

THE BIRTH OF MUHAMMAD AND HIS EARLY LIFE

The Prophet Muhammad was born on Monday 12th Rabi-ul-awal (571AD). After he was born, Amina sent word to his grandfather, Abdul-Muttalib of the joyous news. Abdul Mutallib was at the Ka'bah and he rushed back to see his beloved new grandson.

Abdul-Muttalib tenderly held this newborn baby in his arms. He then took him to the Ka'bah and prayed to Allah and thanked him for such a great blessing. He then named him Muhammad - the praised one, which was not a name common to the Arabs.

It was the general custom of the Arabs that their young children were sent to the desert to be brought up with the Bedouins. The tough desert life gave the child a good start in life and the language of the Bedouins was a much purer Arabic. For a few years, they grew up in this harsh but healthy desert life before returning to their parents.

The Prophet was entrusted to Halima Sadia. She was a poor wet nurse. She and her husband only had a donkey and old she-camel. She did not even have enough milk to feed the other child in her care. It was also the year of famine and drought so they would constantly pray for rain.

None of the other Bedouin wet nurses wanted to take the child Muhammad because he was an orphan. When a child was returned to the family of the foster child, they would reward the wet nurse generously. They couldn't expect to gain many riches from a child who was an orphan. Every woman got a child to bring up but Halima, who had arrived last and did not find a child to foster. She was ready to go back when she decided to return and collect the child Muhammad, even though he was an orphan.

As soon as she lifted Muhammad (pbuh), her fortunes turned right around and her life was filled with immense good fortune. Both Muhammad and the other foster child were fully fed, even though the previous night there was no milk for the other child. The old she camel, which had not given a drop of milk, was soon overflowing with milk. Halima was at the very back of the group of women but now was at the front of the group. This was indeed a great blessing for this poor Bedouin family.

Halima knew that she had a blessed child with all the miracles and blessings she was seeing with her own eyes. Halima's herd of goats used to come home full, and overflowing with milk. The rest of the Bedouins' goats used to come home scraggy and empty. They used to complain to the shepherd to take the sheep and goats to the same place that Halima takes her flock! There were many more signs about how her life was turned around.

After two years, Muhammad was returned to His mother Amina, but soon Amina was persuaded by Halima to return the baby back with them for another two years. At this time, Halima told Amina about the great blessings that she had received when Muhammad was in her care. There was also an illness in Makkah and the child would be protected from it.

A strange incident took place in the prophet's childhood. Once both Muhammad and his foster brother were playing in the yard with the goats when the Angel Jibrael appeared to them. The Angel came split open Muhammad's chest, took out his heart, removed a blood clot and washed it in Zamzam. The angel then returned the heart to Muhammad's body before going away. The angel said this was the part of shaytan in you.

His foster brother ran to Halima and said that Muhammad has been murdered. She rushed out and found Muhammad standing with a pale white face. She checked over his body and found that he was fine.

Very shortly she returned him to Amina, his mother. Amina found out from Halima about the events that had taken place. Amina assured Halima that Muhammad was not under the influence from any devil or jinn but even when she was expecting him she had seen great marvels and miracles. Muhammad was returned to the care of his mother Amina and continued to live with her and Barakah.

Barakah was a slave girl who had been purchased in the slave markets and given as a present to Abdullah. She lived in the household of Abdullah and Amina. When Abdullah passed away she looked after Amina and later took care of Muhammad. She was dedicated to looking after Muhammad her whole life. She also loved him immensely and was with him throughout his sadness and joys. Muhammad also had great respect and love for this woman.

When Muhammad was six years old, he accompanied Amina and Barakah on a trip to

Yathrib. This was a chance for Muhammad to become acquainted with his uncles in Yathrib and also to see the grave of his father, whom he had never met. On his journey, Amina told Muhammad about his father and his uncles but when they got there, Amina became ill and also passed away. Muhammad and Bakarah both returned in tears and Abdul Mutallib began to look after this orphaned child.

This was the second tragedy to strike this six-year-old child. His father passed away before he was born and now his mother had also passed away! He came under the guardianship of his grandfather Abdul Mutallib. Abdul Mutallib had loved Abdullah so much and had been greatly saddened when Abdullah passed away. In Muhammad he could see the beauty and character of Abdullah and he loved Muhammad dearly. He had extra compassion for his orphaned grandchild, Muhammad than for his other grandchildren.

Abdul Muttalib loved Muhammad, in fact some say he took compassion on Muhammad and loved him more than his own children. Abdul Muttalib thought that one day his grandchild Muhammad would be a very special and significant person. He saw Muhammad's kind and generous character and there was a special noor inside of him, which he couldn't explain.

Abdul Muttalib often took Muhammad to the Ka'bah with him. When Abdul-Muttalib used to lie on the couch near the Ka'bah, Muhammad was always near him sitting on the mattress. The rest of Abdul Muttalib's children would sit on the floor around the couch.

Hence, Muhammad came under the care of this kind and generous old man, his grandfather. Although Muhammad had suffered so much tragedy in his life, he never felt that he wasn't loved. His grandfather surrounded him with love and looked after him as if he was his own son.

However, this love would not last for long. Another great catastrophe was ready to strike. When Muhammad was eight years old, Abdul-Mutallib passed away and that episode in the young child's life also ended. He was heart broken at the death of his grandfather but would soon find much love and happiness under the care of his uncle Abu Talib. Abu Talib was by no means rich but was a kind and generous fellow. He was respected by all the tribes that lived in Makkah.

Living with Abu Talib wasn't a life of ease so he tended sheep on the outskirts of Makkah as a youngster. This proved him to be a responsible and honest person. All

the prophets were shepherds before they were given prophethood. He did have a loving guardian and was offered much love and friendship by Abu Talib's family. This he appreciated for the rest of his life.

MUHAMMAD AS A YOUTH AND THE TRADE JOURNEYS

Muhammad (pbuh) began to grow up in a steady family home with Abu Talib, his uncle. Muhammad tended sheep as a youngster and later when he was about 12 years old, he accompanied Abu Talib on a trade journey to Syria. In a place called Bushra a very interesting incident took place, which caused Abu Talib to return Muhammad to Makkah.

On their trade journey they met a monk by the name of Bahira. Bahira lived a simple life in a monastery. He had very simple provisions and lived a harsh life, surviving on the bare essentials of life. His diet was very simple and the clothes he wore were also coarse and well worn. He was looking outside and saw a caravan approaching. His residence were on the main caravan route and he regularly saw caravans passing by. They would be carrying different goods destined to be sold in the great markets of Syria.

He noticed that this caravan was different; there was something special about it. He decided to invite them to a meal and find out more. Bahira sent a message to the caravan that his hospitality was extended to all the members of the caravan. The caravan traders accepted the invitation and arrived at the monk's place.

When they arrived, Bahira searched their faces looking for something. He said that I offered my hospitality to everyone did you leave anyone behind? They said that we left a young boy Muhammad to look after the camels. Bahira insisted that they send someone to get Muhammad and bring him to the entertainment. When Bahira saw the face of Muhammad he was delighted.

After the food, Bahira approached Abu Talib saying that Muhammad would be a great prophet one day. He said that when he had seen the caravan in the distance there was a cloud hanging over them, which was shading them from the great heat of the desert. When the caravan had stopped under a tree the cloud had also stopped above them.

Bahira said that he had seen the stones and the trees prostrating to Muhammad as Muhammad had been walking by. They only do this for a prophet of Allah. He looked

at the Muhammad's back and noticed the seal of the prophet, which was an oval shape protruding just below Muhammad's shoulder blades. He said that this was one of the signs of a great prophet to come that was taught to them in their books.

Bahira said "This is the master of all humans, Allah will send him with a message which would be a mercy to all Humans". Bahira advised that Muhammad should be taken back to Makkah at once, if the Jews found out about Muhammad they would try to kill him. Abu Talib took the advice of this wise old monk and sent Muhammad back with some of the guides.

This was the last trade journey Abu Talib went on. He stayed and worked in Makkah and looked after his children. They would go to the markets and see the many sights and hear the poets. Muhammad did not go on any trade journeys for a while, instead he tended sheep on the outskirts of Makkah. This gave Muhammad time to think about the world around him and look into the beautiful sky night. He looked at the wonderful creation around him, with its complexity and beauty.

During the Prophets early life, when he was 15 years old, there was a war called the Fijar war, or the Sacrilegious war. The reason that it was called the Sacrilegious war was because it was fought in the holy months. In these months, all fighting was prohibited and was meant to be a time of peace. This war lasted for a number of years and a lot of human life was lost.

Muhammad himself did not fight in the war but collected arrows for his uncles in one of the battles. After the war had finished, the main tribes of Arabia got together to make a pact between them. This confederacy was designed to protect the weak and the destitute also bringing more justice to the Makkan society.

When the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was 20 years old he was getting many offers, from different people, to take trade caravans to different parts of the Arabian Peninsula. They wanted Muhammad to trade for them with the profit being shared between the two parties. There was one person who was unable to travel so Muhammad (PBUH) decided to lead the trade caravan for him.

In this trip Muhammad would get a share in the profit and in this case proved to be very good. This made him very sought after by other traders. There was many offers of marriage from different people but financially Muhammad was not in a position to accept. However after this trip he was in a better position to get

married.

Muhammad still stayed in the household of Abu Talib. Muhammad had become very close with the family of Abu Talib who had shown great generosity and kindness to Muhammad in the past. Abu Talib had three sons: Jaffar who was four years old, Aqil who was thirteen and Talib who was similar in age to Muhammad.

One of the richer merchants was Khadija, a widow who was very successful in trade. She was not able to do trade herself so she hired men to do her bidding on her behalf. The reputation of Muhammad was such that he was given the title of Al-Amin (the trust worthy - the honest, the truthful). Khadija became interested in hiring Muhammad for a trade Journey.

Khadija soon sent word to Muhammad asking him if he would take a trade caravan to Syria. She would pay him a high fee, which was double that of which she had paid any other person. She also gave Muhammad the services of a young lad by the name of Maysarah who would look after him on the journey.

When Muhammad reached Basra, he was shading under a tree when a Monk saw him by the name of Nestor. Nestor asked Maysarah about the person sitting under the tree; Maysarah replied that it was Muhammad. Nestor said, that person is no other than a messenger of Allah.

Maysarah soon realised that he was in the company of a very special person. He said that he noticed that the heat was extreme when he saw a clear vision of two angels shading Muhammad from the heat of the day.

Muhammad later returned to Makkah and told Khadija about the journey. He told her about the stuff they had sold and about the goods they had bought in Syria. Khadija was able to sell these new goods for double the money Muhammad had paid for in Syria. She was very happy and pleased with Muhammad and his dealings on this trip.

Khadija was very pleased with Muhammad but was more pleased with his integrity, honesty and character. She now had more on her mind than just hiring him for trade journeys.

MARRIAGE AND THE REBUILDING OF THE KA'BAH

Khadija was a well-respected woman amongst the Makkans. She was from a noble lineage and was also respected as a good merchant. She did not do the trade herself but hired others to carry out her business on her behalf. Through this trade she became very well off.

In the past, some of the Makkans had proposed to her for marriage but she had refused them. She was now forty years old and there was someone she was interested in marrying. She had heard about Muhammad and his fine character. She had met this youngster of twenty-five years of age and liked his good manners and honesty. She had hired him and seen that he was decent and honest, as well as a good businessman. She was thinking about marrying this young man.

She spoke to a close friend of hers called Nufaysah. Nufaysah said that she would look into this matter on her behalf. She went to Muhammad and spoke to him about marriage. Muhammad told her that he wasn't married and that he felt that he wasn't in a position to get married. On further discussion Nufaysah said she would arrange a meeting between Muhammad and Khadija. Both Muhammad and Khadija got together and decided to speak to their uncles about getting marriage.

Muhammad (pbuh) was twenty-five years old and Khadija was about forty years old when they got married. From that day onwards Muhammad and Khadija were very happy and also became the very best of friends.

On the day of the marriage, Muhammad had a 'wet nurse' Barakah who had looked after Muhammad all his life. She was a slave woman from the time of Abdullah, his father. Muhammad set Barakah free who later got married to someone in Yathrib. Khadija offered Muhammad a servant to help. He was a young boy by the name of Zayd. Zayd was bought from one of the great slave markets and then given to Khadija.

Khadija was a great friend to Muhammad and also a loving companion. She bore him six children. There was great joy as well as some sadness in their marriage. Muhammad was blessed with six children: His son Qasim was the oldest but he passed away at the age of about two years old (Muhammad got the title Abu Qasim - the father of Qasim); the next four children were daughters - Zaynab, Rukayah, Umm Kulthum and Fatima. After them another son was born who again passed away at an early age.

Halima used to visit them sometimes and they were always very generous to her. There was a time when there was a great drought in Hijaz and Khadija gave Halima forty sheep and a camel. It was at this time that Ali, the son of Abu Talib, came to stay with Muhammad.

Life after marriage was very simple without anything out of the ordinary happening. He lived a normal life in this city of Makkah. He had a stable home life with his loving companion Khadija. They lived comfortably and looked after each other and their family and friends. Muhammad was known to be kind, honest and generous.

Muhammad would often take some provisions and go out for a few days to the caves around Makkah, away from the hustle and bustle of the city. This was an age-old practice where a few days were dedicated to solitude and reflection. Muhammad would go and spend some time in this secluded environment then return back to normal everyday life.

Muhammad never prayed or worshipped the Idols that lay around the Ka'bah. He kept himself clear of this form of shirk. He would look after the poor and the orphans. He would entertain his guests and look after them. He was considered very kind and honourable amongst the Arabs. Other than this Muhammad was like anyone else. He did not know at this time the great responsibility he would be burdened with in the near future. He did not know that he would be given prophethood and be sent to Mankind to reform them and to teach them about Allah. He did not know that he would be given a divine message that would transform not only Arabia but the whole world.

There was one incident that took place, which showed the respect the Makkans had for Muhammad. In this incident, Muhammad managed to prevent bloodshed and kept the peace amongst the different tribes of Makkah. This incident took place when Muhammad was 35 years of age.

The Ka'bah had existed from the time of Ibrahim (as) and had been a place of pilgrimage and worship. However, the Ka'bah itself was showing signs of wear and tear as well as getting old. The white stoned walls of the Ka'bah were cracking and weakening. The Ka'bah was roofless and the walls were not very tall. The Ka'bah became an easy target for anyone to climb in and steal the treasures. There was significant damage done in the great flood of Makkah and was in urgent need of

repair.

The Makkans decided that they would rebuild and repair the Ka'bah. They would make it stronger and more secure as well as repair the damaged done. The first person to remove the stone was Abu Wahab who lifted the stone from top of the wall but it fell back into the place where it was removed. The people moved away from the Ka'bah with fear.

Then Wahid, the chief of the tribe of Makhzume, took a pickaxe and was ready to destroy the Ka'bah. He did a prayer saying that he only intended good. He then took his pickaxe and destroyed one side of the wall. The people all watched and the following morning when they found that nothing had happened to him during the night came and helped him.

The walls were brought down to their foundations. They came across some large greenish cobbled stones that Ibrahim (as) had laid, which were the original foundations. One of the men put a crowbar between the stones to move them. There was a tremendous quake that shook Makkah. It was taken as a sign not to remove these foundations.

Quraish then began the tremendous task of rebuilding the Ka'bah. They gathered extra stones so that they could make the new walls higher. They worked together, each clan working at a particular part of the building. They built it up until it became high enough for the black stone to be put in its place.

There was a disagreement about who should put the black stone into the corner of the Ka'bah. Each tribe wanted the honour of placing the stone in the Ka'bah. This lasted for four or five days until it came to the point that they were ready to go to fight over this.

One of the old men said that the next person to come to the Ka'bah should decide who will put the stone in the Ka'bah. They all agreed with the old man and waited anxiously for the next person to walk into the Ka'bah. Muhammad, who had been absent for a while, came to the Ka'bah and was greeted by spontaneous joy from all the Arabs.

Muhammad listened to the people and then asked them to bring a cloak. When they brought him a cloak, he placed it on the ground and put the black stone in the middle. He then asked one member of each tribe to hold the ends of the cloak and

lift it into the air. When the stone was at the right height Muhammad placed it in the right place with his own hands.

The Arabs were happy with the decision and this stopped the violence and bloodshed that was going to follow. The funds used to build the Ka'bah were only collected from lawful sources so the whole project could not be completed. Although, the Ka'bah itself was completed, the Hateem that is like a semi-circular wall was not built. The door of the Ka'bah was raised by two meters from the ground. This improved the security and also meant that the Makkans could choose who was allowed into the Ka'bah.

It was only a short time after this that the Angel Jibrael came to Muhammad and brought to him the first few verses of the Qu'ran. He was in a cave in mount Hira, on the outskirts of Makkah when this happened. That is another story for another week, inshallah.

Source: www.musalla.org