

(.The Childhood and Youth of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W

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The Holy Prophet of Islam, Muhammad Al-Mustafa (S), was born after sunrise on Friday the 17th of Rabiul Awwal 570 A.D. in Makka. He was born in the Year of the Elephant, when Abraha tried to destroy the Holy Ka'ba.

The parents of the Holy Prophet (S) were Abdullah son of Abdul Muttalib and Aamina daughter of Wahab. Abdullah died two months before his son was born and was buried in Madina. The

Holy Prophet (S) belonged to the respected family of Bani Hashim from the tribe of Quraish. Abdul Muttalib decided to bring up the Holy Prophet (S) under his own care. On the seventh day of the birth of his grandson, he slaughtered a sheep to show his gratitude to Allah for blessing him with a healthy grandson. Many people were invited to take part in the celebrations.

In this gathering, Abdul Muttalib announced to the people that he would name the child "Muhammad", which means "One who is worthy of praise". When the Quraish asked him why he was keeping such an unusual name, he replied that he wanted his grandson to be praised in the heavens and on the earth. Before this event, the Holy Prophet's (S) mother had already named him "Ahmad". Allah has referred to him by both names in the Holy Qur'an.

The Holy Prophet (S) was breastfed by his own mother Aamina for three days only. As was the custom in those days, he was then given to a foster-mother to nurse. Two women had this honour.

They were:

Suwaybah. She was a slave of Abu Lahab and nursed the Holy Prophet (S) for four months. The Holy Prophet (S) and his wife Bibi Khadija (A) always regarded her with great kindness throughout her life. When the Holy Prophet (S) returned from the battle of Khaybar he learnt of her death and was saddened by it.

Halimah. She belonged to the tribe of Sa'd bin Bakr. She brought up the Holy Prophet (S) outside the city of Makka in the desert. Here he grew up strong and healthy and learnt the pure Arabic language of the desert. He stayed with her for five years.

THE CHILDHOOD OF THE HOLY PROPHET (S)

The Holy Prophet (S) lived in the desert with Halimah for five years and she looked after him very well. During this time he learnt about handling animals and also trained in archery. In this

happy atmosphere he grew up strong and healthy. Halimah regarded him as very special, because ever since he had come under her care, she was showered with the blessings of Allah and became rich. When he was five years old, Halimah returned the Holy Prophet (S) to the care of his mother Lady Aamina. The young boy was very dear to his grandfather Abdul Muttalib, because he reminded him of his son Abdullah.

Lady Aamina decided to go to Madina to visit the grave of her husband, Abdullah, and also meet some of her relatives. She took the Holy Prophet (S) along with her and stayed for one month. On the way back to Makka, tragedy struck, and Lady Aamina fell ill at a place called Abwa. After a short time she died and was buried there. The Holy Prophet (S) was now an orphan and Abdul Muttalib took him under his wing. He loved his grandson very much and made sure that he did not feel unwanted. The Holy Qur'an mentions this event as follows:

In the Name of Allah, the Most Kind, the Most Merciful

Did He not find you an orphan and give you shelter?

(Suratu Dhuha, 93:6)

The Holy Prophet (S) was only eight years old when he lost his grandfather. Before his death, Abdul Muttalib made his son Abu Talib responsible for taking care of the young child.

This was a duty, which Abu Talib carried out fully for the rest of his life.

The loss of Abdul Muttalib made the Holy Prophet (S) very sad, and he kept weeping upto the very edge of the grave and never forgot his kindness. There were many reasons why Abdul Muttalib chose Abu Talib as the guardian of the Holy Prophet (S). Abu Talib and Abdullah were born of the same mother. He was also well known for his generous nature. He treated the Holy Prophet (S) better than his own sons, and never let him feel lonely. When the Holy Prophet (S) was twelve years old, Abu Talib took him on a trade journey into Syria with a caravan of the Quraish. On the way they passed through Madyan, the Qura valley and the country of Samud and saw the beautiful natural scenery of Syria. The Holy Prophet (S) used to say that this was one of the most pleasant trips he had ever been on.

At Basra, the caravan stopped to stock up supplies for the rest of the journey. There was an old Christian monk whose name was Bahira, who lived in an old monastery in Basra. The monk never used to speak but when he saw the Holy Prophet (S), he broke his silence and asked, "Who is this boy?" Abu Talib answered that he was his nephew. Bahira then said, "This boy has a brilliant future. He is the same Prophet whose coming has been foretold in the Heavenly Books. His religion will spread throughout the world. However, you must guard him from the Jews, because if they learn about him, they will kill him".

Some historians say that after this warning, Abu Talib did not like to continue his journey and returned with the Holy Prophet (S) to Makka, while others say that he went on to Syria but kept an extra watch over the safety of the Holy Prophet (S). In any case, Abu Talib was more careful than before about the safety of his nephew.

Some historians have written that the Holy Prophet (S) learnt about the stories of the other Prophets and history from the Christian monk and that is how he related them to the people in the form of the Holy Qur'an. This is a shameful lie. It is difficult for one to believe that the Holy Prophet (S) learnt all the stories from his short meeting with the Christian and managed to remember everything for 28 years and then pretended that the Holy Qur'an was revealed to him at the age of 40. The meeting with Bahira served no real purpose except to make Abu Talib aware that his nephew was a very special person.

Thus, the Holy Prophet (S) grew up in the household of Abu Talib, loved and cherished by all. His aunt, Fatima binte Asad, the wife of Abu Talib and mother of Imam Ali (A) looked after him as if he was her own son. Now you know...

When the Holy Prophet (S) reached the age of five, Halimah returned him to the care of his mother Lady Aamina. Lady Aamina took the Holy Prophet (S) to Madina to visit the grave of her husband, Abdullah, and to meet some of her relatives. However, on the return journey she fell ill and died at a place called Abwa, where she was buried. Orphaned, the Holy Prophet (S) was taken under the care of his grandfather Abdul Muttalib. Sadly, when he was only eight years old he also lost his grandfather.

So, the responsibility of looking after the Holy Prophet (S) was handed over to his uncle Abu Talib, who treated him better than his own sons. His aunt, Fatima daughter of Asad also treated him well.

At the age of twelve Abu Talib took the Holy Prophet (S) on a trade journey with a caravan of the Quraish. At Basra, an old Christian monk by the name of Bahira upon seeing the Holy Prophet (S) inquired who he was. Abu Talib said that he was his nephew. Bahira said that this boy was the same Prophet mentioned in the Heavenly Books. His religion would spread throughout the world. However, if the Jews found him, they would kill him.

From then on Abu Talib took special care of the Holy Prophet (S).

ABU TALIB AND THE HOLY PROPHET (S)

At the time of his death, Abdul Muttalib left the Holy Prophet (S) in the care of his son Abu Talib. Abu Talib and Abdullah, the father of the Holy Prophet (S), were brothers born of the same mother. Abu Talib took the Holy Prophet (S) into his home and treated the young boy,

who was only eight years old, like his own son. His wife, Fatima binte Asad, also loved the Holy Prophet (S) dearly and he regarded her as his mother. Since the time he received a warning from the Christian monk Bahira, Abu Talib was very careful about the personal safety of his nephew. He used to ask one of his own sons to sleep in the bed of the Holy Prophet (S), so that if any attack was made, he would come to no harm. As the Holy Prophet (S) grew up, he was always under the protection of his loving uncle who was one of the most respected leaders of the Quraish. When the Holy Prophet (S) was older, it was Abu Talib who encouraged him to take part in the business of trade caravans. He arranged for his nephew to be introduced into the service of Khadija binte Khuwaylid. This introduction was to lead to the marriage of the Holy Prophet (S) to that noble lady. At the marriage, it was Abu Talib who recited the sermon and conducted the ceremony. When the time came for the Holy Prophet (S) to announce his mission of Prophethood, Abu Talib was one of his strongest supporters. While he was under the powerful protection of his uncle, the Quraish did not dare to harm the Holy Prophet (S). When the Quraish exiled the Muslims from Makka they lived for three years in a valley known as the "Valley of Abu Talib". At this time Abu Talib also went through the same difficulties that the Holy Prophet (S) underwent, although he could have easily returned to Makka where he was still respected and honoured amongst the Quraish. Although some ignorant people write that Abu Talib was not a Muslim, there are many reasons why this cannot be true. Firstly, Abu Talib himself conducted the marriage of the Holy Prophet (S), and a person who is not a Muslim cannot conduct the marriage of another Muslim. Secondly, Fatima binte Asad was known to be a Muslim and she was also the wife of Abu Talib till she died. A Muslim woman cannot remain married to a man who is not a Muslim. Thirdly, at the death of Abu Talib, the Holy Prophet (S) wept for a long time and then prayed for him. Yet we know that it is forbidden to pray for the forgiveness of a person who is not a Muslim. All these and many other reasons prove beyond doubt that, even if he did not declare it openly, Abu Talib was a Muslim of strong faith. In his will, Abu Talib instructed his children to always stand by the Holy Prophet (S) and never to leave him. He also advised them to follow Islam, so that they would be successful. The death of his uncle after a lifetime of companionship made the Holy Prophet (S) very sad. During the same year he also lost his dear wife, Bibi Khadija (A). For these reasons, the Holy Prophet (S) called this year "Aamul Huzn" Now you know... Abu Talib was chosen as the guardian of the Holy Prophet (S) because his father Abdullah and Abu Talib were born of the same mother. After the warning of Bahira, the Christian monk, Abu

Talib was very careful about the safety of the Holy Prophet (S). He used to ask one of his sons to sleep in the bed of the Holy Prophet (S), so that if any attack was made, he would come to no harm.

Abu Talib encouraged the Holy Prophet (S) to take part in the business of trade caravans. He was introduced into the service of Khadija daughter of Khuwaylid; later he got married to her. When the Holy Prophet (S) announced his prophethood, Abu Talib was one of his strongest supporters. He also suffered with the Holy Prophet (S) when the Quraish exciled the Muslims from Makka.

Proof that Abu Talib was a Muslim:

He conducted the marriage of the Holy Prophet (S), and only a Muslim can do that. Fatima daughter of Asad was married to Abu Talib, and she was a Muslim. A Muslim woman can only remain married to a Muslim man. The Holy Prophet (S) cried and prayed for the forgiveness of Abu Talib when he died. It is forbidden in Islam to pray for the forgiveness of a non-Muslim.

THE YOUTH OF THE HOLY PROPHET (S)

As the Holy Prophet (S) grew up, the people around him noticed that this young man was not like others of his age. The people admired his character and bravery and all the Quraish liked him.

In his youth, the Holy Prophet (S) accompanied his uncle Abu Talib on trade journeys to Syria and Yemen. He soon gained a reputation in Makka for his good business sense, his honesty and trustworthiness. People were so impressed by the qualities of the Holy Prophet (S), that they began to call him as-Sadiq (the Truthful) and al-Ameen (the Trustworthy).

When the Holy Prophet (S) would pass them, people would say:

"There goes the young man who behaves equally well with the high and the low. He is considerate to his equals, respects the elders and always shows love and affection to the children. He never speaks a lie or misuses anything entrusted to his care. He does not look at women with an evil intent and is never rude to anybody. He does not backbite or spend his time in finding faults in people."

Such was the character of our Holy Prophet (S), and in later years even his enemies would still leave their belongings with him for safekeeping when they went on a trip away from Makka. Once a man came to Makka and was cheated by a trader in the market place. He complained to the Quraish that he had been mistreated. At that time, some leading citizens formed a committee that would look into such incidents and try to help the people who were unfairly treated. They decided that the main tribes of Quraish should make an agreement that would

protect the rights of the people. This important covenant was called "Hilful Fudhool" or "Covenant of High Morals". The Holy Prophet (S) participated in this agreement and was an active member of the Hilful Fudhool.

The Holy Prophet (S) also spent part of his youth as a shepherd. Thus, by the time he was 25 years of age, the Holy Prophet (S) had built himself a good reputation in Makka and had gained the trust and affection of the people around him. Now you know...

As the Holy Prophet (S) grew up, he stood out as an exceptional young man unlike others of his age. The Quraish admired him for his bravery and character. He spent part of his youth as a shepherd and he also accompanied his uncle Abu Talib on trade journey to Syria and Yemen. During the trade journeys he built a good reputation because of his honesty and trustworthiness. People used to call him as-Sadiq (the truthful) and al-Ameen (the trustworthy).

Even his enemies trusted him; many would leave their belongings with him for safekeeping when they went on a trip away from Makka. The Holy Prophet (S) was an active member of 'Hilful Fudhool' – Covenant of High Morals. This was an agreement that protected the rights of the people.

By the age of 25, the Holy Prophet (S) had gained the trust and affection of the people around him.