigners and slaves to do their work for them. Even when they wanted to rebuild the Ka’bah, they sought the help of an Egyptian, who had survived the sinking of his sea vessel in Jeddah, and who then settled in Makkah.

It is true that, without farming and manufacturing, Arabs were, compared to other peoples, at an economic disadvantage; but they did compensate in another regard: They were an advanced trading nation, by dint of their strategically sound location between Africa and eastern Asia.

It was primarily the city dwellers of the Arabian Peninsula who engaged in trade, and most successful among them were the people of the Quraish. The Quraish differed from other tribes in that they were the inhabitants of Makkah, which was considered to be holy by all Arabs; as such, they were able to travel in safety all over Arabia, for no tribe dared to attack the dwellers of the inviolable city of Makkah. Other tribes did not fare as well; their trading caravans were constantly being subjected to highway robbery by individuals and others tribes that made a living through attacking and robbing passing caravans. Allah ﷻ reminded the Quraish of this particular blessing in the Noble Qur’an:

﴿أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا جَعَلْنَا حَرَمًا ءَامِنًا وَيَسْخَطُفُ النَّاسُ مِنْ حَوْلِهِمْ أَفِيَالْبَطِلِ
يُؤْمِنُونَ وَبِنِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ يَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾﴾

“Have they not seen that We have made (Makkah) a sanctuary secure, and that men are being snatched away from all around them? Then do they believe in Batil (falsehood – polytheism, idols, and all deities other than Allah), and deny (become ingrate for) the Graces of Allah?” (Qur’an 29: 67)

The Quraish dispatched two very large trading caravans on a yearly basis; one went in the winter to Yemen, and the other went in the summer to Ash-Sham (Syria and surrounding regions). They went in safety, while other tribes were constantly being attacked and robbed. Throughout every year, the Quraish sent many lesser caravans to the various marketplaces of Arabia (and perhaps even elsewhere). Allah ﷻ said:

﴿لَا يَلْفُ قُرَيْشٍ ۙ ۱﴾ إِذْ لَفِيهِمْ رِحْلَةَ الشِّتَاءِ وَالصَّيْفِ ۙ ۲﴾ فَلْيَعْبُدُوا رَبَّ هَذَا
الْبَيْتِ ۙ ۳﴾ الَّذِي أَطْعَمَهُمْ مِنْ جُوعٍ وَءَامَنَهُمْ مِنْ خَوْفٍ ۙ ۴﴾

“(It is a great Grace and Protection from Allah), for the taming of the Quraish, (and with all those Allah’s Grace and Protections for their taming, We cause) the (Quraish) caravans to set forth safe in winter (to the south), and in summer (to the north without any fear), So let them worship (Allah) the Lord of this House (the Ka’bah in Makkah). (He) Who has fed them against hunger, and has made them safe from fear.” (Qur’an 106: 1-4)

The caravans carried all kinds of merchandise that was available in the Arabian Peninsula – such as perfume, incense, spices, dates, ivory, beads, skins, silk garments, and weapons. Some merchandise was produced in the Peninsula, but some was imported from abroad. The trading caravans would carry such items to Ash-Sham and elsewhere, and would then return with full loads of wheat, grains, raisins, oils, and clothing.

The Yemenis were also known for trading, for their economic activities were conducted on land and by sea; they traveled to the shores of Africa, India, Indonesia, Sumatra, and the islands of the Arabian Peninsula. Once the inhabitants of Yemen became Muslims, they used their previous travel experience and

knowledge to help spread Islam to the above-mentioned lands. Prior to the advent of Islam, usury was practiced on a widespread scale, perhaps having come to the Arabs from the Jews. In some cases, interest rates reached as high as one-hundred percent. 'Ukaadh, Majinnah, and Dhul-Majaaz were the names of the most famous marketplaces of the Arabian Peninsula. Some historians relate that Arabs would congregate at 'Ukaadh at the beginning of Dhil-Qai'dah; after twenty days passed, they would go to Majinnah. And when they saw the birth of the new moon for Dhil-Hijjah, they would go to Dhul-Majaaz, where they would stay for 8 days. Then they would go to 'Arafah for the pilgrimage. And neither in 'Arafah nor during the days of Minah did they conduct any business - not until the advent of Islam, for Allah ﷻ permitted them to do business during those days:

﴿لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَإِذَا أَفَضْتُمْ مِنْ عَرَفَاتٍ فَأَذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ عِنْدَ الْمَشْعَرِ الْحَرَامِ وَاذْكُرُوهُ كَمَا هَدَيْتُمْ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَمَنِ الضَّالِّينَ ﴿١٩٨﴾﴾

"There is no sin on you if you seek the Bounty of your Lord (during pilgrimage by trading, etc.). Then when you leave 'Arafat, remember Allah (by glorifying His Praises, i.e., prayers and invocations, etc.) at the Mash'ar-il-Haraam. And remember Him (by invoking Allah for all good, etc.) as He has guided you, and verily, you were, before, of those who were astray." (Qur'an 2: 198)

These centers of trade remained open during the early days of Islam, but eventually closed down. During their heyday, 'Ukaadh, Majinnah, and Dhul-Majaaz were not merely marketplaces; they were also centers of poetry and public speaking. Great poets and speakers gathered and competed against one another in their respective arts; thus they were centers that greatly served the advancement of poetry and the Arabic language.

Arab Society

Like most primitive cultures, customs and traditions passed down through the generations dictated the social norms of Arabs, the social status of individual tribesman, the relations between fellow tribesmen, and the relations between one tribe and another. The following are some of the basic realities of Arab society prior to the advent of Islam:

1) There was no limit to the degree to which the nobility felt proud about their ancestry and ranking in society

Arabs were obsessed with the idea of preserving their pure blood, and so they would not intermarry with other races. Islam brought an end to that, making it clear to Arabs that the only factors that make one person superior to the next are piety and good deeds.

2) Arabs were also obsessed with eloquent speech and purity of language

Perhaps the reason why poetry had a strong hold on the hearts and minds of Arabs is that it was the most beautiful way of expressing and recording for posterity – when a poem was especially good – facts about their noble lineages. It is not surprising, therefore, that Arab societies produced so many wonderful poets and public speakers. A single line of poetry had the potential of raising or lowering the status of a tribe. So just as a modern day country becomes thrilled when its favourite sporting team performs at a world-class level, an Arab tribe would become overjoyed if one of its members became a skilled poet.

3) Women were treated like merchandise

At least among most tribes, women were on an equal par with merchandise, in a very literal sense, for they were passed down through inheritance. If a man died, his wife was passed down to his eldest son – provided, of course, that she was not his actual mother. He then had the right to marry her, or even to prevent her

from remarrying. This practice continued until Islam expressly forbade a man from marrying the wife of his father. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا مَا نَكَحَ آبَاؤُكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَجِشَةً وَمَقْتًا وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٢٢﴾﴾

“And marry not women whom your fathers married, except what has already passed; indeed it was shameful and most hateful, and an evil way.” (Qur’an 4: 22)

Despite their deviant sexual practices, Arabs did forbid at least some forms of incestuous marriage, such as marriage with one’s mother, daughter, grandmother, sister, and aunt.

Women were oppressed in other ways as well; for example, women – as well as children – were not allowed to inherit wealth, for the entire estate of the deceased went only to those who could fight and help protect the tribe. It was not a written law that women couldn’t inherit wealth, but it was a practice recognized through established custom, and custom often had more force than legislated law. In this regard, the situation of women changed with the advent of Islam, with the death of Aus ibn Thaabit ﷺ. Aus ﷺ left behind two unsightly daughters and one very young son. His two nephews came and seized his entire estate, which they would have had the right to do (according to pre-Islamic customs) had they done so during the pre-Islamic days of ignorance. Aus’s wife pleaded with them, suggesting that they marry Aus’s two daughters, who could have then benefited at least in some way from their father’s wealth. But the two nephews refused, primarily because of the unsightliness of the two daughters. Aus’s wife then went to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said, “O Messenger of Allah, Aus has died, and has left behind a young son and two daughters. His two nephews, Suwaid and ‘Arfatah, came and seized his entire estate. I said to them, ‘Marry his two daughters,’ but they refused.” The Messenger of Allah ﷺ commanded the two nephews, saying, “Do not move (or spend or use) anything at all from the

estate.”^[1] And the following Verse was then revealed:

﴿لِّلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ مِمَّا قَلَّ مِنْهُ أَوْ كَثُرَ نَصِيبًا مَّفْرُوضًا ﴿٧﴾﴾

“There is a share for men and a share for women from what is left by parents and those nearest related, whether, the property be small or large – a legal share.” (Qur’an 4: 7)

Worse than the ill-treatment adult women received was what some Arabs did to their daughters. In the mind of the average Arab, a daughter was of no use and posed many potential problems. A daughter couldn’t fight and defend her clan and tribe; she couldn’t earn nearly as much money as men could; and if she was taken captive during war, her captors took her as a slave and used her to satisfy their sexual desires. Some females were even forced to work as prostitutes; like pimps do today, their masters would take from them all of the money they made. Society actually sanctioned such practices. Fearing shame and the above-mentioned eventualities, a man would become very sad and upset if his wife gave birth to a daughter. Describing this reality, Allah ﷻ said:

﴿وَإِذَا بُشِّرَ أَحَدُهُم بِالْأُنثَىٰ ظَلَّ وَجْهُهُ مُسْوَدًّا وَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ ﴿٥٨﴾ يَتَوَارَىٰ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ مِن سُوءِ مَا بُشِّرَ بِهِ أَيُمْسِكُهُ عَلَىٰ هُونٍ أَمْ يَدُسُّهُ فِي التُّرَابِ أَلَا سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾﴾

“And when the news of (the birth of) a female (child) is brought to any of them, his face becomes dark, and he is filled with inward grief! He hides himself from the people because of the evil of that whereof he has been informed. Shall he keep her with dishonour or bury her in the earth? Certainly, evil is their decision.” (Qur’an 16: 58, 59)

Many fathers would choose to bury their shame, by literally burying their daughters alive. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿وَإِذَا الْمَوْءُودَةُ سُئِلَتْ ﴿٨﴾ بِأَيِّ ذَنْبٍ قُتِلَتْ ﴿٩﴾﴾

^[1] Tafseer Al-Qurtubee (5/45).

“And when the female (infant) buried alive (as the pagan Arabs used to do) shall be questioned. For what sin she was killed?”
(Qur’an 81: 8, 9)

Some parents buried their child alive because they were poor and feared that they didn’t have enough wealth to raise a child; others did so not because they were poor, but because they feared becoming poor in the future. Islam of course forbade all of these evil practices. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿قُلْ تَعَالَوْا أَتْلُ مَا حَرَّمَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ أَلَّا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا
وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ مِنْ إِمْلَاقٍ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكُمْ
وَأِيَّاهُمْ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنٌ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا
الْنَفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ذَلِكَُمْ وَصَنَّكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٥١﴾﴾

“Say (O Muhammad ﷺ): “Come, I will recite what your Lord has prohibited you from : Join not anything in worship with Him ; be good and dutiful to your parents ; kill not your children because of poverty – We provide sustenance for you and for them ; come not near to Al-Fawahish (shameful sins, illegal sexual intercourse, etc.) whether committed openly or secretly, and kill not anyone whom Allah has forbidden, except for a just cause (according to Islamic law). This He has commanded you that you may understand.” (Qur’an 6: 151)

And Allah ﷻ also said:

﴿وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ خَشْيَةَ إِمْلَاقٍ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُهُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ إِنَّ قَتْلَهُمْ كَانَ خِطَاً
كَبِيراً ﴿٣١﴾﴾

“And kill not your children for fear of poverty. We provide for them and for you. Surely, the killing of them is a great sin.”
(Qur’an 17: 31)

To be sure, these practices were not uncommon; but there were some tribes that did not sanction infanticide. Even among the Quraish, there were individuals who despised the practice of

burying children alive. Zaid ibn 'Amr ibn Nufail – may Allah have mercy on him – was a noteworthy example; Zaid would even go to fathers who contemplated killing their daughters and offered to raise their daughters for them.

Some Arab tribes honoured women and even consulted with them about marriage. In some regards, women rose above their circumstances; they were brave and would accompany their husbands to the battlefield, and if need arose, would even participate in the fighting. The Bedouin woman would help her husband and take care of their livestock; she would also help out by spinning wool and knitting clothing.

4) Marriage took on many strange forms.

Marriage as we know it today was just one form of marriage recognized by Arabs; there were other forms as well, all agreed upon by custom. If an individual engaged in one of the accepted forms, no one else had the legal right to reproach him. I use the word legal, but the forms of marriage were not set down in writing in a constitution or charter of laws; rather, like most other laws that were collectively agreed upon by Arabs, custom alone dictated the actions of society's members.

'Aishah رضي الله عنها related to us four forms of marriage that were practiced by Arabs during the days of ignorance:

“Marriage, during the days of ignorance (pre-Islamic days), was upon four forms; one of those forms is the marriage that people engage in today, which involves a man going to another man and proposing to have his dependant (ward, charge) or daughter's hand in marriage; he would then give her dowry to her, and marry her. Another form of marriage involved a man saying to his wife just after she became purified from menstruation, “Send for such and such man, and ask him to have intercourse (so that he can get you pregnant).” The husband would stay away from her and categorically avoid touching her, until it became clear whether she got pregnant from the other man whom she asked to have sex with her. When the issue of her pregnancy became

clear (i.e., at the time of her next period), her husband would, if he so desired, have (sexual) relations with her. He would only do that (i.e., he would only have another man have sex with his wife) out of a desire to have a child of noble descent. This form of marriage is (called) the Marriage of *Istibdaa'*. In another form of marriage, a group of men, fewer than ten in number, would enter upon a woman, and each one of them would have her (i.e., would have sex with her). After she became pregnant, gave birth, and a number of nights passed after she gave birth, she would summon the men to come to her. None of the men could refuse, and so all of them would gather by her side. She would say to them, "You indeed know what you did, and I have given birth. And so he is your son, O so-and-so," and she would mention the name of the man whom she loved (to have as her child's father). Her child would be ascribed to that man, and he could not refuse (to be the father). As for the fourth form of marriage, many people would enter upon a woman (and engage in sexual intercourse with her), and she would not refuse anyone who came to her. They were the fallen women who would install banners over their doors; whoever wanted them, would enter upon them (and have sex with them). If one such woman became pregnant and then delivered a child, they (i.e., the men who had sex with her) would be gathered for her, and *Kaafahs* (people who were recognized for their expertise in being able to discern relatives through physical attributes) would be sent for them. Then, the *Kaafaahs* would ascribe the child to the one they thought (was the father); the child would then be ascribed to him, and would be called his son. And he wouldn't refuse [to accept him as his son (such were the rules of the game that everyone followed according to custom). Then when Muhammad ﷺ was sent with the truth, he destroyed the marriage of ignorance (i.e., the latter three of the four forms), and kept legislated the marriage that people engage in today."^[1]

^[1] *Saheeh Bukhaaree*, "The Book of Marriage"; chapter, "Those Who Say: Without (the Involvement of) a Guardian (in the Marriage Agreement). There is no Marriage." *Hadeeth* number: 5127.

Some scholars mentioned forms of marriage that 'Aishah ﷺ didn't mention; one was the taking of boyfriends and girlfriends, which was in fact fornication and not marriage. Allah ﷻ mentioned this practice in the following Verse:

﴿وَلَا تُتَّخَذُ الْبَنَاتُ حِرَامًا﴾

"Nor taking girlfriends." (Qur'an 4: 25)

Then there was the *Mut'ah* marriage, which remained lawful during the early days of Islam, but was eventually prohibited. *Mut'ah* marriage is a temporary marriage that ends after a predetermined period of time elapses - one month, two months, one year, whatever is agreed upon by the two contracting parties. Another form of marriage involved a trade: During the pre-Islamic days of ignorance, one man would say to another, "Give up your wife to me, and I will give up my wife to you, and I will give you more."^[1] And yet another form of false marriage was called *Nikaah Ash-Shigaar*: By way of formal agreement, one man would marry his daughter off to another man, on the condition that that man married his daughter off to him; and in this transaction, no dowry would be given to either of the two daughters.

During the pre-Islamic days of ignorance, Arabs considered it lawful for a man to be married to two sisters at the same time; they also deemed it lawful for a man to have as many wives as he wanted. Countless Arab men of course took advantage of the situation, so that some men had ten or more wives. With the advent of Islam, any man who embraced Islam had to divorce any additional wife so that he was left with four wives; and even the remaining four he kept only if he knew that he was able to spend on them and treat them with justice. If he feared that he wouldn't be able to do justice between two wives or more, he would remain content with one wife. Prior to Islam, men would certainly not treat their wives with justice; rather the opposite took place: they would treat

^[1] *Fathul-Baaree* (9/150).

them harshly and usurp all of their rights. Islam then came and did justice to women; they gained rights that they never could have previously dreamt of, and their husbands were instructed to treat them well and with kindness.

5) A man was always allowed to take back his wife, no matter how many times he had previously divorced her

The concept of divorce was recognized among Arabs, but men were given an unlimited amount of freedom in terms of being able to take back their wives after first divorcing them. A man could divorce his wife and then take her back; he could divorce her again and then take her back again; and he could continue this process endlessly, always having the right to take back his wife. In the early days of Islam, this practice was sanctioned, but then was finally limited in scope with the revelation of the following Verse:

﴿الطَّلُقُ مَرَّتَانٍ فَأَمَّا إِذَا مَا تَأْتِيَهُنَّ شَيْءٌ إِلَّا أَنْ يَخَافَا أَلَّا يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا فِيمَا افْتَدَتْ بِهِ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَعْتَدُوهَا وَمَنْ يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٢٢٩﴾﴾

“The divorce is twice, after that, either you retain her on reasonable terms or release her with kindness. And it is not lawful for you (men) to take back (from your wives) any of your Mahr (bridal-money given by the husband to his wife at the time of marriage) which you have given them, except when both parties fear that they would be unable to keep the limits ordained by Allah (e.g., to deal with each other on a fair basis). Then if you fear that they would not be able to keep the limits ordained by Allah, then there is no sin on either of them if she gives back (the Mahr or a part of it) for her Al-Kuhl’ (divorce). These are the limits ordained by Allah, so do not transgress them. And whoever transgresses the limits ordained by Allah, then such are the Zaalimoon (wrong-doers, etc.).” (Qur’an 2: 229)

Still giving a man the opportunity to make amends with his wife after divorce and to take back a hastily spoken word (i.e., "I divorce you"), Islam limited the number of times a man could divorce his wife and yet still take her back.

In Islam, after a man divorces his wife for the first time, he has a period during which he can take her back. If he does take her back and then divorces her for a second time, he has another period during which he can take her back. But if he takes her back for a second time and then divorces her for a third time, the divorce is final, and he may not take her back. The only way he can get back together with her is if she marries another man and then divorces him; and even still, he may not orchestrate a false marriage between her and another man in order to get her back. Her marrying another man and then divorcing him must occur naturally, without advanced planning. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا يَحِلُّ لَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ حَتَّى تَنْكِحَ زَوْجًا غَيْرَهُ فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يَتَرَاجَعَا إِنْ ظَنَّا أَنْ يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ يُبَيِّنُهَا لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٣٠﴾﴾

"And if he has divorced her (the third time), then she is not lawful unto him thereafter until she has married another husband. Then, if the other husband divorces her, it is no sin on both of them that they reunite, provided they feel that they can keep the limits ordained by Allah. These are the Limits of Allah, which He makes plain for the people who have knowledge." (Qur'an 2: 230)

In regard to divorce, Islam also forbade a practice known as *Zihaar*, which involves a man saying to his wife, "You are like the back of my mother (which means that, as with one's mother, one will certainly not have sex with his wife, so it is a kind of vow)." Describing *Zihaar* as "an ill word and a lie," Allah ﷻ gives a man who says the words of *Zihaar* a way out of his predicament through the legislation of atonement. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿الَّذِينَ يُظَاهِرُونَ مِنْكُمْ مِمَّا هُنَّ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ إِنْ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ

إِلَّا الَّتِي وَلَدْنَهُمْ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَيَقُولُونَ مُنْكَرًا مِّنَ الْقَوْلِ وَزُورًا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ
لَعَفُوفٌ غَفُورٌ ﴿٢﴾

“Those among you who make their wives unlawful (Az-Zihaar) to them by saying to them “You are like my mother’s back.” They cannot be their mothers. None can be their mothers except those who gave them birth. And verily, they utter an ill word and a lie. And verily, Allah is Oft-Pardoning, Oft-Forgiving. And those who make unlawful to them (their wives) (by Az-Zihaar) and wish to free themselves from what they uttered, (the penalty) in that case (is) the freeing of a slave before they touch each other. That is an admonition to you (so that you may not return to such an ill thing). And Allah is All-Aware of what you do. And he who finds not (the money for freeing a slave) must fast two successive months before they both touch each other. And for him who is unable to do so, he should feed sixty of the Miskin (poor). That is in order that you may have perfect faith in Allah and His Messenger. These are the limits set by Allah. And for disbelievers, there is a painful torment.”
(Qur’an 58: 2-4)

6) War was a constant reality

Arabs didn’t need an important reason to go to war and to shed blood; to the contrary, they would start wars for the most trifling of reasons. It didn’t matter that the tribal ways that they were fighting to uphold were senseless and trivial; they would fight nonetheless. In pre-Islamic times, Arabs were warlike people, which they became probably through environment and upbringing.

Consider two examples that illustrate the warlike nature of pre-Islamic Arabs and the way in which they started wars for insignificant reasons. In the first example, the Taghlib and Bakr tribes waged a bitter and long war against each other. How did the war start? A man named Jarnee from the Bakr tribe owned a she-camel; his neighbour was Basoos bint Manqadh, who was the

aunt of Jassaas ibn Murrah. The leader of the Taghlib tribe, Kaleeb, sheltered his camels in a special location. One day, Jarmee's she-camel wandered away and ended up among Kaleeb's flock. Upon seeing the strange camel, Kaleeb fired an arrow at it and killed it. Jarmee was furious, and so was his neighbour, Basoos. When Basoos's nephew, Jassaas, learned of what had happened, he didn't think that he should go to Kaleeb and discuss the matter with him, perhaps telling him that he should pay for the she-camel. Instead, he went and killed Kaleeb. And again, no one from the Kaleeb tribe thought about resolving the matter through non-violent means. They simply attacked the Bakr tribe; what ensued was a bitter war that lasted for 40 years and that began with the simple killing of a she-camel.

In the second example, it was the 'Abas and Dhubyaan tribes that fought one another. Their war began with the day that is remembered as the "Day of Daahis and Al-Ghabraa." On that day, Daahis and Ghabraa, which were the names of two horses that belonged to the two aforementioned tribes, were set to race against each other. Qais ibn Zaheer owned Daahis, and Hudhaifah ibn Badr owned Al-Ghabraa. The latter of the two men instructed someone to wait in the valley and to intervene somehow if he saw that Daahis was in the lead. Since Daahis was in fact in the lead upon entering the valley, Hudhaifah's henchman struck the horse as it raced by, and it fell into a stream. Al-Ghabraa of course ended up winning the race, but when it was established that foul play had been at work, fighting took place. Some people died during the fighting, and a cycle of violence erupted, which soon escalated into a full-fledged war, all of which began with a simple horserace.

Some of the wars that had a direct impact on Islamic history were the ones that took place between the Aus and Khazraj tribes of Al-Madeenah; for it was the Aus and Khazraj tribes that eventually became known as the *Ansaar*, once they embraced Islam and welcomed their migrating brothers from Makkah with open arms and hearts.

The Aus and Khazraj tribes were actually related through blood, for the members of both tribes were descended from the line of Haarithah ibn Tha'labah Al-Azdee. These tribes came to and settled in Yathrib, which later became known as Al-Madeenah, after they, among many other others, were displaced because of the great Flood of 'Arim. Some Jewish tribes also came to and settled in Yathrib; the primary reason why they settled there was that they were fleeing from oppression at the hands of the Romans.

At first, the Aus, the Khazraj, and the Jewish tribes of Yathrib lived together in relative harmony and peace. But then fighting took place among them, and wars continued intermittently until the advent of Islam. Sometimes, the Aus were fighting the Khazraj; at other times, the Khazraj were fighting the Jewish tribes; alliances constantly shifted. Very often, the Jewish tribes would switch alliances and sow dissension between the Aus and the Khazraj, their goal being to remain the dominant force in Yathrib. In the latter days of their wars, the Jews of Yathrib were allied to the Aus tribe, and the Aus tribe ended up with the upper hand over the Khazraj. The two tribes agreed to live in peace and under one king, 'Abdullah ibn Ubai ibn Salool, who was about to be crowned around the time that the Aus and Khazraj tribes pledged to believe in, obey, and defend the Prophet ﷺ. 'Abdullah ibn Ubai never forgot about the crown he never got to wear; his bitterness prompted him to fight Islam from within the ranks of Muslims: Outwardly, he claimed to be a Muslim, but inwardly he disbelieved in Islam. History remembers him as being the chief of the hypocrites.

Other than wars that were waged for honour or revenge, some tribes made a living out of attacking other tribes; they would attack a tribe, steal its wealth, and enslave its free men. Some famous Companions ؓ became enslaved in this or a similar manner; two noteworthy examples are Zaid ibn Haarithah ؓ, who was a free Arab, and Salmaan Al-Faarisee ؓ, who was a free Persian. Islam brought an end to such vile and violent practices, to

the extent that a man and woman could travel from San'aa to Hadramoot, without having to fear harm at the hands of any human being; during their journey, they would fear no one save Allah, as well as wolves upon their herd of sheep.

7) Arabs were at a near 100% illiteracy level

Unlike their contemporaries from the People of the Book – Jews and Christians – Arabs were an illiterate people; in short, they were ignorant, and they intransigently held on to the beliefs of their forebears, regardless of whether those beliefs were true or false. Very few people among them could read or write. They had some people among them who became skilled in the art of tracking, and some who practiced medicine, such as Al-Haarith ibn Kildah. It must be noted in their favour that the medicine they practiced was based not on superstitious beliefs, but on the experience they collectively gained through generations of practice.

Despite being illiterate and ignorant, they showed great potential for learning, being endowed with a natural intelligence. Once true knowledge came to them by way of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, many among them became eminent scholars and skilled jurists; they went from a near 100% illiteracy level to a near 100% literacy level.

The Manners And Morals Of Arabs

In many ways, Arabs of pre-Islamic times were loathsome in their manners and morals: They consumed great quantities of alcohol, and they gambled frequently; they would shed blood for the most inconsequential of reasons; they would usurp the wealth of orphans, steal, deal in usury, and fornicate. It must be noted, however, that it was only female slaves and fallen women who fornicated; very rarely were free women guilty of that crime. After the conquest of Makkah, when the Prophet ﷺ was taking pledges of allegiance from women, he mentioned that they must not associate any partner with Allah ﷻ, and that they must neither steal nor fornicate. Upon hearing this, Hind bint 'Utbah ؓ, wife of Abu Sufyaan ؓ, said in surprise, "And does a free woman fornicate?"

Not all Arabs practiced the aforementioned evils. Many among them didn't fornicate; some didn't drink alcohol or needlessly shed blood; some would not even contemplate the idea of dealing in usury or stealing the wealth of an orphan. And to be fair, Arabs had many good qualities as well, which made them well-prepared for the duty of carrying the banner of Islam. Here are some of those good qualities:

1) A Natural Intelligence

This natural intelligence took on different forms. First, they had very powerful memories. Consider the vastness of their language. In Arabic, there are 80 words that mean "honey"; 90, that mean "fox"; 500, that mean "lion"; 1000, that mean "camel," and 1000 that mean "sword." To be sure, to be able to memorize all of these words, Arabs had to have very strong memories.

Arabs were illiterate, yet they loved poetry as much as, or more than, any other literate and civilized people. But in order to preserve poetry, and in order to pass it down to posterity, they had to rely on verbal communication and on powerful memories to retain long poems. Their love of language, and lack of distractions, such as the mind-numbing television screen, further promoted the development of powerful memories.

Once they became Muslims, Arabs used this quality for the service of Islam. One should not be surprised, therefore, to learn that many of the Prophet's Companions ﷺ memorized the Qur'an, and that some individuals among them memorized hundreds, or in some cases thousands, of *Hadeeth* narrations and then conveyed them to the following generation of Muslims.

A second quality that Arabs possessed was an innocence that can be described as ignorance of falsehood. Arcane and convoluted philosophy, superstitions, legends, and complicated beliefs were far from the minds of Arabs. Their disbelief was not built upon a complicated system of false notions and premises, as was the case regarding the Romans, Greeks, and Persians. For truth to establish itself firmly in the mind of a person, falsehood must first be

eradicated. As for a Greek philosopher, for example, his falsehood was based on thousands of false premises, since his philosophy was so complicated and detailed. All of those false premises had to be destroyed in his mind before the truth could enter it. As for the average Arab, he had no complicated system of beliefs, and he even believed in Allah ﷻ. The few false notions he had about idol worship were easily refuted. Thus Arabs were naturally prepared to receive the truth – the message of Islam.

2) Generosity

The quality of generosity was deeply rooted among Arabs. If an Arab owned nothing save a camel, and if a guest came to visit him, he would, without giving the matter a second thought, slaughter the camel and feed its meat to his guest. Of all Arabs, it was perhaps Al-Haatim At-Taaee who was most widely renowned for his generosity; stories of his generous acts were spoken of and lauded in gatherings all over Arabia.

3) Bravery

Arabs would praise a man for having died on the battlefield, and would disparage and satirize a man who died peacefully on his bed. One Arab commented upon hearing about the death of his brother, "If he has been killed, his father, brother, and uncle before him have also been killed. By Allah, we do not die of natural causes."

Nothing meant more to Arabs than individual honour and the honour of one's clan and tribe. If anyone dared to attack their honour, they would defend it with their very lives. Although some Arabs fought for inconsequential reasons, and others fought for evil ends, many Arabs fought to uphold justice, very often not for themselves but for the weak, the old, and the helpless. They would consider it a blemish on their character if they didn't help the oppressed or ill-treated person who came to them seeking their help and protection.

4) Love of freedom, and hatred of subjugation and humiliation

For the most part, the major empires of the time – the Roman Empire and the Persian Empire – did not interfere in the lives of Arabs. The wide desert of the Peninsula was the home of the Arab, who loved freedom and was not under the direct control of any king or ruler. His honour meant more to him than his very life. If anyone dared to humiliate him, he wouldn't think twice about killing him.

The following is an example, albeit an extreme one, of that love of honour and freedom in action. 'Amr ibn Hind was the king of Al-Heerah, and he once arrogantly said to his companions, "Do you know of any Arab whose mother would refuse to serve my mother?" They said, "Yes, the mother of 'Amr ibn Khulthoom, the poor poet."

The king invited 'Amr ibn Kulthoom to visit him, and ibn Khulthoom's mother to visit his mother. The king instructed his mother to ask the guest, upon the completion of their meal, to hand her a serving tray. The king's mother did as she was told, and 'Amr ibn Kulthoom's mother answered, "Let the one who needs something get it herself!" The king's mother repeated her request and insisted that the guest serve her, but instead of doing as she asked, 'Amr ibn Kulthoom's mother yelled out, "What humiliation! O Taghlib (Taghlib was the name of her tribe)." Her son heard her screaming. Feeling enraged at this affront to his honour and the honour of his mother, 'Amr ibn Kulthoom took hold of a sword that was hanging nearby and killed the king with a single lethal blow to the head.

5) Truthfulness, keeping promises, and honesty

In general, Arabs avoided lying. This reality is perhaps best highlighted by a story involving Abu Sufyaan. When he was still a polytheist and a bitter foe of Islam, Abu Sufyaan traveled abroad and met Haraq, the leader of a foreign empire. Haraq

began to ask questions about the Prophet ﷺ and about the new religion in Makkah. Abu Sufyaan could have best served his purposes by lying about the Prophet ﷺ, for to speak truthfully about him involved praising him for his good character, noble lineage, and truthful speech. And it was not politically wise to praise the Prophet ﷺ in front of a foreign leader, who had the potential of embracing Islam and of wreaking havoc upon the Quraish. Nonetheless, Abu Sufyaan did speak truthfully about the Prophet ﷺ; he later said, "Had it not been for (me being) shy of them ascribing a lie to me, I would have lied against him (i.e., against the Prophet ﷺ)." [1]

Faithfulness was a quality that was deeply ingrained in the souls of Arabs; however, they often took faithfulness to an extreme, acting in an incorrect and needlessly violent manner. Islam directed their faithfulness in the right direction. No matter how faithful one of them was to his relative or friend, Islam forbade him from supporting him if he was a wrongdoer. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah curses someone who supports (shelters, helps) a *Muhdith* (one who perpetrates vile deeds or introduces something new into the religion)." [2]

The following story, which is set in pre-Islamic times, exemplifies how, no matter what the cost, an honourable Arab would remain true to his word. Al-Haarith ibn 'Ibaad led an army that consisted of the various subtribes of the Bakr tribe; the goal of the expedition was to attack the Taghlib tribe, but Al-Haarith had a more personal goal in mind: To find and kill the leader of the Taghlib tribe, Al-Muhalhal, who had killed his son in a previous incident. Al-Haarith came across Al-Muhalhal and took him captive, but there was only one problem: He had never before seen Muhalhal, and so he didn't recognize him. Al-Haarith said to his prisoner, "Tell me where Muhalhal ibn Rabee'ah is, and I will free you." The prisoner said, "I have your promise (to free me) if I guide you to him." Al-Haarith said, "Yes." The prisoner said,

[1] *Saheeh Bukhaaree*, "The Beginning of Revelation." *Hadeeth* number: 7.

[2] *Saheeh Muslim*, "The Book of Sacrifices." *Hadeeth* number: 1978.

“Then I am him.” Without harming Muhalhal, Al-Haarith simply let him go, showing a wonderful display of faithfulness that truly deserves admiration.

Another example involves An-No'maan ibn Al-Mundhir, who feared for his life after he refused to give his daughter's hand in marriage to the emperor Kisra. Having first placed his family and weapons in the safekeeping of Haani ibn Mas'ood Ash-Shaibaanee, An-No'maan traveled to Kisra, who treated him very harshly. Kisra sent a message to Haani, demanding that he hand over all that An-No'maan had entrusted him with, but Haani refused. And so Kisra sent an army to fight Haani and his tribe.

Haani gathered his fellow tribesmen and delivered the following sermon: “O people of Bakr, one who is killed yet has an excuse is better than one who is safe yet has fled (from the battlefield). Indeed, caution does not protect one from preordainment. And indeed, patience is one of the causes of victory. I say yes to death, but no to humiliation and baseness. To head towards death is better than to turn away from it, and to be stabbed in the upper part of the chest is better than to be stabbed in the back (i.e., while fleeing). O people of Bakr, fight, for death must come to us all.”^[1]

In choosing between living and fulfilling his promise, Haani chose the latter, yet as happens so frequently in life, he sought out death but was granted life (the opposite happens just as frequently: those who seek out comfort and life are often met by death in a most unexpected manner). In the Battle of Dhee Qaar, the Bakr tribe fought valiantly and triumphed over their Persian foes.

6) Patience in hard times and contentment with the bare necessities

Arabs consumed food in moderate quantities. They looked down upon the person who ate too much, and when they would finish eating a meal, it was not uncommon for them to say, “Gluttony does away with intelligence.” Arabs had an uncanny ability to

^[1] *Taareekh At-Tabaree* (2/207).

endure hardship, a quality that they probably developed through living in the harsh desert for many generations. Low supplies of food and water, tortuous and rocky mountain pathways, the extreme heat of the desert – nothing seemed to perturb them. Once they embraced Islam, they had to be more patient than ever before; in harsh times, one of them would go days with only a small number of dates and some drops of water.

7) Showing mercy when revenge was within one's grasp

Arabs did not back down from fighting their enemies, but it frequently occurred that, at the very moment when one of them had the upper hand against his enemy, and had the ability to pounce on him, he forgave him and left him alone. Arabs were also known to show mercy on the battlefield, in that they wouldn't kill their wounded opponents.

These are just some of the good qualities that Arabs possessed during the days of ignorance. Islam then came and developed those qualities, channeling them in the right direction. With their inherent goodness being strengthened by *Eemaan* and piety, they conquered countries and the hearts of people, filling the earth with faith, after it had become replete with disbelief; with justice, after it had become overrun by oppression and wrongdoing; and with goodness, after it had become overwhelmed by falsehood and evil.

What better can be said about Arabs than that among them was the Messenger of Allah ﷺ? The Persians, the Romans, the Indians, and the Greeks – none of these were chosen to have among them the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, despite the vast knowledge of the Persians, the philosophy of the Indians, the skilled arts of the Romans, and the genius of the Greeks. In spite of their more advanced civilizations, the above-mentioned peoples were not chosen to have the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in their midst. As primitive and uncivilized as they were in some regards, Arabs possessed, more so than others, a sound inherent nature and an overall preparedness to receive, embrace, and then disseminate the message of Islam.

4

Some Important Events That Took Place Before The Birth Of The Prophet ﷺ

Before delving into the study of the Prophet's birth and early years, we discuss in this section those events that had a direct bearing on Islam, that represented the dark days of pre-Islamic ignorance, or that signaled the great change that was about to take place in Arabia and in the entire world. True, the earth was immersed in darkness; but it is from Allah's *Sunan* (ways; *Sunan* is plural of *Sunnah*) regarding the universe that relief comes after hardship, that light comes after darkness, and that ease comes after difficulty.

'Abdul-Muttalib Digs The Well Of Zamzam

In his highly beneficial book, *Saheeh As-Seerah An-Nabawiyyah*, Shaikh Ibraaheem Al-'Alee mentioned an authentic narration that describes how 'Abdul-Muttalib found and dug the well of *Zamzam*. Of course, it was Haajar who first found the well of *Zamzam*, but history books record that, because of the wickedness of later generations, the *Zamzam* well became buried and, if not forgotten, then at least lost – until the time of 'Abdul-Muttalib. 'Alee ibn Abee Taalib ؓ related that Abdul-Muttalib said, "While I was sleeping in Al-Hijr (a part of the Ka'bah that is on its northern side), someone came to me and said, 'Dig *Taibah* (*Taibah* comes from the word *Tayyib*, which means goodness).' 'And what is *Taibah*?' I asked, but he then left me. On the following day, I returned to my place of sleep (in Al-Hijr). When I fell asleep there, he came to me (again) and said,

'Dig *Barrah* (*Barrah* comes from the word *Birr*, which means goodness and purity).' 'And what is *Barrah*?' I asked, but he (again) left me. On the following day, I returned to my place of sleep. And when I fell asleep there, he came to me and said, 'Dig *Al-Madnoonah*.' 'And what is *Al-Madnoonah*?' I asked, but he left (again without answering me). On the following day, I returned to my place of sleep. After I fell asleep there, he came to me and said, 'Dig *Zamzam*.' 'And what is *Zamzam*?' I asked. He said, 'It (is a well that) never runs dry, and it is not dispraised (i.e., it is fresh and good). It is drink for the greater pilgrims (i.e., those who come for *Hajj*). And it is situated (so go and find it there) between excrement and blood, at the eyehole of the Al-'Asim crow (i.e., the crow that has whiteness in its legs), at the village of the ants.'"

After he was made aware of the significance and location of the *Zamzam* well, 'Abdul-Muttalib went out (to search for it) with an axe. He took along with him Al-Haarith ibn 'Abdul-Muttalib, who was, at the time, 'Abdul-Muttalib's only son. When 'Abdul-Muttalib saw the edge of the well, he magnified Allah ﷻ, by exclaiming, "*Allahuakbar* (Allah is the Greatest)!" By the sound of his voice, the Quraish knew that he found what he had been looking for, and so they went to him. They said, "O 'Abdul-Muttalib, this indeed is the well of our father, Ismaa'eel, and we have a right over it, so make us a partner to you in it (i.e., in its ownership)." He said, "I will not do so; this is a matter for which I, and not you, have been specifically chosen, and which I have been given from among you." They said, "Then do us justice, for we will not leave you alone, but will instead dispute with you over it." He said, "Then appoint whomsoever you wish, and we will take the matter to him for judgment." They said, "(We choose) the soothsayer of Banu Sa'd ibn Hudhaim." He said, "Yes (agreed)." The man they had chosen lived in the border regions of Ash-Sham (the area of Ash-Sham consists of Syria and neighbouring lands). With a group of companions from his subtribe - the children of 'Abd-Manaaf - 'Abdul-Muttalib set out for the journey to Ash-Sham. Joining them on the journey was a group of people from

every subtribe of the Quraish. Between them and their destination was a vast desert land, void of any villages or townships; so the journey was not going to be an easy one. And it proved difficult indeed, for, at some point during the journey, 'Abdul-Muttalib and his companions ran out of water. They then remained thirsty for so long that they were sure that death was imminent. The other subtribes, however, did have water, but when the children of 'Abd-Manaaf asked them for some, they refused, saying, "We are in the desert, and we fear that what happened to you will happen to us (if we are too free with our water)." 'Abdul-Muttalib said to his companions, "I think that each man among you should now bury his own grave, using the strength he still has with him. Whenever a man among you dies, the others can push him into his hole and then bury him, until there remains one man, since it is better for one man to be lost (without a burial) than for the entire caravan to be lost." They said, "Good indeed is the command you have given us."

Each man among them dug his grave and then sat down, waiting for his death. But then 'Abdul-Muttalib said to them, "By Allah, for us to kill ourselves in this manner will not make us deserving of (praise) on earth, and we should not be weak like this. Perhaps Allah will provide us with water in some land (ahead of us), so prepare to move on." They were getting ready to leave, when 'Abdul-Muttalib made his camel stand up, and gushing forth from underneath its hooves was a spring of fresh water. 'Abdul-Muttalib and his companions exclaimed, "*Allahuakbar* (Allah is the Greatest)." They all drank water and filled their containers. They then invited the other subtribes of the Quraish, who, all the while, had been watching their every move. 'Abdul-Muttalib said, "Come to this water, for Allah has indeed provided us with drink." They came, drank, and filled their containers with water. They then said, "By Allah, we will never again enter into a dispute with you regarding *Zamzam*, for the One Who has given you this water to drink in this barren land, is indeed the One Who gave you *Zamzam* to drink. So return to your water rightly-guided." There being no point to go to the soothsayer of

Banu Sa'd, they all returned to Makkah, and no one thereafter argued about 'Abdul-Muttalib's right to have complete control over the *Zamzam* well.

After he related this narration, Ibn Ishaq wrote, "This is what has reached me from 'Alee ibn Abee Taalib ؓ regarding *Zamzam*."^[1] Many other narrations are related in regard to the superiority and virtues of *Zamzam* water. An example is a narration that is related in *Saheeh Muslim*; in it, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Indeed, it (*Zamzam* water) is blessed; indeed, it is *Ta'aam To'om* (i.e., just as food fills a person, *Zamzam* water fills a person who drinks it)."^[2]

Ad-Daaraqutnee and Al-Haakim related from Ibn 'Abbaas ؓ that the Prophet ﷺ said, "*Zamzam* water achieves the purpose for which it is consumed: If you drink it to seek a cure, Allah will cure you; if you drink it to make you full, Allah will make you full; if you drink it to cut off your thirst, Allah will (cut off your thirst). It is the *Hazma* of Jibreel (i.e., the effect of his striking the ground with his ankle or wing), and the drink Allah provided to Ismaa'eel." Al-Haakim declared this *Hadeeth* to be authentic. Shaikh Muhammad Abu Shohbah, may Allah have mercy on him, said, "Whatever the case may be, Al-Haafiz Ad-Dimyateer – one of the later eminent Huffaaz – ruled that the *Hadeeth*, '*Zamzam* water achieves the purpose for which it is consumed,' is authentic. And Al-Haafiz Al-'Iraaqee concurred with him on that ruling.^[3]

^[1] *As-Seerah An-Nabawiyyah* by Ibn Hishaam (1/142-155); also, *As-Siyyar Wal-Maghuazee* by Ibn Ishaq (pgs. 24, 25); and *Ad-Dalaail* by Al-Baihaqee (1/93-95). Ibn Ishaq explicitly mentioned that he heard the narration (from the next narrator), and so the chain of the narration is authentic. Also, it is corroborated by a *Mursal* narration from Az-Zuhree. The *Hadeeth* is authentic by way of Al-Baihaqee and Ibn Hishaam.

^[2] *Saheeh Muslim*, "The Virtues of the Companions"; chapter, "Some of the Virtues of Abu Dharr ؓ." *Hadeeth* number: 2473.

^[3] *Muqaddimah ibn As-Salaah*, and its Explanation by Al-Haafiz Al-'Iraaqee (pg. 13).

he People Of The Elephant

Their story is established both in the Qur'an and in the *Sunnah*, and its details are related in various history books. As for the Qur'an, Allah ﷻ said:

﴿أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِأَصْحَابِ الْفِيلِ ۝١ أَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ كَيْدَهُمْ فِي تَضَلُّيلٍ ۝٢
وَأَرْسَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ طَيْرًا أَبَابِيلَ ۝٣ تَرْمِيهِمْ بِحِجَارَةٍ مِّن سِجِّيلٍ ۝٤ فَجَعَلَهُمْ
كَعَصْفٍ مَّأْكُولٍ ۝٥﴾

"Have you (O Muhammad ﷺ) not seen how your Lord dealt with the owners of the elephant? (The elephant army which came from Yemen under the command of Abraha Al-Ashram intending to destroy the Ka'bah at Makkah). Did He not make their plot go astray? And sent against them birds, in flocks, striking them with stones of Sijjil. And made them like an empty field of stalks (of which the corn has been eaten up by cattle)." (Qur'an 105: 1-5)

And as for the *Sunnah*, it is related in *Saheeh Bukhaaree* that, when the Prophet ﷺ set out during the time of Al-Hudaibiyyah, he continued until he reached Ath-Thaniyyah – the mountain upon which is the road that descends onto the people of Makkah – but his camel knelt down, ostensibly refusing to proceed forward. The people said, *Hal! Hal! Hal*, is what one would say to a camel when it stopped in its tracks. But it remained firmly where it was. The people said, "Al-Qaswaa (the riding camel of the Prophet ﷺ) has refused to move forward!" The Prophet ﷺ said, "Al-Qaswaa has not refused, for that is not one of its characteristics. But rather He Who restrained the elephant (of Abraha) has restrained it (i.e., just as Allah ﷻ prevented the elephant of Abraha from proceeding forward, He ﷻ was preventing Al-Qaswaa from doing the same)."^[1]

^[1] *Saheeh Bukhaaree*, "The Book of Conditions"; chapter, "The Conditions of Performing *Jihaad* and Making Treaties with the People of War." *Hadeeth* number: 2731.

In *As-Seerah An-Nabawiyyah*, Abu Haatim related the story of the People of the Elephant in some detail; the following is his account (in abridged form). A king in Yemen captured and tamed the elephant that is significant to this story; that king was originally from Abyssinia, and his name was Abraha. He built a church in Sinai, and called it Al-Qulais, claiming that he would be able to make Arab pilgrims congregate at Al-Qulais instead of at the Ka'bah, in Makkah. But he felt that he first needed to do away with his competition, which meant destroying the Ka'bah, so he made an oath to go to the Ka'bah and fulfill his goal of destroying it.

One of the kings of Himyar, Duh Nafar, came out to fight Abraha; the latter defeated the former and took him as a prisoner. Upon being taken to Abraha, Dhu Nafar said, "O king, do not kill me, for keeping me alive (to help you) is better for you than killing me." Abraha spared him, though he made sure to tie him up. He then set out with his army, clearly intending to go to the Ka'bah. Along the way, when he reached the lands of Kath'am, he faced resistance from An-Nufail ibn Habeeb Al-Kath'amee and some Yemeni tribes that supported him. Abraha's army was victorious, and An-Nufail was taken captive. An-Nufail said, "O king, I am very knowledgeable about the lands of the Arabs, so don't kill me. Here are my two hands, which I use to pledge to you complete obedience from my people." Abraha spared him, and he became Abraha's new guide. When the army reached Taaif, now ever closer to Makkah, Mas'ood ibn Mu'attib and some men from the Taqheef tribe came out to meet Abraha. Mas'ood said, "O king, we are your slaves. You have no dispute with us, and what you want is not with us. What you want is nothing other than the House that is in Makkah. We will send with you one who will guide you to it." They sent one of their slaves, whose name was Abu Rughaal; but Abu Rughaal ended up being of no use to Abraha, for he died along the way at Al-Maghmas. His grave is known, and has long been a place where people go in order to pelt it with stones.

From Al-Maghmas, Abraha sent a man named Al-Aswad ibn

Maqsood to the forefront of his army. Al-Aswad and those with him were met by the dwellers of Makkah, and were able to seize 200 camels that belonged to 'Abdul-Muttalib.

Then Abraha sent Hunaatah Al-Humairee to the people of Makkah, giving him the following instructions, "Ask for the most honourable one among them; then inform him that I have not come to fight, but only to destroy this House (i.e., the Ka'bah)." After Hunaatah entered Makkah, he met 'Abdul-Muttalib ibn Haashim and said, "Verily, the king has sent me to you, to inform you that he has not come to fight, unless you fight him; rather, he comes only to destroy this House. As soon as he accomplishes his mission, he will leave you."

'Abdul-Muttalib said, "We will not fight him; we will free up all that lies between him and the house (i.e., we will not stand in his way, but will instead depart Makkah for a while). If Allah puts nothing in his way to stop him from reaching it, then, by Allah, we have no strength against him."

'Abdul-Muttalib accompanied Hunaatah back to the encampment of Abraha's army. Dhu Nafar was a friend of Abdul-Muttalib, so when the latter reached the front of the army's encampment, Dhu Nafar visited him.

"O Dhu Nafar," began 'Abdul-Muttalib, "Is there anything you can do to help us in this (affliction) that has descended upon us?"

"What help can a prisoner offer when he is not safe from being killed at any time during the morning or evening?" said Dhu Nafar. "But I will send for Anees, the stableman of the elephant. I will order him to do what he can for you with the king, and to elevate your ranking with him." Anees was then sent for and when he arrived, Dhu Nafar said to him, "This is the chief of the Quraish, the owner of Makkah's caravan, which feeds people in the plains and beasts in the mountains. The king has taken 200 of his camels. If you are able to benefit him, then do so, for he is a friend of mine."

Anees then entered upon Abraha and said, "O king! This is the

chief of the Quraish and the owner of Makkah's caravan, which feeds people in the plains and beasts in the mountains. He asks permission to enter upon you, and I hope that you permit him, for he comes showing you neither hostility nor opposition." Abraha granted permission for him to enter.

'Abdul-Muttalib was a huge, muscular, and handsome man; so when Abraha saw him, he welcomed and honoured him. Disliking both for 'Abdul-Muttalib to sit with him on his bed, and for 'Abdul-Muttalib to sit beneath him, Abraha descended to the carpet beneath the bed and sat down beside 'Abdul-Muttalib.

"O king," said 'Abdul-Muttalib, "You have taken a great deal of wealth from me, so return it to me."

"You indeed impressed me when I saw you, but I withdraw (that admiration) from you."

"And why?" asked 'Abdul-Muttalib.

"I have come to the House that is your religion and the religion of your fathers and that is your sanctuary and protection - for the purpose of destroying it. You do not speak to me about that, yet you speak to me about (a meager) 200 camels that belong to you!"

"I am the lord of these camels," said 'Abdul-Muttalib. "This House has a Lord Who will defend it."

"He would not defend it from me," said Abraha.

"Then that is your affair," said 'Abdul-Muttalib. Abraha issued a command, upon which 'Abdul-Muttalib's camels were promptly returned to him. 'Abdul-Muttalib returned to the Quraish, informed them of what was happening, and ordered them to seek shelter in the mountain passes of Makkah. From Al-Maghmas, Abraha was poised to enter Makkah. He ordered his army to reload their supplies. His elephant was brought to him, and he had it loaded with supplies while it was standing on all fours.

When they were ready to proceed towards Makkah, the elephant was prodded into marching forward, but it stood still. It almost bundled itself up and knelt to the ground. They struck it with a

pickaxe in the head, but it still refused to move even an inch forward. They tried again to make it move, but it stood there, motionless. They directed it back towards Yemen, and it raced in that direction; but no sooner did they make it face Makkah again than it stopped. The elephant then made its way to one of the mountains in that area.

As for the army, Allah ﷻ sent from the sea birds like *Balasaan* (starling birds). With each bird were three stones, two in its legs and one in its beak. The stones they carried were like chickpeas or lentils. When they flew over the army, they hurled the stones down upon them. If any person in the army was hit with a stone, he died, but not all of the people in the army were hit. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِأَصْحَابِ الْفِيلِ ۚ ① أَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ كَيْدَهُمْ فِي تَضَلُّيلٍ ۚ ② وَأَرْسَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ طَيْرًا أَبَابِيلَ ③ تَرْمِيهِمْ بِحِجَارَةٍ مِّن سِجِّيلٍ ④ فَجَعَلَهُمْ كَعَصْفٍ مَّأْكُولٍ ⑤﴾

“Have you (O Muhammad ﷺ) not seen how your Lord dealt with the owners of the elephant? (The elephant army which came from Yemen under the command of Abraha Al-Ashram intending to destroy the Ka’bah at Makkah). Did He not make their plot go astray? And sent against them birds, in flocks, striking them with stones of Sijjil (back clay). And made them like an empty field of stalks (of which the corn has been eaten up by cattle).”
(Qur’an 105: 1-5)

And Allah ﷻ sent upon Abraha a disease in his body. His soldiers fled back towards Yemen, and (their body parts) were falling off in every land (they passed through). Abraha’s fingertips began to fall off. After each fingertip fell off, it was followed by a discharge of pus and blood. When he reached Yemen, he was like a young bird among those who remained from his companions (perhaps this refers to how few they were in number). And then he died.^[1]

[1] *As-Seerah An-Nabawiyah* by Abu Haatim As-Subtee (pgs. 34-39); also refer to *As-Seerah An-Nabawiyah* by Ibn Katheer (1/pgs. 30-37).

Both Ibn Ishaq and Ibn Hishaam – may Allah have mercy on them both – related that while Abraha was marching with his army towards Makkah, ‘Abdul-Muttalib went to the *Masjid* and took hold of the ring on the door of the Ka’bah. Then, he and a group of men from the Quraish supplicated to Allah ﷻ, asking for His help against Abraha and his army. Then ‘Abdul-Muttalib let go of the ring, and headed off with his fellow tribesmen to the peaks of nearby mountains, where they intended to be on the lookout, waiting to see what Abraha was going to do once he entered Makkah. The narrator of this story then described the way in which Abraha and his army were destroyed.^[1]

Lessons and Morals taken from the Story of The Elephant

- 1) A sense of the inviolability of the Ka’bah is one of the most important of things that one should take away from this story. Even Arab polytheists from pre-Islamic times honoured and sanctified the Ka’bah. The significance that the Ka’bah had in their minds is one of the remnants of Ibraaheem’s religion that remained in Makkah even throughout the dark years of its history when polytheism was the dominant religion of its inhabitants.
- 2) To save what is sanctified and holy, one often needs to make sacrifices, which is exactly what many Arab tribes did when the Ka’bah’s sanctity, and very existence, was at stake. First, one of the kings of Himyar fought against Abraha, but was then taken captive. And then An-Nufail ibn Habeeb Al-Khath’amee, along with other tribes from Yemen, fought Abraha, though they were of course no challenge against his huge army. They knew they were no challenge, but the point is that they still fought to preserve what they valued.
- 3) The traitors of a nation ultimately bring disgrace upon themselves. Some Arabs volunteered to be Abraha’s spies;

^[1] *As-Seerah An-Nabawiyyah* by Ibn Hishaam, along with the commentary of Abu Dharr Al-Khushanee (1/pg. 84-91).

others agreed to guide him to the Ka'bah, so that he could then destroy it. Such people are cursed in this life and in the Hereafter. Consider the example of Abu Rughaal, whose grave has become a symbol of treachery. Throughout the centuries, people have felt hatred for him in their hearts. And whenever someone passes by his grave, he pelts it with stones.

- 4) 'Abdul-Muttalib said, "We will not fight him; we will free up all that lies between him and the house (i.e., we will not stand in his way, but will instead depart Makkah for a while). If Allah puts nothing in his way to stop him from reaching it, then, by Allah, we have no strength against him." This venerable sage from pre-Islamic times provided clear insight into the reality of the war that takes place between Allah ﷻ and His enemies. No matter how strong and numerous those enemies are, they cannot withstand, not even for the smallest, minutest fraction of a nanosecond, the Might and Power of Allah ﷻ. It is He ﷻ Who grants life, and He can take it away at any moment He pleases. Al-Qaasimee (may Allah have mercy on him) related that Al-Qaashaanee (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "The story of the People of the Elephant is famously known, and it took place near the era of the Messenger ﷺ. Their story is one of the signs of Allah's power and of the effects of His wrath upon those who are brazen enough to violate what He has made sanctified."
- 5) It is important to understand that Arabs honoured Allah's Inviolable House - the Ka'bah - which Allah ﷻ has taken upon Himself to preserve and protect from the harm of evildoers; furthermore, and this is very significant to understand the history of those times, they honoured the Quraish. They would say about the Quraish, "They are the people of Allah. May Allah fight on their behalf and be sufficient for them against their enemies." That veneration and honour was a sign from Allah ﷻ, and a prelude to the sending of a Prophet ﷺ to Makkah, one who would come and purify the Ka'bah from idols, and return to it its high ranking and significance.

- 6) Many scholars – such as Al-Maawardee and Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allah have mercy on them both – maintain that the story of the elephant is one of the signs of the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ. The events of the story point to the advent of Muhammad ﷺ, who was in his mother’s womb when they occurred; he ﷺ was born 50 days later.

As the Prophet’s birth approached, many signs occurred that affirmed his Prophethood and blessedness; one of the greatest of those signs was what happened to Abraha and his army. How so? First, had the Quraish fought Abraha and lost the battle, they would have been taken as slaves and prisoners. But Allah ﷻ destroyed Abraha, thus protecting the Prophet ﷺ from being born a slave. Second, based on their beliefs and practices, the Quraish did not deserve to be protected from the army of the elephant; they weren’t from the People of the Book; rather, they were idol worshippers who were far astray from the truth. When it came to protecting Makkah, what was important was honouring the Ka’bah and paving the way for the Prophet ﷺ.

When Arabs learned of what Allah ﷻ did with the Army of the Elephant, they felt awe and veneration for Makkah, and they treated the Quraish with greater honour than ever before.

Ibn Taymiyyah – may Allah have mercy on him – said, “(The events that took place during Abraha’s attempted attack on Makkah) occurred in the year during which the Prophet ﷺ was born. Those who lived beside the House (i.e., the Ka’bah) were polytheists – they worshipped idols. The religion of the Christians (which was the religion of Abraha) was better than their religion; therefore, this sign (the miraculous destruction of Abraha’s army) did not take place for the sake of those who lived beside the Ka’bah at that time, but instead for the sake of the House itself, or for the sake of the Prophet ﷺ, who was born that year beside the House, or for both the House and the Prophet ﷺ. Whatever the case, it was from the signs of his

Prophethood.”^[1]

And while he was discussing the story of the elephant, Ibn Katheer – may Allah have mercy on him – said, “This was a sign and a prelude to the sending of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, for he – according to the most famous of accounts – was born in that year. It was as if it was being said to the Quraish: ‘O people of the Quraish, Allah did not help you against the people of Abyssinia because you are better than them; rather, He ﷻ (destroyed Abraha’s army) to preserve the Ancient House (i.e., the Ka’bah), which He ﷻ will honour with the sending of the illiterate Prophet, Muhammad – O Allah, send prayers and salutations upon him – who is the Seal of the Prophets.”^[2]

- 7) Allah ﷻ did not permit the People of the Book – Abraha and his fellow Christians – to destroy the Ka’bah and take control of the holy city of Makkah, even though its sanctity was being defiled by polytheism. According to Allah’s Decree, Makkah was intended to be free from the rule of a tyrant, so that new and correct beliefs could develop and thrive in an atmosphere of relative freedom. Such was Allah’s planning for His House and religion, even before anyone knew that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was going to be born in that same year.

In remembering the story of Abraha, we should feel consolation and hope when we see the imperial designs of those who greedily look at our lands – and especially our holy lands – with hopes of conquest. Allah ﷻ protected His House from the People of the Book when Makkah was inhabited by polytheists; now both Makkah and Al-Madeenah are inhabited by Muslims, and so He certainly will – *In Sha Allah* – defend and protect both holy lands from evildoers.

- 8) News of Abraha’s miraculous demise spread all over Arabia;

^[1] *Al-Jawaab As-Saheeh* (4/122).

^[2] *Tafseer Ibn Katheer* (4/548, 549).

Arabs considered the event to be so important that they dated their calendar based on it. They would say, "Such and such happened in the Year of the Elephant," or, "Such and such happened 8 years after the Year of the Elephant." The Year of the Elephant corresponds to the year 570 of the Christian calendar. Of course, "the Year of the Elephant" did not last very long as the standard upon which Arabs based their calendar; with the advent of Islam, the new standard became the migration of the Prophet ﷺ to Al-Madeenah.

From The Birth Of The Noble Prophet ﷺ Until The *Fudool* Confederacy

The Lineage Of The Prophet ﷺ

Just as he ﷺ is the most complete of people in terms of character, the Prophet ﷺ is superior to all other human beings in terms of his noble lineage. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Verily, Allah - 'Azza wa-Jall (the Possessor of might and majesty) - chose Ismaa'eel from the children of Ibraaheem; Kinaanah from the children of Ismaa'eel; Quraish from Kinaanah; the children of Haashim from Quraish; and me from the children of Haashim."^[1]

Imam Bukhaaree, may Allah have mercy on him - mentioned the lineage of the Prophet ﷺ (keep in mind that 'ibn' means, 'son of'): "He is Abul-Qaasim Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah ibn 'Abdul-Muttalib ibn Haashim ibn 'Abd-Manaaf ibn Qusai ibn Kilaab ibn Murrâh ibn Ka'ab ibn Luaiy ibn Ghaalib ibn Faihr ibn Maalik ibn An-Nadar ibn Kinaanah ibn Khuzaimah ibn Mudrikah ibn Ilyâas ibn Mudar ibn Nizaar ibn Ma'ad ibn 'Adnaan."^[2]

In *Sharhus-Sunnah*, Al-Bagawee mentioned the Prophet's lineage up until 'Adnaan, and then said, "Beyond 'Adnaan, his lineage is

^[1] *Saheeh Muslim*, "The Book of Virtues"; chapter, "The Superiority of the Prophet's Lineage." *Hadeeth* number: 2776.

^[2] *Saheeh Bukhaaree*, "The Virtues of the *Ansaar*"; chapter, "The Sending of the Prophet ﷺ." *Hadeeth* number: 3851.

not correctly memorized.”^[1] ‘Urwah ibn Az-Zubair ؓ said, “The people we have found who say that they know who is beyond ‘Adnaan, are only guessing.”^[2]

Ibn Al-Qayyim mentioned the Prophet’s lineage until ‘Adnaan and then said, “(The Prophet’s) lineage until here is known to be correct and is agreed upon by genealogists, so there is no disagreement whatsoever. As for what is beyond ‘Adnaan, there is difference of opinion. Yet they (genealogists) unanimously agree that ‘Adnaan is from the direct line of Ismaa’eel ؑ.”^[3]

And Ibn Sa’d wrote in his *Tabaqaat*: “We refrain (from claiming any knowledge about the lineage of the Prophet ﷺ) between ‘Adnaan and Ismaa’eel ؑ.” Adh-Dhahabee said, “Adnaan is from the children (i.e., from the direct line) of Ismaa’eel ibn Ibraaheem ؑ, and this is unanimously agreed upon by the people (i.e., by historians and genealogists), but they differ about those grandfathers (of the Prophet ﷺ) that are between ‘Adnaan and Ismaa’eel ؑ.”^[4]

Men with noble lineages have throughout history been accorded with special honour. Generally speaking, a person with noble lineage is not denied the right to lead and to have authority, but people question the right of a person of low lineage to be a leader – a king, a president, an emperor, etc. Since the Prophet ﷺ was being prepared for Prophethood, Allah ﷻ blessed him with a noble lineage, thus making it easier for people to accept and follow him.

The Prophet ﷺ indeed possesses a most wonderful lineage. He ﷺ is from the direct line of both Ismaa’eel ؑ and Ibraaheem ؑ. Furthermore, he ﷺ is the answer to Ibraaheem’s supplication; he ﷺ said about himself, “I am the supplication of my father Ibraaheem (i.e., the answer to his supplication), and the glad

^[1] *Sharhus-Sunnah* (13/193).

^[2] *Ibn Sa’d* (1/58).

^[3] *Zaad Al-Ma’ad* (1/71).

^[4] *As-Seerah An-Nabawiyyah* by Adh-Dhahabee (pg. 1).

tidings of my brother 'Eesa (Jesus)."^[1] It is most often the case that people who are blessed with noble lineages aspire for higher goals and aims, and turn away from base desires; and of course, this was especially true of Prophets ﷺ and Messengers ﷺ.

The first narration mentioned in this section, as well as other similar narrations, points to the fact that Allah ﷻ favoured Arabs above all other peoples, and the Quraish in particular above all other tribes. If one loves the Prophet ﷺ, then one should, by extension, love the people to whom he was sent and the tribe among whom he was born. That love should be felt not because of their race, but because of a simple reality: Every *Qurashee* (a member of the Quraish) Arab was blessed by being related to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. This does not mean that we should love all individuals among the Quraish, nor does it run contrary to the reality that many members of the Quraish and many Arabs disbelieved in Islam. For as soon as one of them deviated from the truth and disbelieved in Allah ﷻ, the true relation between him and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ became destroyed and any blood relation between them was taken out of consideration - and the same of course applies to present-day Arabs and descendants of the Quraish.

'Abdullah Ibn 'A dul- uttalib's Marriage To Aaminah Bint Wa b, And Aaminah's Dream

'Abdullah was one of 'Abdul-Muttalib's most beloved sons. 'Abdullah was about to be slaughtered at one point during his youth (the history of which is not mentioned in this work), but he was spared and his father paid 100 camels for his ransom. 'Abdullah got married to Aaminah bint Wahb ibn 'Abd-Manaaf ibn Zuhrah ibn Kilaab, whose lineage was very noble indeed.

Either before the Prophet's birth or shortly afterwards (historical accounts differ in this regard), 'Abdullah died and was buried in Al-Macleenah, alongside his uncles from the Banu 'Adee ibn An-

^[1] *Al-Haakim* (2/600).

Najjaar clan. He had gone to Ash-Sham (Syria and surrounding regions) for a business trip, and death overtook him in Al-Madeenah, during his return journey; but he had already impregnated his wife. And so it was as if it was being said to him: "Your mission in life is complete; as for this pure child you leave behind, Allah will, with His Wisdom and Mercy, take care of him and prepare him for the task of taking mankind out of darkness and bringing them into the light."

The marriage of 'Abdullah to Aaminah was not the beginning of the Prophet's affair. When the Prophet ﷺ was once asked about the beginning of his affair, he ﷺ said, "I am the supplication of my father Ibraaheem (i.e., the answer to his supplication) and the glad tidings of my brother 'Eesa. And my mother saw (in a dream) that light came out of her, light that illuminated the castles of Ash-Sham (Ash-Sham refers to the region of Syria and neighbouring lands)."^[1]

The supplication of Ibraaheem ؑ is related in this Verse of the Qur'an:

﴿رَبَّنَا وَأَنْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ
وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١٢٩﴾﴾

"Our Lord! Send amongst them a Messenger of their own (and indeed Allah answered their invocation by sending Muhammad ﷺ), who shall recite unto them Your Verses and instruct them in the Book (this Qur'an) and Al-Hikmah (full knowledge of the Islamic laws and jurisprudence or wisdom or Prophethood, etc.), and sanctify them. Verily! You are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise." (Qur'an 2: 129)

And the glad tidings of 'Eesa ؑ are mentioned in this Verse:

^[1] Ahmad (5/262), Al-Haakim (2/600), and Mujma' Az-Zawaa'id (8/222). Imam Ahmad's chain of this narration is *Hasan* (acceptable), and other corroborating narrations strengthen (its grading). Al-Haakim said, "Its chain is authentic, though neither of them (i.e., Bukhaaree and Muslim) related it (in their *Saheeh* compilations)"; Adh-Dhahabee concurred with his grading of the *Hadeeth*.

﴿وَإِذْ قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ يَبْنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ
مِنَ النُّورِ وَمُبَشِّرًا بِرَسُولٍ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِي اسْمُهُ أَحْمَدٌ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ قَالُوا هَذَا
سِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٦﴾﴾

“And (remember) when ‘Eesa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), said: “O Children of Israel! I am the Messenger of Allah unto you confirming the Taurat [(Torah) which came] before me, and giving glad tidings of a Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad. But when he (Ahmad, i.e., Muhammad ﷺ) came to them with clear proofs, they said: “This is plain magic.” (Qur’an 61: 6)

In the above-mentioned *Hadeeth*, the Prophet ﷺ said, “And my mother saw (in a dream) that light came out of her, light that illuminated the castles of Ash-Sham (Ash-Sham refers to the region of Syria and neighbouring lands).” Commenting on these words, Ibn Rajab said, “The coming out of this light at the time of his birth is an indication of the light that he ﷺ was to come with, that the people of earth were to be guided by, and that was going to remove the darkness of *Shirk* (polytheism, to associate partners with Allah in worship).” Allah ﷻ said:

﴿يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ كَثِيرًا مِمَّا
كُنْتُمْ تُخْفُونَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَعْفُو عَنْ كَثِيرٍ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ
مِنَ اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿١٥﴾ يَهْدِي بِهِ اللَّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ
رِضْوَانَهُ سُبُلَ السَّلَامِ وَيُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِهِ
وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿١٦﴾﴾

“O people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians)! Now has come to you Our Messenger (Muhammad ﷺ) explaining to you much of that which you used to hide from the Scripture and passing over (i.e., leaving out without explaining) much. Indeed, there has come to you from Allah a light (Prophet Muhammad ﷺ) and a plain Book (this Qur’an). Wherewith Allah guides all those who

seek His Good Pleasure to ways of peace, and He brings them out of darkness by His Will unto light and guides them to a Straight Way (Islamic Monotheism)." (Qur'an 5: 15, 16)

Ibn Katheer said, "The specific mention of Ash-Sham as being the place where his light shall appear points to how Islam will have a stable and firm footing in the lands of Ash-Sham. In the end times (i.e., just before the end of this world), Ash-Sham will be a stronghold of Islam and its adherents, and it is there that 'Eesa (Jesus) ibn Maryam ﷺ will descend - in Damascus, at the white minaret on its eastern side. It is related both in *Saheeh Bukhaaree* and *Saheeh Muslim* that the Prophet ﷺ said, "A group from my nation will continue to remain successful upon the truth; they will not be harmed by those who forsake them, nor by those who oppose them; (they will remain upon that state) until Allah's command comes (i.e., a gentle, good wind that will take the souls of all believers), and they will still be upon that state." In *Saheeh Bukhaaree*, the following is included in the narration: "And they are in Ash-Sham."^[1]

The Birth Of The Prophet ﷺ

Scholars agree that the Prophet ﷺ was born on a Monday, and most scholars maintain that he was born after 12 nights had passed from the month of Rabee'ul-Awwal. Furthermore, scholars agree that he was born during the Year of the Elephant. As for the location of his birth, the Prophet ﷺ was born in the house of Abu Taalib, in the mountain pass of Banu Haashim.

His Wet Nurses

The wet nurse of the Prophet ﷺ was Umm Aiman Barakah Al-Habashiyyah, who was the female slave of his father, 'Abdullah. The first woman to breast-feed the Prophet ﷺ was Thuwaibah, the female slave of Abu Lahab. Zainab bint Abu Salamah ﷺ

^[1] Refer to *Tafseer Ibn Katheer* (1/184). Bukhaaree related this *Hadeeth* in his *Saheeh*, in "The Book of Virtues." *Hadeeth* numbers: 3640 and 3641. Bukhaaree also related in another book of his *Saheeh*: *Adhering to the Qur'an and Sunnah*. *Hadeeth* number: 7311.

related that Umm Habeebah ؓ informed her that she once said to the Prophet ﷺ, "O Messenger of Allah, marry my sister, the daughter of Abu Sufyaan." Surprised that she would want him to have another wife – since that ran contrary to the nature of women – the Prophet ﷺ said, "And would you love for that (to happen)?" She ؓ said, "Yes, I am not alone [as things stand (i.e., as things stand now, I still have to share you with other wives)], but the person I would love most to share with me in goodness is my sister." The Prophet ﷺ said, "Verily, that is not permissible for me," referring to the fact that it is not permissible for a man to be married to two sisters at the same time. She ؓ said, "Verily, we are told that you want to marry the daughter of Abu Salamah." The Prophet ﷺ asked, "The daughter of Umm Salamah?" She said, "Yes." The Prophet ﷺ said, "Had she not been my *Rabeebah* (the daughter of my wife – one that is born from another man) in my household, she would (still) not be lawful to me (so there are two reasons why it was not lawful for him ﷺ to marry her). She is the daughter of my brother through breastfeeding, for Thuwaibah breast-fed both Abu Salamah and me."^[1]

As for Umm Aiman, she was a maid who belonged to 'Abdullah ibn 'Abdul-Muttalib, and she was from Abyssinia. When the Prophet ﷺ was born, and after his father had died, Umm Aiman nursed the Prophet ﷺ. Then, when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ grew older, he ﷺ freed her and married her off to Zaid ibn Haarithah ؓ. The Prophet ﷺ died first, and then Umm Aiman ؓ died five months later.^[2]

Haleemah As-Sa'diyyah ؓ

'Abdullah ibn Ja'far ؓ said, "When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was born, Haleemah bint Al-Haarith came among a group of

^[1] *Saheeh Bukhaaree*, "The Book of Marriage"; chapter, "And Your Mothers From Breast-feeding." *Hadeeth* number: 5101.

^[2] *Saheeh Muslim*, "The Book of Jihaad"; chapter, "The *Muhaajiroon* Return Gifts, such as Trees and Fruits, to the *Ansaar*, Once They no Longer Needed Them (i.e., Those Gifts)." *Hadeeth* number: 1771.

women from (the tribe of) Banu Sa'd ibn Bakr, all of whom were looking for infants in Makkah." It was common during those times for women who lived in the city to give up their infants for a while to women who lived in the desert. Those women were wetnurses; they would rear and breastfeed the infants for a number of months or years, depending on the child. The theory behind this practice was that children who were raised in the desert were at a safe distance from the diseases that commonly afflicted city-dwelling people; furthermore, in the desert, a child would grow up independent and strong, both physically and mentally; and he would learn pure, grammatically correct Arabic, and avoid picking up the slang that was often spoken in the city. Haleemah ؓ herself related the rest of the narration:

"I left among the first group of women, riding a female donkey – which was *Qamraa* (a colour that is close to either green or white and that contains some mixture of brownness or dullness in it) – that belonged to me. With me was my husband, Al-Haarith ibn 'Abdul-'Uzzah, one of the children of Sa'd ibn Bakr, who became a part of the Banu Naadirah clan. Our female donkey had become afflicted with bloody wounds (because of the length of the journey). I also brought along an old camel, but by Allah, it would not give forth even a drop of milk. It was a year of drought: people went hungry, to the point that they became very weak and emaciated. Also with me was my son, who, by Allah, did not sleep at night (due to hunger). And I did not even have anything in my hand with which I could distract him. Yet I hoped for rain (and relief). We had sheep, and so we wanted rain. After we arrived in Makkah, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was presented to each one of us, and each one of us disliked (taking) him. We said, 'He is an orphan, and it is the father who is kind and generous to the wet nurse. (In the case of this orphan) what can we expect his mother, uncle, or grandfather to do for us?' Each one of my female companions took an infant (except for me). When I found no other child, I returned to him (the Prophet ﷺ) and took him. By Allah, the only reason I took him was that I could find no other infant. I said to my companion (husband), 'By Allah, I will indeed take this

orphan who is from the children of 'Abdul-Muttalib; perhaps Allah will benefit us through him, and I will not return with my female companions without having taken anything.' He said, 'You are correct (in your decision).'

And so I took him, and returned with him to the place where we had made camp. By Allah, during the very same evening that I brought him with me to the campsite, my breasts gave forth milk, so that I was able to quench his thirst, as well as the thirst of his brother (i.e., her son, and his brother from breast-feeding). His father (again, his father from breast-feeding, and not his blood father) stood up beside the old camel we came with, and he touched it. It was full with milk! And so he milked it. He gave me milk, (and I drank) until my thirst became quenched, and then he drank until his thirst became quenched. He then said, 'O Haleemah, you do realize, by Allah, that we have taken a blessed soul. Allah has given us through that soul what we could not have hoped for.' All of us being full, we spent a good and blessed night. Previously, we could not sleep at night with our own child.

Then my companions and I set out for the return journey to our lands. I mounted my *Al-Qamraa* female donkey, and I carried him (the Prophet ﷺ) with me. By the One Who has the soul of Haleemah in His Hand, I raced past the rest of the caravan; the women exclaimed, 'Hold on for us! Is this the female donkey that you set out with (at the beginning of our journey)?' I said, 'Yes.' They said, 'But it had bloody wounds (on its legs) when we arrived, so what happened to it (to cause this change)?' I said, 'By Allah, I am carrying upon it a blessed boy.'

So we continued our journey, and with the passing of every day Allah ﷻ increased us in goodness. When we arrived (home), the lands were afflicted with drought. Our flocks would go out for grazing, and would then return. The sheep of (the) Banu Sa'd (tribe) returned hungry; meanwhile, my sheep returned with their stomachs full and with plenty of milk in them. We would milk (our sheep) and (then) drink. They (the rest of the tribe) would

say, 'What is it with the sheep of Al-Haarith ibn 'Abdul-'Uzzah, and the sheep of Haleemah: they come back full and with plenty of milk in them. Woe upon you (they would say to one another)! Go out to pasture where the sheep of their flock go out to pasture.' They would do so, but as would happen before, their flocks would return hungry; meanwhile, my flock would also return as before (full and with plentiful milk).

And the way in which the Prophet ﷺ grew was very different from the way in which all other children grow: "He grew in a single day the normal growth of an entire year. When he was fully two years old, both his father (i.e., his father from breast-feeding) and I took him to Makkah. We said, 'By Allah, as long as we are able to keep him, we will never part from him.' When we met with his mother, we said, 'By Allah, we have never seen a boy who is more blessed than he is, and we fear upon him the plague and diseases that are rampant in Makkah (Aaminah herself was sick at the time), so let us take him back with us, at least until you are cured from your sickness.' We continued to persist until she finally gave her permission. We took him back with us and stayed (in our homeland) for 3 or 4 months. While he and his brother (i.e., her son, and his brother from breast-feeding) were playing behind the houses (in the area) among a group of small goats and sheep that belonged to us, his brother suddenly (left him and) came racing back to us, and said, 'Verily, (something has happened to) my brother from the Quraish! Two men, both wearing white garments, came to him, took him, and made him lie down. Then, they split open his stomach.'

His father and I went racing outside, and when we reached him, we found him to be standing up; the colour of his face had completely changed. When he saw us, he raced towards us, crying. Both his father and I embraced him, and tightly held him close to us. (One of us said,) 'What is the matter with you, may my mother and father be sacrificed for you?' He said, 'Two men came to me and made me lie down; they split open my stomach, put something with (or in) it, and then returned it as it was before.'

His father said, 'By Allah, I am sure that my son has become afflicted (with madness or something similar); let us return to his family, and give him back to them, before something we really fear happens to him.' And so we took him back to his mother, who, upon seeing us, reproached us for what we were doing and said, 'What made you bring him back before I asked you to do so? Before, you were indeed bent upon restraining him among yourselves.' We said, 'Nothing is the matter. Allah has decreed an end to his breast-feeding, and we are happy with what we see (in terms of his health, etc).'

She said, 'Something has happened with you, so tell me about it?' She did not leave us alone until we told her what had happened. She then said, 'No! By Allah, Allah would not do that with him. Indeed, my son has a great purpose ahead of him. Shall I not inform you about him? I carried him (in my womb), and by Allah, I never carried a load that was lighter and easier upon me than he was. Then, when I carried him, I was made to see light come out of me, light that illuminated the necks of camels in Basra (or she said, 'illuminated the castles of Basra'). Then I delivered him and by Allah, he did not come out as other children do; he came out, supporting himself with his hands on the ground; and his head was raised towards the sky.' She took him, and we departed."^[1]

Lessons and Benefits from This Story

- 1) The student of *Seerah* sees signs and manifestations of the Prophet's blessedness throughout his life; during the Prophet's infancy, Haleemah رضي الله عنها greatly benefited from his blessedness. Once she took the Prophet ﷺ into her life, she began to produce a great deal of milk, though previously her

^[1] Abu Ya'laa, in *Mujma' Az-Zawaaid* (8/221), and *As-Seerah An-Nabawiyah*, with the Explanation of Al-Khushanee (1/214), by way of Ibn Ishaq. In the narration of *As-Seerah*, Ibn Ishaq explicitly said that he heard the narration (from another narrator). Commenting on this *Hadeeth*, Adh-Dhahabee said in *As-Seerah An-Nabawiyah* (pg. 8), "This *Hadeeth* has a good chain, and there are corroborating narrations that strengthen (its grading); therefore, based on those corroborating narrations, the *Hadeeth* is *Hasan* (acceptable)."

breasts did not have enough milk in them for even a single child – her son. Haleemah’s child would cry a lot, thus preventing his mother from sleeping at night, a situation that changed after Haleemah ﷺ took custody of the Prophet ﷺ. Having plentiful milk to drink, both son and mother began to spend comfortable and relaxed nights. The Prophet’s blessedness also became manifested in the sheep that belonged to Haleemah ﷺ and Haarith ﷺ, for they began to flow with plentiful milk, though previously their udders would remain dry and empty.

- 2) What Allah ﷻ chooses for his obedient slaves is best for them. Allah ﷻ chose an orphan for Haleemah ﷺ, though she did not want to take the infant, and did so in the end only because she could find no other. And, of course, Allah’s choice was supremely best for her. On the very day she took the Prophet ﷺ with her, she experienced the positive results of that choice. In this there is a lesson for every Muslim: Not knowing what is in one’s best interest in the long run, one should be content in his heart with what Allah ﷻ decrees for him; and one should not regret what passes one by in this world; or in other words, one should not regret missing out on what Allah ﷻ did not decree for one to have.
- 3) To maintain the natural purity that a child is born upon, to promote correct development of both mind and body, city-dwelling Arabs would send their children to be raised, in the first few critical years of their life, in the desert. Commenting on this practice, Shaikh Muhammad Al-Ghazaalee – may Allah have mercy on him – said, “It is a wretched thing indeed that our children live in constricted apartments, within closely attached and crowded buildings – as if each building contains boxes to confine and enclose those that are within them. Such a life prevents them from experiencing the wonderful joy of breathing good and fresh air. To be sure, the nervousness and stress that have accompanied the development of modern civilizations have partly to do with people being far away from

natural settings, and being immersed in artificiality. We should certainly admire the attitude that the people of Makkah took towards the desert, in terms of making its spacious land the first playground of their children. Many specialists in education feel that a natural environment should be the first classroom setting for infants, so that their perceptions of the world become in harmony with the realities of the universe in which they live. It appears, however, that (given our present-day circumstances and mind-sets) achieving that would be most difficult indeed."

In the desert land of the Banu Sa'd tribe, the Prophet ﷺ learned fluent, pure Arabic; later on in his life, he ﷺ became the most eloquent speaker of the language. Once, Abu Bakr ؓ said to him, "O Messenger of Allah, I have not seen anyone who is more eloquent than you are." The Prophet ﷺ replied, "And what would prevent me (from being so), for I am from the Quraish, and I was nursed (and raised) among (the) Banu Sa'd (tribe)."

- 4) The incident of the splitting of the Prophet's chest certainly deserves more than a passing mention or thought. What happened on that day was from the signs of Prophethood, and was a clear proof that Allah ﷻ chose Muhammad ﷺ for a very important mission in life.

Imam Muslim related in his *Saheeh* the story of the Prophet's chest being split open. In Imam Muslim's narration, Anas ibn Maalik ؓ said, "While the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was playing with some other boys, Jibreel ؑ came to him, took him, forced him to the ground, and split him open, revealing his heart. Jibreel extracted his heart, removed from it a blood clot, and said, 'This is the portion of *Shaitaan* (the Devil) in you.' He then washed the heart with *Zamzam* water in a basin made of gold. He then joined the heart together, and returned it to its place. The children hurried off to his mother - i.e., his mother from breast-feeding. They said to her, 'Verily, Muhammad has been killed.' They went to him and found that his colour had changed (though he was otherwise

fine)." Anas ؓ said, "I used to see the marks of that stitching on his chest."^[1]

Without a doubt, purification from *Shaitaan's* influence was more than an early sign of Prophethood; it was also preparation for protecting the Prophet ﷺ from evil and from worshipping other than Allah ﷻ. Only pure Islamic Monotheism was to remain in his heart. The above-mentioned incident served its purpose, for even prior to receiving revelation, the Prophet ﷺ never bowed down to an idol or perpetrated a major sin, even though polytheism and evil deeds were practiced on a widespread scale among the Quraish.

While discussing the incident during which the Prophet's chest was split open, Dr. Al-Bootee pointed out that, "It appears that the wisdom behind it was both to announce the importance of the Prophet ﷺ and to prepare him at a very early age for *Al-'Ismah* (protection from major sins, from making a mistake when conveying the message of Islam, and so on) and revelation. Physical means were employed (for that preparation) to make it easier for people to have faith in him and to believe his message. Therefore, the incident involved spiritual purification, but was manifested in a physical, tangible manner" The removal of the blood clot purified the Prophet ﷺ from the immaturity, foolishness, and recklessness of youth. The incident also shows us the degree to which Allah ﷻ protected the Prophet ﷺ and prevented *Shaitaan* from having any influence over him whatsoever.

The Death Of His Mother, And Then His Living Under The Care Of His Grandfather And Uncle

Aaminah died when the Prophet ﷺ was six years old, and like her husband before her, she died during a journey. She had traveled to see her uncles from the Banu 'Adee ibn Najjaar tribe, and the purpose of her visit was to show them her son. She died on the way back in a place called Al-Abwaa, which is situated somewhere

^[1] *Saheeh Muslim*, "The Book of *Eemaan* (faith)"; chapter, "The Night Journey of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to the Heavens." *Hadeeth* number: 162.

between Makkah and Al-Madeenah, and she was buried there as well.

Once she died, it was 'Abdul-Muttalib who became guardian and caretaker of the Prophet ﷺ. 'Abdul-Muttalib loved the Prophet ﷺ a great deal and preferred him to even his own sons – who were the uncles of the Prophet ﷺ. Being in awe of their father, the Prophet's uncles did not dare sit on his carpet; in fact, no one dared to sit with him on his carpet. Yet the Prophet ﷺ would do so, though his uncles would try to make him sit somewhere else. Abdul-Muttalib took the Prophet's side in the matter; in fact, he encouraged the Prophet ﷺ to sit alongside him, seeing goodness in him and sensing that he was going to grow up to do great things. When 'Abdul-Muttalib would send the Prophet ﷺ on an errand, he would perform it and then return in a short while; but one day, 'Abdul-Muttalib sent him to search out for stray camels, and he ﷺ was delayed during the performance of that task. When the Prophet's absence became prolonged, 'Abdul-Muttalib began to worry a great deal, and even felt very sad, for he loved his grandson a great deal. As soon as the Prophet ﷺ returned with the camels, 'Abdul-Muttalib said to him, "O my son, just as a woman does, I have become sad on your account – with sadness (that is so extreme) that (it) will never leave me."^[1]

After two years of his guardianship had passed, 'Abdul-Muttalib was bidding farewell to the world, and, upon learning of his imminent death, ordered that his son, 'Abu Taalib, should be the new guardian of the Prophet ﷺ. So at the age of 8, the Prophet ﷺ yet again had a new guardian, one that loved him as much, or almost as much, as did his previous one.

Allah ﷻ decreed that His Messenger ﷺ should be raised as an orphan. Thus, as a child, the Prophet ﷺ did not have parents who spoiled him or riches that made for a soft and easy upbringing. The Prophet ﷺ faced many calamities even as a child; in addition to not having ever met his father, he first lost his mother and then

^[1] Related by At-Tabaraanee in *Al-Kabeer* (5524). In *Saheeh As-Seerah An-Nabawiyyah* (pg. 56), Ibraaheem Al-'Alee ruled that the *Hadeeth* is authentic.

his grandfather. Such hardships helped make him sensitive to the pains of others, for sadness purifies the soul from hardness and arrogance and increases it in softness and humbleness.

His parents died in their twenties not because they were weak in their physical makeup, but rather because Allah ﷻ caused them to die once they had fulfilled the task for which they were created, so that every orphan can find comfort and consolation in the early history of the Prophet ﷺ. For despite being an orphan, the Prophet ﷺ had lofty manners and characteristics. As an orphan, the Prophet ﷺ developed a high level of determination, so that he depended upon no human being in his affairs. That his parents could have no influence on his mission and that no human being could interfere in his training and development are some of the reasons why the Prophet ﷺ was born an orphan. Since it was Allah ﷻ Alone Who took care of the Prophet's training and upbringing, the Prophet ﷺ was not influenced in the least by the beliefs and traditions of pre-Islamic ignorance. Allah ﷻ provided the Prophet ﷺ with the care of his grandfather and uncle to facilitate his material welfare; but as for his spiritual welfare and his moral training, it was Allah ﷻ Who was taking care of him.

Working As A Shepherd

Being of noble lineage does not guarantee financial stability, a fact that Abu Taalib knew all too well. When the Prophet ﷺ was still young, Abu Taalib was going through a financial crisis; he had many mouths to feed, and business wasn't going so well. To help his uncle get through those hard times, the Prophet ﷺ worked as a shepherd. In an authentic *Hadeeth*, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Every Prophet that Allah sent herded sheep (at one time or another during his life)." The Companions ﷺ said, "And even you?" He ﷺ said, "Yes, I herded them upon Qaraareet (Ibn Hajar said that scholars mention two possible meanings of Qaraareet: it is either a place in Makkah, or it is a portion of a dinar or dirham, in which case the Prophet ﷺ was mentioning his wages) for the

people of Makkah.”^[1]

Working as a shepherd allowed the Prophet ﷺ to work in peace and quiet, to enjoy the beauty of the desert, and to contemplate the wonders and beauty of Allah’s creation. Through his work, a shepherd picks up and develops many wonderful qualities, qualities that the Prophet ﷺ needed to lead his nation. Here are some of those qualities:

- 1) Patience: A shepherd is busy taking care of his flock from the rising of the sun until nightfall. Since sheep take so long to graze, a shepherd needs to be very patient in dealing with his flock. Likewise, a leader also has to be patient with his people, albeit for different reasons.

Castle life, comfort, and luxury – a shepherd knows none of these things. All day long, he is outside in very hot weather, and extremely hot weather if he is working in the Arabian Peninsula. He therefore needs plentiful water to quench his constant thirst, and all that he is able to find is coarse food. In short, the shepherd’s life is a hard life, and so he must be very patient in coping with his daily hardships.

- 2) Humbleness: The very nature of a shepherd’s work requires him to be humble. Serving sheep, supervising the delivery of a baby sheep, guarding sheep from predators, and sleeping in close proximity to the flock – these are the day-to-day duties of a shepherd. Being in close contact with his flock throughout the day, a shepherd might sometimes be sprayed with urine or come into contact with dung. But none of this perturbs the shepherd, and so as each day of labor passes, pride and arrogance are driven further away from his heart, and humbleness becomes more and more his defining characteristic. It is related in *Saheeh Muslim* that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “He who has an atom’s weight (or the weight of a small ant) of pride in his heart does not enter

^[1] *Saheeh Bukhaaree*, “The Book of Hiring Out”; chapter, “Herding Sheep for Qaraareet.” *Hadeeth* number: 2262.

Paradise." A man said, "Verily, a man loves for his clothing to be nice, and for his shoes to be nice (so is that pride?)." The Prophet ﷺ said, "Verily, Allah is beautiful and loves beauty. Pride is denying (and turning away from) the truth, and looking down upon people (deeming oneself to be superior to them)."^[1]

- 3) Bravery: Because of a shepherd's job description, his natural enemies are all predatory animals. To stave off the attacks of wild animals upon his flock, a shepherd certainly has to be very brave.
- 4) Mercy and compassion: Like human beings, sheep are prone to sickness, disease, and accidents. And it is their shepherd who must act as their caretaker and doctor while they are convalescing. If one is merciful to animals – as is a shepherd – then it is more than likely that he will be even more merciful towards other human beings, particularly so if he is a Messenger ﷺ sent by Allah ﷻ to teach mankind, guide them, and save them from the Hellfire.
- 5) The love of earning one's living through lawful work: Indeed, Allah ﷻ most certainly could have provided the Prophet ﷺ with wealth and comfort, so that he would not have had to work as a shepherd. But instead, he was being trained, and his nation was being taught a lesson: The most honourable way to live is to eat from what one earns through lawful work. One who invites others to Islam must especially avoid taking from what is in the hands of others; he must be independent of all human beings. A self-sufficient man is dignified in the eyes of others; whatever good he does, he does for Allah ﷻ. That every Prophet ﷺ worked – as is mentioned in the above-mentioned *Hadeeth* – is one of many proofs that refute the accusation that polytheists leveled against Prophets ﷺ. Allah ﷻ said:

^[1] *Saheeh Muslim*, "The Book of Faith"; chapter, "The Prohibition of Pride and an Explanation (of this Ruling)." *Hadeeth* number: 91.