

ABDUL MUTALLIB

After the time of Prophet Ibrahim (as) and Ismael, the people gradually began to worship and pray to Idols. They began to believe in many gods, who they said were partners with Allah. This is the worst sin called shirk and led to the downfall of this once healthy and prosperous society.

As time went on, things became so bad that the house of Allah, the Ka'bah, was filled and surrounded by 360 idols. Allah made the people hard-hearted and they fought over the smallest thing. Much hatred and bloodshed existed within this community and evil was rampant. This period is known as Jahiliyah, the times of ignorance.

The period before Islam is described in this poem:

Arabia is the location of this rhyme,
long ago, before our prophets time.
It was a very harsh and barren land,
surrounded by vast oceans of sand.

The Arab society, lacked law and order
and was infested with chaos and disorder.
All the Arabs did was quarrel and fight.
Few were educated, a handful could write.

The strong and ruthless ruled the tribes,
consisting mainly of corruption and bribes.
Much blood was spilt in many a feud,
and their fighting was unjust and crude.

They fought over the smallest thing
and death and mourning, this would bring.
These tribal feuds, for years would last
and deep into misery, the society was cast.

Every vice and evil, they staunchly followed
In their depravity, like animals they wallowed
Chasing every desire, alcohol they drank.

To the depth of corruption, they now sank.

Rights and dignity they didn't respect,
to call them barbaric would be correct.
Their treatment of orphans was inhumane,
cause them suffering and so much pain.

The women's status was considered low.
Not a shred of respect, did they ever show.
It is evident enough that evil did thrive,
when newborn daughters were buried alive.

They worshipped gods made of stone
Others made of wood, feathers or bone
Some worshiped trees, stars or the sun
And the belief in one god, they did shun

Every civilization had passed them by
To conquer them, no nation would try
To them the Arabs were a lost cause
A society riddled with evil and flaws

In total ignorance, the Arabs thus dwelled
and against Allah, they continually rebelled
To truth and knowledge, they were blind
and this rang true, for the rest of mankind

It was from Arabia, the truth shone bright
The words of Allah, an illuminating light
It came in the form of the Holy Qu'ran.
Guidance from Allah - the Lord of man.

There were a few significant people that came before the prophet, which are worth mentioning. Qusay was one of the main chiefs of Makkah, who was from the tribe of Quraish. He was a handsome fellow and the leadership of Makkah fell to him after a bitter war. War was common amongst the Arabs. The Quraish were considered amongst the noblest tribes because they were direct descendants of Ismael.

Qusay ruled Makkah like a king. He would collect the taxes from the people, to provide for the pilgrims who still visited Makkah and performed the Hajj. Qusay built himself a big spacious house close to the sanctuary. He also encouraged his tribesmen to build themselves houses. Previously the people had lived in tents, camping close to the Ka'bah.

Qusay had many sons, the most prominent and famous was Hashim. He was very gifted and provided water and food for the pilgrims, when they came to Makkah.

He was a great merchant and established the two great trade routes through Makkah. Both the trade routes passed through Yathrib, which was a small oasis town which lay on the ancient incense route. The winter trade route was between Makkah and Yemen whilst the summer trade route went into northern Arabia going into Palestine and Syria.

Through this trade, Makkah began to prosper and became a major city which attracted much wealth. Hashim married Salma, the daughter of Amr, from the clan of Khazraj. Salma and Hashim had one son whom they named Shaybah. Both Salma and Shaybah remained in Yathrib and were often visited by Hashim on his trade journeys. However, Hashim wasn't granted a long life and he passed away in the Gaza in Palestine. Shaybah remained with Salma in Yathrib, until Shaybah was about 14 years of age.

Muttalib, the brother of Hashim took over the role of looking after the affairs of the pilgrims. However, he had great love for his brother, Hashim, who had passed away at such a young age. He also heard a lot of good things said about Hashim's son, Shaybah. Shaybah had continued to live in Yathrib with his mother Salma after his father had passed away. He was growing into a pleasant youngster with a kind nature.

Mutallib decided to visit Salma and Shaybah in Yathrib. On reaching Yathrib he spoke to his nephew and Salma. He explained to them that since Shaybah was a son of Hashim, he should come and live in Makkah. Makkah was a great city and had a lot more to offer than Yathrib. This was especially true because Shaybah was from the tribe of Quraish, the most respected and honoured tribe in Arabia. He also had the possibility of taking over the sacred and noble duties at Hajj, which his father fulfilled so well.

Salma, reluctantly at first, decided to let Shaybah travel to and live in Makkah with his uncle Mutallib. Both Uncle and nephew set off for Makkah, leaving behind

Yathrib. When they reached Makkah, the people were amused at the sight of seeing Muttalib and this young boy, whom they assumed to be the slave of Muttalib. They referred to him as Abdul Muttalib, which means the slave of Muttalib. After Muttalib corrected them and told them that he was his nephew, they lovingly continued to call Shaybah by the name of Abdul Muttalib.

After Abdul Muttalib came to Makkah, he came to be loved by the people, He managed to secure his rights from his family and lived happily in Makkah. After Muttalib passed away, Abdul Muttalib took over in the duties of proving food and water for the pilgrims. He excelled in this, which further enhanced his reputation for leadership and fairness.

One of the first events which took place at the time of Abdul Muttalib was the rediscovery of the blessing of Zamzam. The Zamzam had been taken away from the people when they had strayed from tawheed. The Zamzam was a great blessing of Allah which had been gifted to the people many hundreds of years earlier. The people had gradually moved away from the truth and became more wicked and unjust. They began to worship idols, which is such a grave sin. Allah took the Zamzam away from the people and this blessing had been lost for many years.

The story begins when Abdul Muttalib was sleeping under the shade of the Ka'bah, at a place near the Hujr Ismael. This was a common occurrence for people to see Abdul Mutallib sleeping there. One time, he had a dream which repeated itself three times and in the last dream, he heard a voice asking him to dig in a certain place near the Ka'bah.

Abdul Muttalib was initially stunned by the dreams but then decided he would listen to this voice in the dream. Abdul Muttalib, in the company of his son Hashim, took two pick axes and began to dig near the Ka'bah. It was at the place where animals were sacrificed, between the two idols. Before long a crowd gathered to see what was happening. He was asked to stop by some of the people but he continued to dig with his son Harith watching over him.

Before long he came to some well stones where he found some treasures the tribe of Juram had buried. This included swords, armours and the two gold statues. He also found the well of Zamzam that had been lost and forgotten about for so many

years. When he unearthed it, the water gushed forth and others tried to join Abdul Muttalib in this blessed work. However, he lay claim to the finding and the tradition of providing Zamzam fell exclusively to him.

After this Abdul Muttalib gained lots of respect from the Arabs. He did a prayer that may Allah provide him with ten sons and promised that if they all grew up into young men he would sacrifice one of them. Little did he know that Allah would soon bless him with ten sons and he would need to fulfil this promise.

Over time he had ten sons and with regret he remembered his promise to sacrifice one of them. For such a long time he dreaded this day but he knew in his heart that he would need to. Abdul Mutallib decided to fulfil his promise but which son would he choose? Abdul Muttalib drew lots and the fate of the sacrifice fell on Abdullah, the youngest and his most beloved son. He was very sad but he knew that he must fulfil this promise.

Abdul Muttalib went to the Ka'bah with his son Abdullah intending to sacrifice him. When the people saw this they stopped him asking him where he was going with this handsome young boy and the knife. The people learned that he was going to sacrifice him so they told him to sacrifice some camels instead.

After listening to their advice he decided to consult a wise woman from Yathrib. Abdul Mutallib told the whole story to the wise woman and she advised him to sacrifice ten camels at a time until the promise was fulfilled. He would know that the promise was fulfilled when the divining arrow would point at the camels instead of his son. The divining arrows was a way of deciding a matter in the days of ignorance.

He would sacrifice ten camels and the arrow would point towards his son. He would sacrifice another ten camels and would check with the arrow each time. He sacrificed a total of a hundred camels (ten at a time) until he knew that this was acceptable to fulfil his promise.

Abdul Muttalib arranged for his son, Abdullah, to marry a lady by the name of Aminah from a tribe in Yathrib. Abdullah was only a young man of twenty-five, was very handsome and a noor filled his face when he was going to get married. They were a well-matched couple and everyone celebrated with great happiness and joy.

Aminah and Abdullah started their life together and after a few months he was asked to go on a trade journey to Syria. Aminah was upset because they had only been married for a few months and now Abdullah was going to leave. Deep down she knew that they would be together soon when he returned from the journey. Little was she to know that he would not return to her alive.

THE YEAR OF THE ELEPHANT

Abdul Mutallib had ten sons, the youngest of whom was Abdullah. From all his sons, Abdul Mutallib loved Abdullah very much. When Abdullah was old enough to get married, he was married to Amina, daughter of Wahab bin 'Abd Munaf, the chief of Bani Zuhrah. She was a noble and respected lady from a good family.

After a few months of marriage, Abdul Muttalib sent Abdullah on a trade journey to Syria. On his return journey from Syria, Abdullah became very ill and passed away. He was buried near Yathrib. This was a particularly sad occasion for Abdul Mutallib because he loved Abdullah very much and Allah had taken his life at such a young age of twenty five. Amina was also extremely sad at the death of her husband with whom she had spent such little time. Amina thought about Abdullah's child, who wasn't born yet and had already been orphaned.

However, to add to this burden, another storm was brewing in the form of an army of sixty thousand soldiers. They were coming from Yemen with the intent of destroying the Ka'bah. The Arabs had never seen such a big army before and knew deep down that they would never be able to fight such a force. This army was fully equipped and trained for war. It was commanded by the Yemeni King, Abraha and was led by a number of powerful elephants.

The army was gradually moving towards Makkah and was only a matter of time before it had arrived. The people of Makkah, had no intention of defending the Ka'bah and fighting this huge army. They had already decided in their hearts that they would retreat to the mountains until the army had left.

The Surah al-feel talks about this incident. The Surah is translated below and followed by some commentary on the surah.

Al-Feel (the Elephant)

Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the people of the Elephant?

Did he not render their treacherous plan futile?

He let loose against them flights of birds

Which pelted them with stone of Baked clay

Thus he made them like chewed dry Grass.

This is Surah number 105 in the Holy Qu'ran. The Qu'ran has a total of 114 surahs which are of different lengths. Allah revealed the Qu'ran over a period of 23 years. The surahs have been put under two headings - the Makki Surahs and the Madni Surahs. The Makki Surah were revealed before the Hijra (the migration from Makkah to Madina by the prophet). The Madni Surah were revealed after the Hijra. All the scholars agree that Surah al-feel is a Makki Surah.

This Surah is addressing the Arabs at the time of the prophet and remind them of the great favours Allah has done for them. It reminds them of an incidents which they had witnessed with their own eyes. It talks about the mighty army of Abraha which was too powerful for all Arabia to fight. Allah has destroyed the entire army swiftly when it attacked the Ka'bah.

The Ka'bah had become a place of pilgrimage drawing people from all over the Arabian Peninsula. It became very busy and a lot of trade and business took place there. Some other countries saw this success and tried to create their own building, which could be used to attract people and let them make pilgrimage. Allah, however, did not grant any of them success.

Abraha, the king of Yemen, was an Abyssinian Christian who built a magnificent cathedral in the capital of Yemen, Sanah. After building this Cathedral and decorating it with gold, he wrote to the Negus saying he would not rest until he had diverted the Arab's pilgrimage to it. He publicly announced this in Yemen so that everyone new about this.

He was trying to provoke the Arabs into some form of retaliation, giving him an excuse to attack Makkah and destroy the Ka'bah. An enraged Arab defiles the Cathedral and a group of Quraysh set fire to it. This was all the excuse Abraha was looking for, so in 571 AD he took his army and set march towards Makkah. His army included sixty thousand troops and thirteen elephants.

Yemen was a super power in its time. No way could anyone fight against such a vast and powerful army - most had never seen such a big army in their lives! On the way, Abraha had some minor retaliation from the tribes but gradually headed towards Makkah. He also got some guides on the way to give him the best and safest route.

Near the outskirts of Makkah, Abraha captured two hundred camels that belonged to Abdul-Muttalib. He then sent an envoy of his to Makkah to tell them that he had no intention to fight the Arabs but to destroy the Ka'bah. If they offered no resistance then there would be no cause for bloodshed. He also instructed them that if they wanted to negotiate with him then they should return with their chief. The chief of Makkah at that time was Abdul-Muttalib.

Abdul Muttalib was taken to Abraha, who asked him what he wanted. Abdul Muttalib replied that he wanted the camels that Abraha had taken to be returned to him. Abraha returns the camels and said that you only demand your camels but you say nothing about this house which is your sanctuary and the sanctuary of your forefathers.

Abdul Muttalib replied that I am the owner of the camels and as for the house it has its own owner and he will defend it. With this Abdul Muttalib left and went back to Makkah.

Abdul Muttalib told the people to take their families and go to the mountains on the outskirts of Makkah. Abdul Muttalib went to the Ka'bah and prayed to Allah to protect his house. He did not pray to any of the idols that were in the Ka'bah but to Allah himself. After this Abdul-Muttalib and his companions left and headed for the mountains to join the rest of the Makkans.

The next morning Abraha prepared to enter Makkah with his special elephant, Mahmood, leading the army. Mahmood stopped and knelt down refusing to move. It was coaxed and then beaten with iron bats trying to get it to move forward. When it was made to face any other direction, it would immediately start off but when they made it face Makkah it would again stop.

Suddenly swarms of birds appeared with stones in their beaks and claws and showered the army with them. Whoever the stones hit would start to disintegrate until the whole army was destroyed. In the confusion they tried to retreat to

Yemen but the whole army was destroyed. This incident became famous and the story reached all corners of Arabia. After this the Makkans started to worship Allah for a few years then they returned to worshiping idols.

This year became known as the year of the elephant. It was in this year, 571CE, that an even greater event took place which would change the course of world history. A special child was born in Makkah to the lady Amina and her husband Abdullah, who had recently passed away. The birth of this child was celebrated in the heavens above and foretold in books of history and religion throughout the world. He would bring justice and the knowledge of the almighty creator to the Earth. He would enlighten the world, removing the shackles of ignorance and subservience. This child was born to an ignorant and decadent society which would be transformed into the most knowledgeable and just society.

This child would grow and become a role model for many billions of humans from all parts of the world. His words and actions would be spoken about and studied for thousands of years afterwards. This child would grow to become Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the rest of the seerah lessons are dedicated to his life, inshallah.

Source: www.musalla.org