The Birth of Holy Muhammad and the Early Years of His Life

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Abdullah was the favorite son of Abdul Muttalib. When he was seventeen years old, he was married to Amina, a high-born lady of Yathrib, a city in the north of Makkah. He was not, however, destined to live long, and died only seven months after his marriage.

Muhammad, the future apostle of God, was a posthumous child.Shaikh Muhammad el-Khidhri Buck, professor of Islamic History, Egyptian University, Cairo, says in his book, *Noor-ulYaqeen fi Seeret Sayyed al-Mursaleen* (1953). He (Muhammad ibn Abdullah) was born in the house of his uncle, Abu Talib, in the “quarter” of Banu Hashim in Makkah, on the 12th (it is mentionable that it is the writer's view. Most of shia do not agree with him) of Rabi al-Awal of the Year of the Elephant, a date that corresponds to June 8, 570.

His midwife was the mother of Abdur Rahman ibn Auf. His mother, Amina, sent the tidings of the auspicious birth to his grandfather, Abdul Muttalib, who came, took him in his arms, and gave him the name Muhammad.

Muhammad's share in his patrimony was one maid servant, Umm Ayman; five camels and ten sheep. This is proof that prophets can inherit property, and if they can inherit property from their parents, they can also bequeath property to their own children.

Being a prophet does not disqualify them from receiving their own patrimony nor does it disqualify their children from receiving theirs. This statement may appear to be a non-sequitur in this context but it is not. Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, may God bless him and his Ahlul-Bait, had bestowed upon his daughter, Fatima, as a gift, the estate of Fadak.

But when he died, Abu Bakr, the khalifa, and Umar, his adviser, seized the estate on the plea that prophets do not bequeath any property to their own children, and whatever wealth they possess, belongs, after their death, not to their children, but to their umma (the people).

It is a grim penalty that one has to pay in Islam for being the son or daughter of its Prophet. Everyone else in the umma has the right to inherit the wealth and property of one's father but not the daughter of Muhammad, the Messenger of God!

It was a custom among the Quraysh to send their children into the desert to spend their early years in a climate that was more salubrious than that of Mach. Children built up stronger bodies in the wide open spaces and pure air of the desert than they could in the stifling and noisome air of the City.

There was one more reason why the Arab aristocrats sent their children to live in the desert. They were purists in speech, and were great “aficionados” of words. They were fascinated by

the Arabic language, its words, their meanings and the various nuances of their meaning; and they took great pride in their own eloquence. In fact, the upper classes in Makkah predicated their authority on their rhetorical power. Makkah was the meeting-place of many caravans and its Arabic had become corrupted into a kind of “pidgin Arabic”.

The Arab aristocrats did not want their children to learn and to speak the pidgin Arabic of Makkah; they wanted them to speak only the pure and uncontaminated language of the desert. They, therefore, sent their children away from Makkah to protect them from all such deleterious effects during the early years of their lives.

Amina gave her child, Muhammad, to Halima, a woman of the tribe of Banu Asad, living in the east of Makkah, for nursing. The infant Muhammad spent the first four years of his life in the desert with his wet-nurse. Sometime in the fifth year of his life, she is reported to have brought him back to his mother in Makkah.

Muhammad was six years old when Amina, his mother, died. He was then taken by Abdul Muttalib, his grandfather, to his home. But only two years had passed when Abdul Muttalib also died.

Just before his death, Abdul Muttalib called all his sons together and told them that he was leaving two “bequests” for them; one was the leadership of the clan of Banu Hashim, and the other was Muhammad ibn Abdullah, their nephew, an orphan of eight.

He then asked them who among them wanted his power and authority as the leader of the tribe, and who among them would take charge of the boy who had lost both parents. Most of his sons showed much eagerness to be named the leader of the tribe but no one volunteered to take charge of Muhammad.

As Abdul-Muttalib surveyed the assembly and contemplated the future of the boy, Muhammad, an uneasy silence fell over the scene. But it didn't last long. Abu Talib, one of his sons, stepped forward and said that he wanted the son of his late brother, Abdullah, and that he had no interest in authority and power.

Abu Talib's forthright declaration clinched the matter for Abdul Muttalib. He decided to make Abu Talib not only the guardian of Muhammad but also the guardian of the clan of Banu Hashim.

Abdul Muttalib announced on his death-bed that his son, Abu Talib, would succeed him as the new chief of Banu Hashim, and that he would also be the guardian of Muhammad. He then ordered the assembly to acknowledge Abu Talib as the new leader of Banu Hashim. The latter complied, and was then dismissed.

History ratified the judgment of Abdul Muttalib. His son and successor, Abu Talib, discharged

both duties most honorably.

Sir John Glubb

In 578 Abdul Muttalib died. Before his death, he charged his son, Abu Talib, to look after Muhammad. Abdullah, Muhammad's father, had been the brother of Abu Talib by both their father and mother. Abdul Muttalib's other sons had apparently come from different wives. *(The Life and Times of Mohammed, 1970)*

Abu Talib and his wife were very happy and proud to receive Muhammad into their family. They took him not into their home but into their hearts, and they loved him more than they loved their own children.

Abu Talib was a man of great dignity and commanding presence. During his incumbency as the leader of Banu Hashim he bore the titles of the “Lord of Quraysh,” and “Chief of the Valley.” Like other members of his tribe, he was also a merchant, and his caravans traveled to and from Syria and Yemen

In every season, Abu Talib's caravans left Makkah for their various destinations. Occasionally, he himself accompanied a caravan to supervise the sale and purchase of merchandise in the foreign markets. Young Muhammad is reported to have traveled with him to Syria with one of the caravans when he was twelve years old.

Early in life, Muhammad, the future prophet, built up a reputation for truthfulness, integrity and sound judgment. Since there were no banks in those days, he became a “banker” for the Makkans. They brought their cash, jewelry, and other valuables to him for safe-keeping, and whenever they wanted anything back, he returned it to them. They called him *Amin* (trustworthy) and *Sadiq* (truthful).

Sir William Muir

Endowed with a refined mind and delicate taste, reserved and meditative, he (Mohammed) lived much within himself, and the pondering of his heart supplied occupation for leisure hours spent by men of a lower stamp in rude sports and profligacy.

The fair character and honorable bearings of the unobtrusive youth won the approbation of his fellow-citizens; and he received the title, by common consent, of *Al-Amin*, ‘the Faithful.' Thus respected and honored, Mohammed lived a quiet and retired life in the family of Abu Talib. *(Life of Mohammed, 1877, p. 20)*

When Muhammad was twenty years old, a war broke out between Quraysh, his tribe, and the tribe of Hawazin. Though he was present in the campaigns of this war, he did not take any part

in fighting. He did not kill or wound anyone, thus showing at this early period, his hatred of bloodshed. He is, however, said to have picked up arrows from the ground, and to have given them to his uncles who were fighting.

A few years later, Muhammad was admitted as a member into the League of the Virtuous. As mentioned earlier, this League had pledged itself to protect the weak, to oppose the tyrants and the oppressors, and to put an end to exploitation in all forms.

It is noteworthy that it was the clan of Banu Hashim, to which Muhammad, the future prophet belonged, which inaugurated the League of the Virtuous. Was it a mere coincidence? There is no way to answer this question. But by their demarche, the Banu Hashim had declared war upon iniquity and injustice. They made it clear that they would not connive at the crimes of the strong against the weak; nor would they acquiesce in the exploitation of the poor by the Quraysh of Makkah.

Not many years later, Muhammad was to launch a program for the reconstruction of human society the economic component of which would comprehend precisely the destruction of exploitation. He would take the “privileges” of the Quraysh, and their “right” to exploit the poor and the weak, away from them.

Montgomery Watt

The League of the Virtuous seems to have played an important part in the life of Mecca, and in large part to have been directed against the men and the policies to which Mohammed later found himself opposed. In particular his clan of Hashim came to have a leading role in the (League of the Virtuous. *(Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman, 1961*