Al-Islam.org
Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project
Published on *Al-Islam.org* (https://www.al-islam.org)

Birth and Da'wah

At a market-place known as ‘Okaz, a great annual fair used to be held in the month of Thul-Qi’dah during which war and bloodshed were forbidden. At the time of the fair, ‘Okaz presented a scene of pleasure and abandonment with its dancing girls, gaming tables, drunken orgies, poetic contests and shows of prowess ending frequently in brawls and bloodshed. At one of the fairs, war broke out between Quraish and Banu Kinanah (the parent tribe) on one side and the Qais ‘Aylan on the other.

I happened during the sacred months (during which Arabs were supposed to stop all wars and feuds). This war continued for 9 years with a considerable loss of life and varying fortunes. This is referred to by historians as Harb al-Fijar or the “Sacrilegious War.’ Muhammad was 14 or 15 years old when he was obligated to take part twice to help his uncle Zubayr. His height was average, and so was his strength, yet he had a marked aptitude for archery and gave every promise of being an excellent bowman like his great ancestors Abraham and Ishmael. A powerful wartime asset of his lay in the strength of his eyesight: he was reputed to be able to count no less than twelve of the stars of the constellation of the Pleiades.

The lewd scenes, drunken affrays and the horrors of the war must have created a deep impression on the sensitive mind of young Muhammad whose heart bled as he witnessed the detestation that war had brought and for those who fell victim to it. Quraish were ultimately victorious. A league was formed, on the suggestion of Zubayr, Muhammad's uncle, to prevent disturbances of the peace, to help the victims of oppression, and to protect travellers. It was founded at the house of ‘Abdullah ibn Ju’dan. Muhammad took a very active interest in the functioning of this league which came into being as a result of a settlement known as Hilf al-Fudul between Banu Hashim, Banu Taym, Banu Asad, Banu Zuhrah and Banu Muttalib.

He, despite his young age, diligently worked to improve people's morals and ethics and to cultivate in their hearts the fear of the Almighty God. At the age of twenty, Muhammad proposed certain measures to contain if not end the violence and the injustice of the time. At this instance, Zubayr, the oldest surviving sons of ‘Abdul-Muttalib, formed a league whose members would explain to the main tribes comprising Quraish to bind themselves by an oath to secure justice to the helpless. The Hashimites, the

Banu Zohra, and the Banu Taym took part in the league and swore that they would stand up as the champions of the injured and would see that injustices did not remain unpunished and that the claims of the oppressed were fully satisfied. This oath is known as “Hilf al-Fudul,’ League of the Virtuous. It proved its usefulness both in preventing violence and as a means to enforce restitution. In his later years, Muhammad expressed his pleasure at having taken the initiative in that league which was formed at the house of ‘Abdullah ibn Jod’an. It continued to function for half a century following the inception of Islam.

Year of The Elephant (570 A.D.)

The above-mentioned episode had happened when ‘Abdul-Muttalib was young. Now we come to the most important event of his life. It took place just eight years before his death. By then, he was the patriarch of the tribe.

By the second millennium B.C., the Minaeans[1] of South Arabia had already extended their trade far into the north of the Arabian Peninsula. After them, the Sabeans created a kingdom which prevented the emergence of any strong central power. They were succeeded by the Himyarites (to whom Queen Balqees of Sheba [Saba'], wife of prophet Solomon, belonged) were lucky enough to escape the domination of the Roman empire after Aelius Gallus's attempt to subject them to the dominion of Augustus had misfired.

These Himyarites had once extended their kingdom to Abyssinia (Ethiopia) to the west of the Red Sea, but the tide of politics shifted. In 530 A.D., the Christian Abyssinian governor over Yemen and Southern Arabia, Abraha ibn al-Sabah al-Ashram, conquered South Arabia and pressed forward for an attack on Persia in the north but failed to advance beyond Mecca when his army was attacked, as we are told in the Holy Qur'an, by a heavenly host of tiny birds called Ababeel.

It was on August 29th of that year, the Year of the Elephant, that the last Messenger of God, Muhammad, was born. After his conquest of Yemen and Nejran, Abraha became the region's vicegerent on behalf of the Ethiopian Negus. He built a magnificent cathedral in San’a, Yemen, in the hope that it would supersede Mecca as the great place of pilgrimage for all Arabia. He had marble brought to it from one of the palaces of Balqees the Queen of Sheba and he set up crosses in it of gold and silver. Its pulpits were made of ivory and ebony.

He wrote to the Negus saying, “I have built thee a church, O King, the like of which was never built for any king before thee, and I shall not rest until I have diverted unto it the pilgrimage of the Arabs.’ He did not keep that thought to himself, and the tribes throughout Hijaz and Nejd were very angry. A man of Kinanah, a branch of Quraish, went to San’a for the deliberate purpose of defiling the church which he did one night then returned safely to his people.

When Abraha heard of it, he vowed that in revenge he would raze the Ka’ba to the ground. Having made

his preparations, he set off for Mecca with a large army in van of which he placed an elephant. Some Arab tribes of north San'a tried to stop him, but the Abyssinians overpowered them and captured their leader, Nufayl of Khath'am. By way of ransom for his life, Nufayl offered to act as Abraha's road guide. When Abraha's army reached Taif, the men of Thaqif came out to meet him, being afraid that he might destroy the temple they had built for their god al-Lat in mistake for the Ka'ba. They pointed out to him that he had not yet reached his destination, offering him a road guide of their own for the remainder of the trip. Although Nufyal was already with him, Abraha accepted their offer, but the Thaqif guide died on the way, about two miles from Mecca, at a place called al-Mughammis where he was buried. The Arabs took to stoning his grave which is still being stoned to this day.

Abraha halted at al-Mughammis and sent a detachment of horsemen to Mecca's outskirts. They plundered whatever they could find on the way and sent it back to Abraha including two hundred camels which were the property of 'Abdul-Muttalib, Muhammad's grandfather. Quraish and other neighbouring tribes held a war council and decided that it was useless to try to resist the enemy. Meanwhile, Abraha sent a messenger to Mecca to ask for their chief. He was to tell him that Abraha had not come to fight but only to destroy the Ka'ba, and if he wished to avoid bloodshed, he must come to the Abyssinian camp.

'Abdul-Muttalib, therefore, had no choice except to meet Abraha. When the latter saw him entering his tent, he was so impressed by him that he rose from his royal seat to greet him and to seat him beside himself on the carpet. Abraha did not speak Arabic; Amheric was his tongue, so he had to communicate with 'Abdul-Muttalib through an interpreter whom he told to inquire if 'Abdul-Muttalib had a favour to ask. 'Abdul-Muttalib replied that the army had taken two hundred of his camels and he asked that they should be returned to him. Abraha was surprised at this request and said that he was disappointed in him because he was thinking of his camels rather than his religion which was being attacked. 'Abdul-Muttalib replied, "I am the lord of the camels, and the Ka'ba likewise has a Lord Who will defend it.'

'Abdul-Muttalib returned with his camels to Quraish whom he advised to withdraw to the hills above the town. Accompanied by his family and others, he went to the Sanctuary, stood beside it then prayed the Almighty for His help against Abraha and his army. He took hold of the door of the Ka'ba and, crying to Allah, prayed in the following words (of poetry):

Allah! Surely a man defends his own home, therefore, Thou shouldst protect Thy Own House. Their cross and their wrath can never overcome Thy wrath. O Allah, help Thy Own people against the fellows of the cross and its worshippers.

'Abdul-Muttalib's light covered the Ka'ba, so much so that the Meccans asked him about it. "Go home! By Allah, never did my forehead's light overwhelm anything except that I won victory, and now it has done just that!' Then he, too, went to the summit of the hill, Abu Qubays. The next morning, Abraha prepared to march into the town with the intention to destroy the Ka'ba and then return to San'a. His elephant, richly decorated, was led into the front of the army which was already drawn up.

When the huge animal reached its position, his keeper Unays turned him the same way as the troops were turned, that is, towards Mecca, but instead of marching, the elephant knelt down and refused to move. Even beating him about the head with iron bars and sticking iron hooks into his belly did not stir him to move; he remained like a solid rock. When the entire army turned in the direction opposite of that of Mecca, the elephant voluntarily rose to its feet, turned around and followed. When they turned round about again in the direction of Mecca, the elephant knelt down as if it was prostrating in humility.

Earlier that same day, 'Abdul-Muttalib had an encounter with the elephant. He asked the animal, "Do you know why they had brought you here?' The animal beckoned with his head that he did not. "They brought you here so that you may demolish the House of your Lord. Are you going to do that?' The elephant shook his head as a signal negating that he would2. Then 'Abdul-Muttalib withdrew.

Suddenly the sky grew dark and a strange sound was heard. Soon a great wave of darkness swept upon the army from the direction of the sea, and the air above their heads, as high as they could see, was full of birds called "ababeel.' Those few who survived said that each bird had three pebbles the size of dried peas, one in its beak and one between the claws of each foot. They kept pelting Abraha's army with those pebbles which were very hard and launched with such velocity that they pierced even coats of mail.

Every stone found its mark and killed its man. As soon as a body was struck, its flesh began to rot, some more gradually than others. Among the survivors were Unays and the elephant, but all were terror-stricken. A few survivors remained in Hijaz and worked as shepherds or did other work, but the main part of the army returned in disorder to San'a. Many died by the wayside and many others, including Abraha, died soon after their return. After that day, Quraish were called "the people of God,' earning more respect than ever before because God had answered their prayers and saved the Ka'ba from destruction.

It is to this important event that Allah refers in Chapter 105:

In the Name of Allah, the most Gracious, the most Merciful
Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the fellows of the Elephant? Did He not make their treacherous plan go astray? And He sent against them birds in flocks, striking them with stones of baked clay, so He rendered them like straw eaten up. (**Qur'an, 105:1-5**)

Some historians have tried to minimize the impact of the Divine intervention by suggesting that the army perished because of an epidemic of smallpox. But that explanation creates more puzzles than it solves. How was it that the whole army was seized by that epidemic just when it was advancing on the Ka'ba? How was it that not a single soldier survived that epidemic? Why no Meccan caught that contagious epidemic? And, if there was no epidemic in Mecca before or after that sudden burst of the plague, where did that epidemic come from?

This epoch-making episode happened in 570 A.D. It was on August 29th of this same year that the

Prophet of Islam was born ‘Abdullah and Amina.

‘Abdullah son of ‘Abdul-Muttalib, Muhammad's father, was not in Mecca to witness that miracle. He had gone to trade in Palestine and Syria with one of the caravans. On his way home, he had lodged with his grandmother's family in Yathrib. It was there and then that he fell ill and shortly thereafter died at the youthful age of 25 before the birth of his holy son. To his wife Amina, the news was a death blow which she could not survive. Mecca was overtaken with grief at the news of ‘Abdullah's son. ‘Abdullah was greatly cherished, loved and respected as his father, the chief of Mecca.

Amina daughter of Wahab ibn ‘Abd Munaf, his wife and mother of our holy prophet Muhammad, never felt any heaviness on account of her pregnancy and, therefore, for quite some time could not tell for sure that she was pregnant. She was conscious of a light within her. One day it shone forth from her so intensely that she could see the castles of Bostra (or Busra) in Greater Syria (actually in Trans-Jordan, to be exact). She is reported to have said,

When I conceived him, I saw in a vision someone approaching me and saying to me: “You have conceived the best person among all mankind.’ In every month of that year, I used to hear someone calling from somewhere in the heavens: “Glad tidings! Time has come for the blessed one to come out to earth!’ When birth-pangs overtook me, I saw women as tall as palm-trees who gazed at me, whereupon a light emanated from me at the very moment when Muhammad emerged into the world, and I saw him prostrating, so much so that I was able, through that light, to see everything as far as the castles of Bostra.

It was then that I heard a voice saying: “Name him Muhammad, for I am the Praised One, and this is the one who will always be praised, and whose name I derived even from My own!’ I also saw three persons looking as though the sun rises from their faces and who were carrying a silver can and a wash bowl of green chrysolite. They washed him and marked the back area between his shoulders, then they wrapped him in silk and said to him: “Glad tidings to you, O one loved by Allah! You are the master of all the descendants of Adam, the dignity of life on earth, and the honour of the life hereafter! Congratulations to whoever accepts your call and loves you and upholds your *wasi* after you and the Imams from among your descendants, the *wasis* who will be pleased!’

The voice also told her ‘… When he is born, say: ‘I place him under the protection of the One God from the evil of every envier', then name him Muhammad.’ She was frightened and did not know what to make of that voice. In order to repel its effects, she was advised to wear iron lockers till her delivery. Indeed, what Amina heard had a precedent. In Genesis XVII:19, we read: “And God said (to Abraham): Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed, and thou shalt call his name Isaac.’ Also in Matthew I:21: “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus.’

At the time of Muhammad's birth, Amina was at her uncle's home, and she sent word to ‘Abdul-Muttalib asking him to come to see his grandson. ‘Abdul-Muttalib hastened joyfully to see the infant, took him in

his arms and went to the Ka'ba. There, he offered thanks to God for the gift and named him "Muhammad' which means "the praised.' Then he took him back to his mother. On the way, he showed him to his own family. He himself was shortly to have another son by Amina's cousin Hala. At the moment, his youngest son, 'Abbas, was three years old. Abbas met him at the house door. "This is your brother! Kiss him,' said he. And Abbas kissed him.

Amina's grief for the loss of her young husband was so intense, it dried the milk in her breasts, and she could not nurse Muhammad. For this reason, he had to be entrusted to Thuwayba, a maid servant of Abu Lahab, one of Muhammad's uncles, for a short period of time. Some tribes in Mecca were famous for nursing and rearing children, and one of them was that Banu Sa'd ibn Bakr, a branch of Hawazin, whose territory lay to the north-east of Mecca, the hills south of Taif, to be exact. Amina was in favour of entrusting her son to the care of a woman of this tribe.

And so it was: Halima daughter of Abu Thu'ayb of Banu Sa'd, wife of Harith, became Muhammad's nurse. Halima kept Muhammad with her for about five years. He was now grown up and no longer needed his foster mother's care. Halima reluctantly gave him back to his mother Amina. But Muhammad's mother did not enjoy the company of her first-born for any length of time: in 575 A.D., she proceeded to Medina accompanied by Umm Ayman to visit the grave of her late husband and to show her son to his father's maternal relatives.

Umm Ayman was the slave girl of 'Abdullah, Muhammad's father. After no longer than a month of staying at Medina, Amina felt that her heart was failing. She eventually died at Abwa' midway between Medina and Mecca where she was buried. Umm Ayman brought Muhammad, who was now six years old, back to Mecca where he was placed in the charge of his grandfather 'Abdul-Muttalib who had already reached the patriarchal age of four scores.

Umm Ayman remained his nurse. 'Abdul-Muttalib took charge of raising young Muhammad thereafter for no more than two years following which he died in 578 A.D., leaving an 8-year old orphan. Muhammad very bitterly felt the loss of his grandfather, and he followed his bier weeping. On his death-bed, 'Abdul-Muttalib embraced Muhammad for the last time and entrusted him to the care of his son Abu Talib, brother of 'Abdullah, Muhammad's father, by both parents, enjoining him to treat the orphan as he would his own son. Abu Talib very affectionately promised his father to do so, and he lived up to his promise. He loved Muhammad very much, let him sleep by his own bed-side and took him whenever he went. He continued doing so till Muhammad was about twelve years old.

Faith of The Ancestors of The Prophet

It is the accepted belief of the Shi'a Ithna-'Asheris, the Hanafis, and the Shafi'is, that the ancestors of the Prophet from 'Abdullah to Qidar ibn Isma'il, and from there right up to Adam, were true believers. They believed in the One and Only God and faithfully followed the Divine religion of their times. From Qidar to 'Abdullah, all of them followed the *Shari'a* of Prophet Ibrahim which was the religion prescribed

for them by God.

Imam Jalaluddin al-Sayyuti has written nine books on this subject and has proven beyond doubt that all the ancestors of the Prophet were true believers. Shaykh 'Abdul-Haqq Muhaddith Dehlawi has written the following: "All the ancestors of the Prophet from Adam up to 'Abdullah were pure and clean from the uncleanness of disbelief and paganism. It was not possible for Allah to put that Holy Light (of the Prophet) into dark and dirty places, i.e. the loin of a pagan man or the womb of a pagan woman. Also, how could it be possible for Allah to punish the ancestors of the Prophet on the Day of Judgement and thus humiliate him in the eyes of the world?'

The Prophet himself has said: "I was always being transferred from the loins of the clean ones to the wombs of the clean ones.'

'Allamah al-Majlisi3 has written that it is the unanimous belief of Shi'a scholars that the father, mother and all ancestors of the Prophet followed the true religion, that his Light never entered into the loin of any pagan man or the womb of any pagan woman. Also, they accept traditions saying that all his ancestors were "Siddiqun' (truthful ones): They were either prophets or successors of prophets (*wasis*).

After Isma'il, all his ancestors were successors of Isma'il. Other traditions specify that 'Abdul-Muttalib was a "Hujjat' (Proof) of Allah and that Abu Talib was his successor.

The Commander of the Faithful Ali ibn Abu Talib said: "By Allah, neither my father ever worshipped the idols, nor my grandfather 'Abdul-Muttalib, nor his father Hashim, nor his father 'Abd Munaf. They prayed facing towards the Ka'ba and followed the religion of Ibrahim.'

If you look again at the preceding life-sketches of some of the ancestors of the Prophet, you will find that many traditions established by them are now included into the tenets of Islam. Qusayy started the night-stay at al-Mash'ar al-Haram during the *hajj*, and Allah kept that system in Islam. Can anybody think that Allah would confirm a religious rite established by a pagan?!
Likewise, you have seen how the customs established by 'Abdul-Muttalib were adopted in Islam. Could Allah glorify 'Abdul-Muttalib if he had been a pagan?!

Also, read again the events of the discovery of Zamzam and the appearance of the well in the desert. Read again the events of 'Amul-Fil, and see the firm conviction that Allah would surely save His House. That statement, repeated several times, shows that 'Abdul-Muttalib knew before hand what was going to happen. Why was he so sure? There can only be one explanation: He was informed by Allah. And this, in turn, proves the earlier statement that he was a "Hujjat' of Allah.

In all these events and narrations, he is always seen praying to Allah, and there is no hint from any quarter that he ever prayed to the idols of Quraish (to Hubal, Lat or 'Uzza). When he finds Zamzam, he exclaims: '*Allahu Akbar!*' When he emphasizes anything, he swears by the Name of Allah. When he stakes his claim, he says that it was given to him by Allah. What further proof is needed to show that it

was a family of true believers?

The Prophet said: "Jibril (Gabriel) said to me: 'I searched the east and the west of the earth, but I did not find anyone superior to Muhammad; and I searched the east and the west of the earth, but I did not find the children of any father better than the children of Hashim.'"
Also, the Prophet said: "Verily, Allah chose Kinanah from the children of Isma'il, and He selected Quraish from Kinanah, chose the children of Hashim from Quraish, and selected me from the children of Hashim.'

'Abdullah

At the discovery of Zamzam, 'Abdul-Muttalib encountered the enmity of Quraish. He was quite worried because he had only one son to help him. He, therefore, prayed to Allah, making a *nathr* (vow, pledge or covenant) that if Allah gave him ten sons to help him against his enemies, he would sacrifice one of them to please Allah. His prayer was answered, and Allah gave him not ten but twelve sons, out of whom 5 are famous in the Islamic history: 'Abdullah (the Prophet's father), Abu Talib (Ali's father), Hamzah, 'Abbas and Abu Lahab. The other seven were: al-Harith (already mentioned), Zubayr, Ghaydaq, al-Muqawwim, Dharar, Qutham, and Hijl (or Mughirah). He had six daughters: 'Atika, Umayma, Bayda', Barra, Safiyya, and Arwi.

When ten sons were born, 'Abdul-Muttalib decided to sacrifice one of them according to his *nathr*. Lot was cast and 'Abdullah's name came out. 'Abdullah was the dearest to him, but he did not flinch from the decision of the fate. He took 'Abdullah's hands and started towards the place where sacrifices were offered. His daughters started crying, begging him to sacrifice ten camels in place of 'Abdullah. At first, 'Abdul-Muttalib refused. But when the pressure of the whole family and, in fact, the whole tribe, mounted, he agreed to cast lot between 'Abdullah and ten camels. Again the name of 'Abdullah came out. On the suggestion of the people, the number of the camels was increased to twenty; again, the same result. Repeatedly, the number was increased to thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty and ninety.

But the result was always the same. At last the lot was cast between 100 camels and 'Abdullah. Now the lot came out for the camels. The family was jubilant, but 'Abdul-Muttalib was not satisfied. He said: "Ten times the name of 'Abdullah has come out. It is not fair to ignore those lots just for one lot.' Three times more, he repeated the lot between 'Abdullah and 100 camels, and every time the lot came out for the camels. Then he sacrificed the camels, and the life of 'Abdullah was saved.

It was to this incident that the Prophet referred when once he said: "I am the son of the two sacrifices,' meaning the sacrifices of Isma'il and 'Abdullah.

The mother of 'Abdullah (and the grandmother of the Prophet) was Fatima daughter of 'Amr ibn 'Aith ibn 'Amr ibn Makhzum. She was also the mother of Abu Talib, Zubayr, Bayda', Umayma, Barra and 'Atika.

A year before “the year of the elephant,’ ‘Abdullah was married to Aminah daughter of Wahab ibn ‘Abd Munaf ibn Zuhrah ibn Kilab. In that very gathering, ‘Abdul-Muttalib married Hala, daughter of Wuhayb, a cousin of Amina. Hala gave birth to Hamzah, and Thuwayba, slave-girl of Abu-Lahab, breast-fed him. She also gave her milk to the Prophet for some time. Thus, Hamzah was the uncle of the Prophet and also his cousin as well as foster brother.

Various traditions put the age of ‘Abdullah at the time of his marriage at 17, 24 or 27 years.
‘Abdullah, like many other Meccan businessmen, used to go with the trade caravans to Syria. While returning, he fell ill and stayed at Yathrib. When ‘Abdul-Muttalib sent al-Harith to look after him and bring him back, he had already passed away. ‘Abdullah was buried in Yathrib. His grave was walled up by the Wahhabis and nobody was allowed to visit it. Then, in the 1970s, the Wahhabis dug up his body together with those of 7 companions of the Prophet and buried them somewhere else. It was done on the pretext of extending the Mosque.
‘Abdullah had left some camels, goats, and a slave-girl, Umm Ayman. The Prophet got them all as his inheritance.

Prophecies Predicting His Advent

The advent of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) was prophecized in sacred scriptures of many creeds. Here are proofs:

Prophecy in Hindu Sanskrit Scriptures:

Here is the original Sanskrit text:

Translation:
People, listen emphatically! The Man of Praise (Muhammad) will be raised among the people. We take the emigrant in our shelter from sixty thousand and ninety enemies whose conveyances are twenty camels and she-camels, whose loftiness of position touches the heavens and lowers it.

Prophecy in the Parsi (Ancient Persian) Scripture:

Here is the original text written in ancient Pahlavi[4]:

Translation:
When the Persians sink so low in morality, a man will be born in Arabia whose followers will upset their throne, religion and everything. The mighty stiff-necked ones of Persia will be over-powered. The house which was built (the Ka’ba) and in which many idols have been placed will be purged of idols, and people will say their prayes facing towards it. His followers will capture the towns of the Parsis and Taus and Balkh and other big places round about. People will embroil with one another. The wise men of Persia and others will join his followers.

Prophecy in the Bible:

Following is the text on pp. 225 – 227 of the Gospel of Saint Barnabas, an English translation by Lonsdale and Laura Ragg of the original Italian manuscript found at Vienna's Imperial Library:
The priest (disciple) asked, "How shall the Messiah be called, and what sign shall reveal his coming?' Jesus answered: "The name of the Messiah is Admirable, for God Himself gave him the name when He created his soul and placed it in celestial splendor. God said: 'Wait, Muhammad, for thy sake I will create Paradise, the world, and a great multitude of creastures whereas I make thee a present, in so much that whoso shall bless thee shall be blessed, and whoso shall curse thee shall be cursed.

When I shall send thee into the world, I shall send thee as My Messenger of Salvation, and thy word shall be true insomuch that the heavens and the earth shall fail but thy faith shall never fail.' Muhammad is his blessed name.' Then the crowd raised their voices saying, "O God! Send us Thy Messenger! O Muhammad! Come quickly for the salvation of the world!'

The Prophet is Born (570 A.D.)

Muhammad was born in such a family on Friday, the 17th of Rabi'ul–Awwal, in the first year of 'Amul–Fil, Year of the Elephant, which corresponded to August 29, 570 A.D., to bring the Message of God to the world. In Sunni circles, the 12th of Rabi'ul–Awwal is more famous. Thus, the prayer of Ibrahim while constructing the Ka'ba was granted:

"Lord! And raise a Messenger from among them who shall recite to them Thy verses, and teach them the Book and the wisdom, and purify them, indeed Thou art the Mighty, the Wise' **(*Qur'an, 2:129*).**

And the tidings of Christ came true:

Children of Israel! Surely I am the messenger of Allah to you, verifying that which is before me of the Torah and giving the good news of a Messenger who will come after me whose name will be Ahmad. **(Qur'an, 61:6)**

When Muhammad was about six years old (in 575 A.D.), he lost his mother as well; so, the doubly–orphaned child was brought up by 'Abdul–Muttalib with the most tender care. Umm Ayman was now his governess. It was the will of God that Muhammad should undergo all the suffering, pain and privation incidental to human life in order that he would bear them with becoming fortitude and raise his stature in human perfection. Not two years had passed before 'Abdul–Muttalib also expired.

'Abdul–Muttalib died in 578 A.D. at the age of 82, leaving the care and custody of the orphaned Muhammad to Abu Talib. Abu Talib and his wife, Fatima bint Asad, loved Muhammad more than their own children. As the Prophet himself said, Fatima bint Asad was his "mother' who kept her own children waiting while she fed the Prophet, kept her own children cold while she gave him warm clothes. Abu

Talib always kept the child with him day and night.

Abu Talib had succeeded ‘Abdul-Muttalib in *siqaya* and *rifada* and was an active participant in the trade caravans. When Muhammad was 12 years old (now we are in 582 A.D.), Abu Talib bade farewell to his family to go to Syria. Muhammad clung to him and cried. “Who are you leaving me with, O uncle,’ asked him Muhammad, “with my mother, or with my father?’ Both his parents had by then died. Abu Talib was so moved that he took the child with him. The caravan reached Busra (or Bostra) on the highway to the ancient city of Damascus, Syria. Abu Talib's trade caravan stayed near the monastery of a Nestorian[5] monk, Buhayrah, whose Christian name was Sergius (or Georgius) and whose small Nestorian church or monastery was on the highway to Bostra.

Buhayrah noticed something unusual about the caravan with which Abu Talib and Muhammad travelled: A piece of cloud was shadowing Muhammad from the merciless heat of the sun, going with him wherever he went. When he came and sat under a tree there, the tree branches bowed down as if they were paying him homage. All this was noticed by Buhayrah (or Bahirah) the monk who sent word to the caravan to go to his church cell to eat. That cell contained, among other few items, some old manuscripts among which was one that contained the prediction of the coming of a Prophet to the Arabs.

Buhayrah was quite familiar with the contents of that book. He felt that the coming of the prophet would soon take place, and during his own lifetime. This feeling was shared by another Christian monk who was living in Mecca, and his name was Waraqah ibn Nawfal. He was first cousin of Khadija daughter of Khuwaylid, wife of the Prophet . Buhayrah knew that such a sign was of great significance. “Could it be that he had at last come and was among those travellers?,’ He asked himself. “O men of Quraish! I have prepared food for you,’ he addressed them, “And I would like you to come to me, every one of you, young and old, bondman and freeman.’

They came to his cell. Muhammad was left to look after their camels and belongings. As they approached, Buhayrah examined them carefully, one by one, but he could not see anything corresponding to the description in his book, nor did anyone among them seem to be adequately great enough to warrant two miracles which he himself had just witnessed. Perhaps they had not all come to him, so he asked them: “Men of Quraish! Let none of you stay behind.’ “There is none that has been left behind,’ they said, “save a boy, the youngest among us.’ “Treat him not so,’ said Buhayrah, “but call him to come, and let him be present with us at this meal.’ Abu Talib and the others realized their thoughtlessness and blamed themselves, saying, “Ibn (the son of) ‘Abd-Allah should not have been left behind,’ and one of them went back to him, hugged him, and brought him to sit with everyone there.

The very first glance that Buhayrah cast at young Muhammad was sufficient to explain the miracles which he had just witnessed. He looked at him attentively the whole time, examining each movement he made and every word he uttered. When they had finished eating, Buhayrah went to his youngest guest and asked him a few questions about how he lived and slept, and about his general affairs. Muhammad

unhesitatingly informed him of these things, for he looked to him as a venerable man, and his questions were courteous. He did not even hesitate to draw off his cloak when finally the monk asked him if he could see his back, his shoulders. Buhayrah was now convinced beyond the shadow of doubt that he saw the new Arabian Messenger of Allah when the latter's shoulders were exposed to the examining eyes of Buhayrah the monk: the mark of the seal of Prophethood was there, just as it was described in his ancient book, and in the exact place.

He turned to Abu Talib and said: "What kinship hath this boy with thee?' "He is my son,' Abu Talib said. "He is *not* thy son,' the monk emphatically responded, adding, "it cannot be that this boy's father is alive.' "He is my brother's son,' said Abu Talib. "Then what of his father?' asked the monk. "He died,' said Abu Talib, "when the boy was still in his mother's womb.' "That is the truth,' said Buhayrah. "Take thy brother's son back to his country, and guard him against the Jews, for by God, if they see him and know of him that which I know, they will contrive evil against him. Great things are in store for this nephew of thine. He shall be the Prophet of this nation6.'

This encounter is recorded in several English references, but we would like to introduce to the reader another testimonial which he most likely has not read yet; it is an English translation from a major Arabic source; here it is:
Ibn Abbas, the Prophet's uncle, quotes his father Abbas who in turn quotes 'Abdul–Muttalib quoting Abu Talib as saying:

Eight years had passed since the birth of the Messenger of Allah when I went out to Syria in a trade caravan. It was extremely hot. When I decided to start the trip, some of my people said to me, "What will you do with Muhammad? And to whose charge are you going to leave him?' I said, "I shall not leave him with anyone; he will be with me.' They said, "Are you going to take a child out in such extremely hot weather?! Do you really take such person out with you?!' I said, "By Allah! He shall never part with me wherever I go, and I shall have a low conveyance for him.' Muhammad and the camel he was riding were in front of me, and he was always ahead of everyone else, always in the vanguard. Whenever the heat intensified, a white cloud like a piece of snow would greet him then stand over his head and would never leave him.

The cloud may even sometimes rain upon us different kinds of fruit as it followed us. We were short of water once to the extent that we could not buy a water–bag for less than two dinars, but whenever and wherever we alighted, lakes would be filled, water would become plentiful, and the ground would turn green with grass. We were enjoying fertility and goodness. The camels of some among us would refuse to advance, so Muhammad would rub his hands on them, and they would then instantly move on.

When we came near to Bostra, some priests advanced towards us as fast as beasts of burden. And the cloud never parted with the Messenger of Allah. A priest from among them did not pay any attention to the caravan or to any of its merchants, nor did he speak to anyone at all. He looked at Muhammad and immediately recognized him. I heard him saying, "If there is anyone at all, it has to be you!' We alighted

under a huge tree having only a few branches near the monk's monastery. It was not a fruit tree. Caravans used to sit in its shade. When the Messenger of Allah alighted under that tree, it shook and spread its branches over the Messenger of Allah, instantly bearing three kinds of fruit: two of them grow in the summer and one in the winter.

Each and every one of us was extremely surprised. When Buhayrah, the monk, saw that, he took sufficient food for the Messenger of Allah, then he came to us and asked us, “Who is in charge of this child?’ I said, “I am.’ He asked me, “What kinship are you to him?’ “His uncle,’ I said. He said, “Man, he has many uncles; which one of them are you?’ I said, “I am the brother of his father by the same mother.’ He said, “I testify that it is he or else I am not Buhayrah at all!’ Then he asked me,’Do you permit me to serve him this food so he may eat of it?’ I turned to the Prophet and said, “Son! There is a man here who would like to be generous to you; so, you may eat of his food.’ Muhammad asked me, “Is it food for just myself rather than for any of my companions?’ Buhayrah answered, “Yes, it is specifically for you.’

The Prophet said, “I shall not eat any food so long as these men do not.’ Buhayrah said, “But I do not have food more than this much.’ He now asked Buhayrah, “O Buhayrah! Do you permit them to eat with me?’ Buhayrah answered in the affirmative. He said, ‘*Bismillah*,’ then ate, and we ate with him. By Allah! We were one hundred and seventy men, and each one of us ate to his fill, so much so that we even belched! Buhayrah, meanwhile, was standing next to the Prophet, keeping insects away from him. He was puzzled to see how many men ate of that very little food. From time to time, Buhayrah would kneel down to kiss Muhammad's head and cheeks. Whenever he kissed him, he said, “It is he! It is he! I swear by the Lord of Jesus!’ People did not understand what he was talking about. One man from our caravan said to Buhayrah, “You surely must have something in mind!

We used to pass by you before, and you never offered us anything (to eat) at all!’ Buhayrah said, “By Allah I do have something in mind and something else, too, and I see what you do not see, and I know what you know not. Under this tree there is a child had you only come to know about him what I know, you would have carried him on your necks till you reach his land. By Allah! I have not been generous to you except for his own sake! I have seen how light came in front of him extending from the heavens to the earth. By Allah! I have seen men carrying fans of emeralds and sapphire fanning him and others scattering all kinds of fruit over him. Then I saw this cloud that never parts with him. Even my cell ran to him just as a beast of runs. Then I saw how this tree had very few branches then suddenly its branches became many, then it shook up and produced three different types of fruit: two typical of summer fruit and one typical of winter fruit.

Then I saw how these lakes had lost all their water since the Israelites became corrupted and since the disciples came to drink of them, so we found in the book of Simon of Safa that he had cursed them, so their water dried up. Then he (Simon) added saying that whenever those lakes become full of water, you should know that it is for the sake of a Prophet who will appear in the land of Tihama and who will

migrate to Medina. His name among his people is al-Ameen and in the heavens Ahmad, and he is from the progeny of Ishmael son of Abraham. By Allah! He is the one!'

Then Buhayrah added saying, "O child! I would like to ask you about three merits by the Lat and the 'Uzza!..' Hearing the names of the Lat and the 'Uzza, the Messenger of Allah became angry and said, "Do not ask me anything in their name, for by Allah, I hate nothing more than them. They are idols my people have carved.' Buhayra exultingly said, "This is one (Sign)!' Then he said, "By Allah, would you tell me..' Muhammad said, "Ask me whatever you wish, for you have asked me in the Name of my Lord and yours Who has no peer at all.' Buhayrah asked him about his sleep and his awakening, and Muhammad answered his questions. Then Buhayrah asked him about other matters, and Muhammad answered him, too.

Now Buhayrah knelt down and kissed Muhammad's feet as he said, "O son! How sweet your smell is! O one whose followers will be more numerous than those who follow any other prophet! O one whose light is the source of the light of the whole world! O one through whose name the mosques shall be populated! It is as though I see you leading the troops, those on foot and those on horseback, and Arabs and non-Arabs shall follow you willingly or unwillingly. It is as though I can see you smashing the Lat and the 'Uzza, and I see the Ka'ba controlled by none other than you; you shall put its keys wherever you please. How many a hero from Quraish and from the other Arab tribes shall you subdue? With you are the keys of the Garden and of the Fire, and the destruction of the idols shall take place at your hands. The Hour shall not come to pass except after all kings embrace your creed even against their will!'

He kept kissing his hands once and his feet another as he said, "If I live to see your advent, I shall strike with the sword just as an arm strikes another! You are the master of all the offspring of Adam, the master of the messengers, the Imam of the pious, the seal of the prophets! By Allah! The earth smiled on the day you were born, and it shall remain so till the Day of Judgment, happy on your account! By Allah! The synagogues and the idols wept and so did the devils, so they shall remain weeping till the Day of Judgment! You are the fulfillment of Abraham's plea to his Lord, the glad tidings of Jesus, the holy, the purified from the impurities of *jahiliyya*!' Then he turned to Abu Talib and said, "What kinship do you have with this child, for I see that you never part with him?' Abu Talib said, "He is my son.' Buhayrah said, "He is not thy son, for the son of this child cannot be living, nor can his mother.' Abu Talib said, "He is the son of my brother, and his father died when his mother was pregnant, then his mother died when he was six years old.'

Buhayrah said, "You have said the truth; such is he, but I think you ought to take him back to his land on this account, for there is no Jew nor a Christian nor anyone having a divine Book without having come to know about the birth of this child. If they see him and come to know about him just what I have come to know, they shall desire to harm him, and those who desire so most of all are the Jews.' Abu Talib asked him, "Why so?' Buhayrah said, "It is so because the son of your brother shall be both a Messenger and

a Prophet, and the Great Spirit (Gabriel) shall visit him just as he used to visit Moses and Jesus.'

Abu Talib said to him, "No, God willing, Allah shall never neglect him.' Then we left for Syria. When we came close to Syria, by Allah, I saw all the mansions of Syria as if they were shaking and a great streak of the sun was emanating from them. When we were in the middle of Syria, we could not traverse the Syrian market because of the stampede of people who were looking at the Messenger of Allah. And the news spread to all parts of Syria, so much so that not a single rabbi or priest remained without coming to meet him.

There are other eye witnesses who reported the same. They were some of the merchants who had participated in Abu Talib's trade caravan. Let us review some of these accounts:
Ya'li, the famous Arab genealogist, narrates the following:

Khalid ibn Aseed ibn Abul–'as and Taleeq ibn Abu Sufyan ibn Umayyah went out in the same trade caravan wherein the Messenger of Allah participated. They were with him, and they narrated saying that they observed him as he walked or rode or did anything to the animals or to the birds. They narrate saying: When he was in our midst as we reached Bostra's market, we came across a group of Christian priests. As soon as the priests saw us, the colour of their faces changed into yellow, as if saffron had painted their faces, looking as though they were struck by lightning.

They said to us, "You have to come to meet our most senior; he is nearby at the grand church.' We asked them, "Why should we? What do you have to do with us?' They said, "You will not be harmed in the least, and we may shower you with our generosity.' They thought that one of us was Muhammad. We went with them and entered the huge building of the church. Their most senior priest sat in the middle, and his students were all around him. He had opened a book in his hands and kept looking once at us and once at the book.

Then he said to his students (who had brought us to him), "You have not done anything at all. You did not bring me the person I seek although he is here (in town).' Then he asked us who we were, and we told him that we belonged to Quraish. "Which (clan) of Quraish do you belong to?' he asked. "To 'Abd Shams,' we answered. "Is there someone else besides you?,' he asked again. We said, "Yes, a child from Banu Hashim whom we call the orphan of 'Abdul–Muttalib.' By Allah, the moment he heard that, he gasped in a way that we thought he was going to faint. Then he leaped as he said, "Woe unto us! The Christians, by Christ, have surely perished!' Then he stood up and used one of his crosses as a cane to lean on, and he was very deeply indulged in his thoughts. As many as eighty patriarchs and a number of students were around him. He asked us, "Is it easy for you to let me see him?'

We answered him in the affirmative then he accompanied us and saw Muhammad standing at Bostra's market. By Allah, it was as if we never saw his face before, for it was shining like the moon, and he had bought a good deal of merchandise and earned a good deal of profit and also bought a good deal. We were about to tell the high priest that was him, but he was faster than us. "This is he! I have recognized

him, by Christ!,' said he. He came close to Muhammad, kissed his head then said, "You are the holy one!' Then he kept asking him about his marks of Prophethood, and the Prophet kept answering him. We heard the high priest saying this to him: "If I ever live till your time (of Prophethood) comes, I shall do justice to the sword.' Then he said to us, "Do you know what is with him? life and death are with him. Whoever clings to him shall live for a long time, and whoever departs from him dies a death after which there shall be no life at all. He is the one with whom the greatest victory is,' then he kissed his face and returned.[7]

The major Christian sects during Muhammad's lifetime were: the Copts, the Syrian (Chaldean) Nestorian (to whom Buhayrah belonged), and the Armenian Christians from the main churches of Antioch (Antakiya), Rome, and Egyptian Alexandria.

Abu Talib, acting on Buhayrah's advice, sold all his merchandise for cheaper prices then and there, returning at once to Mecca.
Sacrilegious War (Harbul-Fijar) (585 A.D.) and League of The Virtuous (Hilful-Fudul) (595 A.D.)

Muhammad Marries Khadija (595 A.D.)

Now, Muhammad was old enough to go with the trade caravans. But Abu Talib's financial position had become very weak because of the expenses of *rifada* and *siqaya*, and it was no longer possible for him to equip Muhammad with merchandise on his own. He, therefore, advised him to act as agent for a noble lady, Khadija bint Khuwaylid, who was the wealthiest person in Quraish.

Her genealogy joins with that of the Prophet at Qusayy. She was Khadija daughter of Khuwaylid ibn Asad ibn 'Abdul-'Uzza ibn Qusayy. She, hence, was a distant cousin of Muhammad.
The reputation which Muhammad enjoyed for his honesty and integrity led Khadija to willingly entrust her mercantile goods to him for sale in Syria. She sent him word through his friend Khazimah ibn Hakim, a relative of hers, offering him twice the commission she used to pay her agents to trade on her behalf. Muhammad, with the consent of his uncle Abu Talib, accepted her offer.

Most references consulted for this book make a casual mention of Khadija. This probably reflects a male chauvinistic attitude which does a great deal of injustice to this great lady, the mother of the faithful whose wealth contributed so much to the dissemination of Islam. It is not out of place at all that we should learn a little bit more about this great lady.

If you wish to research the life of this great lady, the best references are: al-Sayyuti's *Tarikh al Khulafa,* Abul-Faraj al-Isfahani's *Aghani,* Ibn Hisham's *Seera,* Muhammad ibn Ishaq's *Seerat Rasool-Allah,* and *Tarikh al-rusul wal muluk* by Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (839-923 A.D.). Of all these books, only al-Tabari's *Tarikh* is being translated (by more than one translator and in several volumes) into English. One publisher of Tabari's English *Tarikh* is the press of the State University of New York (SUNY).

“Islam did not rise except through Ali's sword and Khadija's wealth,’ a saying goes. Khadija al-Kubra daughter of Khuwaylid ibn (son of) Asad ibn ‘Abdul-’Uzza ibn Qusayy belonged to the clan of Banu Hashim of the tribe of Banu Asad. According to some historians, Quraish's real name was Fahr, and he was son of Malik son of Madar son of Kananah son of Khuzaimah son of Mudrikah son of Ilyas son of Mazar son of Nazar son of Ma’ad son of Adnan son of Isma’eel (Ishamel) son of Ibrahim (Abraham) son of Sam son of Noah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon the prophets from among his ancestors. According to a number of sources, Khadija was born in 565 A.D. and died in 620 A.D. at the age of 55, but some historians say that she died ten years later.

Khadija's mother, who, according to some sources, died around 575 A.D., was Fatima daughter of Za'ida ibn al-Asam of Banu ‘Amir ibn Ghalib, also a distant relative of Prophet Muhammad. Khadija's father, who died around 585 A.D., belonged to the ‘Abd al-’Uzza clan of the tribe of Quraish and, like many other Quraishis, was a merchant, a successful businessman whose vast wealth and business talents were inherited by Khadija and whom the latter succeeded in faring with the family's vast wealth. It is said that when Quraish's trade caravans gathered to embark upon their lengthy and arduous journey either to Syria during the summer or to Yemen during the winter, Khadija's caravan equalled the caravans of all other traders of Quraish put together.

Although the society in which Khadija was born was terribly male chauvinistic, Khadija earned two titles: *Ameerat-Quraish*, Princess of Quraish, and *al-Tahira*, the Pure One, due to her impeccable personality and virtuous character, not to mention her honourable descent. She used to feed and clothe the poor, assist her relatives financially, and even provide for the marriage of those of her kin who could not otherwise have had means to marry.

By 585 A.D., Khadija was left an orphan. Despite that, and after having married twice__and twice lost her husband to the ravaging wars with which Arabia was afflicted__, she had no mind to marry a third time though she was sought for marriage by many honourable and highly respected men of the Arabian peninsula throughout which she was quite famous due to her business dealings. She simply hated the thought of being widowed for a third time. Her first husband was Abu (father of) Halah Hind ibn Zarah who belonged to Banu ‘Adiyy, and the second was Ateeq ibn ‘aith. Both men belonged to Banu Makhzoom.

By her first husband, she gave birth to a son who was named after his father Hind and who came to be one of the greatest *sahabis* of the Prophet. He participated in both battles of Badr and Uhud, and he is also famous for describing the Prophet's physique; he was martyred during the Battle of the Camel in which he fought on the side of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib, although some historians say that he died in Basra. All biography accounts describe Hind as an outspoken orator, a man of righteousness and generosity, and one who took extreme caution while quoting the Messenger of Allah. Besides him, Khadija gave birth by Abu Halah to two other sons: al-Tahir, and, of course, Halah, who is not very well known to historians despite the fact that his father is nicknamed after him.

Who were Khadija's children by her second husband? This is another controversy that revolves round the other daughters or step-daughters of the Prophet besides Fatima. These daughters, chronologically arranged, are: Zainab, Ruqayya, and Umm Kulthoom. Some historians say that these were Khadija's daughters by her second husband, whereas others insist they were her daughters by Muhammad. The first view is held by Sayyid Safdar Husayn in his book *The Early History of Islam* wherein he bases his conclusion on the contents of al-Sayyuti's famous work *Tarikh al-khulafa wal muluk* (history of the caliphs and the kings). Here is a brief account of Khadija's daughters:

Zainab, their oldest, was born before the prophetic mission and was married to Abul-'As ibn al-Rabee'. She had accepted Islam before her husband did and participated in the migration from Mecca to Medina. She died early in 8 A.H./629 A.D. and was buried in Jannatul Baqee' where her grave can still be seen defying the passage of time. Ruqayya and Umm Kulthoom married two of Abu Lahab's sons. Abu Lahab, one of the Prophet's uncles, stubbornly and openly rejected his nephew's preaching; therefore, he was condemned in the Mecci Chapter 111 of the Holy Qur'an, a chapter named after him.

Having come to know about such a condemnation, he became furious and said to his sons, "There shall be no kinship between you and me unless you part with these daughters of Muhammad,' whereupon they divorced them instantly. Ruqayya married the third caliph 'Uthman ibn 'Affan and migrated with him to Ethiopia in 615 A.D., five years after the inception of the prophetic mission, accompanied by no more than nine others. That was the first of two such migrations. After coming back home, she died in Medina in 2 A.H./623 A.D. and was buried at Jannatul Baqee'. 'Uthman, thereafter, married her sister, Umm Kulthoom, in Rabi' al-Awwal of the next (third) Hijri year. Umm Kulthoom lived with her husband for about six years before dying in 9 A.H./630 A.D., leaving no children.

One particular quality in Khadija was quite interesting, probably more so than any of her other qualities mentioned above: she, unlike her people, never believed in nor worshipped idols. There was a very small number of Christians and Jews in Mecca, and a fairly large number of Jews in Medina. What brought those Jews to Mecca and Medina? Some of them had migrated from Nejran, Yemen, after being massacred by a fanatical Christian governor ruling on behalf of the Ethiopian Negus. The date of the massacre is 523 A.D., and its details are outside the scope of this book. Others had come from Greater Syria (including Jerusalem, Palestine) either escaping the persecution of the Romans or driven by curiosity and the desire to meet a new prophet of God whose advent was predicted in their books.

The Holy Qur'an tells us that Jewish scriptures make a reference to Prophet Muhammad, and here are proofs testifying to this fact not from the Holy Qur'an but from the Jews themselves:

'Abdullah ibn Salam, a Jewish rabbi who later on accepted Islam when the Prophet was in Medina, was asked once by ''Omar ibn al-Khattab,' Do you have any reference to Muhammad in your books?' "Yes, by Allah,' said 'Abdullah, "We can identify him by the description whereby Allah described him if we see him among you just as one of us identifies his son once he sees him in the company of other children.'[8]

According to the reference titled *Dala'il al-Nubuwwah*, Hassan ibn Thabit, the renown poet, is quoted by a chain of narrators saying, "By Allah! I was a young child of 7 or 8, yet I could very well understand whatever I heard. One day I heard a Jew on the summit of a hill shouting as loudly as he could for other Jews to go to him. 'Woe unto you,' said they, 'what is the matter with you?!' He said, 'The star that signals the birth of Ahmad the prophet did, indeed, appear last night!'"[9]

Imam al-Hasan, the oldest son of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib, is quoted in a lengthy statement saying,

A group of Jews came to the Messenger of Allah. The most knowledgeable person among them asked him about certain things, and he, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny, answered them for him. He, therefore, accepted Islam then took out a white sheet of *riqq* (papyrus) wherein he recorded the statements of the Prophet and said to him, "O Messenger of Allah! I swear by the One Who sent you a Prophet in truth that I have not copied this except from tablets which Allah, the most Exalted and the most Sublime, had dictated to Moses son of Amram ('Imran). I have also read in the Torah so many of your merits that I even doubted them.

For forty years, I have been wiping out any reference to you in the Torah, yet whenever I wiped it out, I saw it fixed again therein. I have read in the Torah that nobody can answer these questions (which I have just asked you) except you, and during the time wherein you answer them, Gabriel would be on your right, Michael on your left, and your *wasi* in front of you.' The Messenger of Allah said, "You have surely said the truth. Here is Gabriel on my right and Michael on my left and my *wasi* Ali ibn Abu Talib in front of me.' The Jew believed and proved that his conviction was sound.[10]

Waraqah ibn Nawfal, one of Khadija's cousins, had embraced Christianity and was a pious priest who believed in the Unity of the Almighty, just as early Christians did, that is, before the concept of the Trinity crept into the Christian faith, widening the theological differences among the believers in Christ. He reportedly had translated the Bible from Hebrew into Arabic. His likes could be counted on the fingers of one hand during those days in the entire populous metropolis of Mecca, or Becca, or Ummul-Qura (the mother town), a major commercial center at the crossroads of trade caravans linking Arabia with India, Persia, China, and Byzantium, a city that had its own Red Sea port at Shu'ayba.

Most importantly, Mecca houses the Ka'ba, the cubic "House of God' which has always been sought for pilgrimage and which used to be circled by naked polytheist "pilgrims' who kept their idols, numbering 360 small and big, male and female, inside it and on its roof-top. Among those idols was one for Abraham and another for Ishmael, each carrying divine arrows in his hands. Hubal, a huge idol in the shape of a man, was given as a gift by the Moabites of Syria to the tribesmen of Khuza'ah, and it was Mecca's chief idol.

Two other idols of significance were those of the Lat, a grey granite image which was the deity of Thaqif in nearby Taif, and the 'Uzza, also a block of granite about twenty feet high. These were regarded as the wives of the Almighty... Each tribe had its own idol, and the wealthy bought and kept a number of idols

at home. The institute of pilgrimage was already there; it simply was not being observed properly, and so was the belief in Allah Whom the Arabs regarded as their Supreme deity. Besides Paganism, other “religions’ in Arabia included star worship and fetishism.

The Jews of Medina had migrated from Palestine and Yemen and settled there waiting for the coming of a new Prophet from the seed of Abraham in whom they said they intended to believe and to be the foremost in following, something which unfortunately did not materialize; on the contrary, they joined ranks with the Pagans to fight the spread of Islam as the reader will come to know later in this book. Only a handful of them embraced Islam, including one man who was a neighbour of Muhammad; he lived in the same alley in Mecca where Khadija's house stood; his wife, also Jewish, used to collect dry thorny bushes from the desert just to throw them in the Prophet's way.

Since Khadija did not travel with her trade caravans, she had always had to rely on someone else to act as her agent to trade on her behalf and to receive an agreed upon commission in return. In 595 A.D., Khadija needed an agent to trade in her merchandise going to Syria, and it was then that a number of agents whom she knew before and trusted, as well as some of her own relatives, particularly Abu Talib, suggested to her to employ her distant cousin Muhammad ibn ‘Abdullah who, by then, had earned the honoring titles of *al-Sadiq*, the truthful, and *al-Amin*, the trustworthy. Muhammad did not have any practical business experience, but he had twice accompanied his uncle Abu Talib on his trade trips and keenly observed how he traded, bartered, bought and sold and conducted business; after all, the people of Quraish were famous for their involvement in trade more than in any other profession.

It was not uncommon to hire an agent who did not have a prior experience; so, Khadija decided to give Muhammad a chance. He was only 25 years old. Khadija sent Muhammad word through Khazimah ibn Hakim, one of her relatives, offering him twice as much commission as she usually offered her agents to trade on her behalf. She also gave him one of her servants, Maysarah, who was young, brilliant, and talented, to assist him and be his bookkeeper. She also trusted Maysarah's account regarding her new employee's conduct, an account which was most glaring, indeed one which encouraged her to abandon her insistence never to marry again.

Before embarking upon his first trip as a businessman representing Khadija, Muhammad met with his uncles for last minute briefings and consultations, then he set out on the desert road passing through Wadi al-Qura, Midian, and Diyar Thamud, places with which he was familiar because of having been there at the age of twelve in the company of his uncle Abu Talib. He continued the lengthy journey till he reached Busra (or Bostra) on the highway to Damascus after about a month.

It was there that he had met Buhayrah the monk when he was a child. Buhayrah had died and was succeeded in the monastery by Nestor. Busra, the city, was then the capital of Hawran, one of the southeastern portions of the province of Damascus situated north of the Balqa'. To scholars of classic literature, Hawran is known by its Greek name Auranitis, and it is described in detail by Yaqut al-Hamawi, Abul-Faraj al-Isfahani, and others. Arab trade caravans used to go there quite often and even

beyond it to Damascus and Gaza, and few made it all the way to the Mediterranean shores to unload their precious cargoes of Chinese paper and silk textiles bound for Europe.

What items did Muhammad carry with him to Busra, and what items did he buy from there? Meccans were not known to be skilled craftsmen, nor did they excel in any profession besides trade, but young Muhammad might have carried with him a cargo of hides, raisins, perfumes, dried dates, light weight woven items, probably silver bars, and most likely some herbs. He bought what he was instructed by his employer to buy: these items may have included manufactured goods, clothes, a few luxury items to sell to wealthy Meccans, and maybe some household goods.

Gold and silver currency accepted in Mecca included Roman, Persian, and Indian coins, for Arabs during those times, including those who were much more sophisticated than the ones among whom Muhammad grew up such as the Arabs of the southern part of Arabia (Yemen, Hadramout, etc.), did not have a currency of their own; so, barter was more common than cash. The first Arab Islamic currency, by the way, was struck in Damascus by the Umayyad ruler ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan (697-698 A.D.) in 78 A.H./697 A.D., 36 years after the establishment of the Umayyad dynasty (661-750).

The time Muhammad stayed in Busra was no more than a couple of months during which he met many Christians and Jews and noticed the theological differences among the major Christian sects that led to the disassociation of the Copts, the Syrian (Chaldean) Nestorian, and the Armenian Christians from the main churches of Antioch (Antakiya), Rome, and Egyptian Alexandria. Such dissensions and differences of theological viewpoints provided Muhammad with plenty of food for thought; he contemplated upon them a great deal.

There is another testimonial to the cloud that shaded young Muhammad; it comes from the holy and pure offspring of Muhammad. Imam al-Hasan al-’Askari[11] has narrated saying that he once asked his father (Imam) Ali ibn Muhammad, peace be upon them, about the miracles performed by the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny, in Medina and Mecca. Here is what Imam al-’Askari said to his son:

son! As for the cloud (that used to shade the Prophet), when the Messenger of Allah travelled to Syria to trade on behalf of Khadija daughter of Khuwaylid, and the distance from Mecca to Jerusalem was one month on foot, they used to suffer from the extreme heat of the sun in those open plains. The wind would blow at them and would pour on them sands and dust. During those times, Allah Almighty used to send a cloud to His Messenger in order to shade him. It would stop whenever he stopped and resume whenever he did. If he advanced, it would advance, and if he lagged behind, it would do the same. If he went to the right, it, too, would go to the right, and if he went to the left, it would go there, too. It used to protect him from the heat of the sun from above.

The wind that used to stir the sands and the dust would do so in the faces of the Quraishites and their camels, but when it came close to Muhammad, it would become calm and quiet, and it would carry

neither sands nor dust. Instead, an easy and cool breeze would blow on him, so much so that Quraish used to say, “Muhammad's company is better than a tent!’

They used to seek refuge with him and try to earn his friendship. Comfort was theirs whenever they were near him even when the cloud was actually intended only for him. When strangers intermingled with their (the Quraishites') caravans, the cloud would distance itself from them. They would then inquire, “Whom is this cloud serving?! Whoever it serves is surely honored and revered.’

The cloud would then address those in the caravan saying, “Look at the cloud, and you will see that it is written on it: ‘There is no god except Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; I support him through Ali, the master of *wasis*, and distinguished him through his Progeny who are loyal to him, and to Ali, and to their friends, who are the enemies of his opponents.’ All this would be readable and comprehensible to those who knew and were skilled in reading and writing as well as to those who did not.[12]15

While in Syria, a monk named Nestor observed some signs of Prophethood about Muhammad, so he asked Maysarah, “Is there a glow, a slight redness, around his eyes that never parts with him?’ Nestor asked Maysarah. When the latter answered in the affirmative, Nestor said, “He most surely is the very last Prophet; congratulations to whoever believes in him.’ And Nestor very much desired to see Muhammad. The rest of the story is narrated by ‘Abbas, Muhammad's uncle, who quotes ‘Abdul-Muttalib quoting Abu Talib saying,

We once took Muhammad on a (business) trip to Syria. When we were in the marketplace, a high priest named Nestor came and sat in front of him, looking at him without saying anything. He kept doing so for three consecutive days. He then could no longer do so without going to him and coming behind him, as if he was requesting him for something. I said to him, “O monk! Do you want anything from him?’ “Yes,’ Nestor said, “I do want something from him. What is his name?’ “Muhammad son of ‘Abdullah,’ said I. By Allah, his face changed colour, then he said, “Could you please ask him to agree to uncover his back so that I may look at it?’

Muhammad drew his garment from his back, and when Nestor saw the mark of Prophethood on it, he kept kissing him and crying. Then he said, “O man! Hurry and take this child back to the place where he was born, for if you only know how many his enemies in our land are, you will not even think much of the reason because of which you came here.’ Nestor kept looking after him every day, carrying food for him. When we departed from Syria, Nestor brought Muhammad a shirt and said to him, “Could you please wear this shirt so that you may remember me thereby?’

But Muhammad did not accept it, and I noticed how he did not like the idea, so I took the shirt myself so that his feelings would not be hurt and said to him, “I shall wear it.’ Then I hurried and took Muhammad back to Mecca. By Allah, not a single woman or man, young or old, stayed without eagerly welcoming him back with the exception of Abu Jahl, may Allah curse him, for he then had drunk so much wine that he was completely drunk.’[13]

If you are not convinced yet, here is another testimonial to that incident:
Bakr ibn ‘Abdullah al-Ashja’i quotes his forefathers saying that in the same year when the Messenger of Allah went to Syria, ‘Abd Manat ibn Kinanah, Nawfal ibn Mu’awiyah ibn ‘Orwah ibn Sakhr ibn Nu’man ibn ‘Adiyy also went out as businessmen. When Abu al-Muwayhib, the monk, met them, he asked them, “Who are you?’ “Merchants from Quraish, people of the sanctuary.’ “From which (clan of) Quraish are you?’ He asked them again. They answered his question, whereupon he asked them, “Is there anyone else from Quraish in your company?’ They said, “Yes, a young man from Banu Hashim named Muhammad.’

Abu al-Muwayhib then said, “He, by Allah, is the one I am seeking!’ They said to him, “By Allah, there is none among the Quraishites more obscure than him, and they refer to him only as the orphan of Quraish. He is hired by one of our women named Khadija; so, what do you want with him?’ He kept moving his head as he said, “He is the one! He is the one!’ Then he requested them to take him to meet Muhammad. “We left him (trading) at Bostra's market.’ Just as they were talking thus, the Messenger of Allah came. The monk immediately said, “This is the one!’

He spent an hour in a dialogue talking to him, then he kissed his forehead and took out something from his pocket which we could not tell what it was. He kept asking Muhammad to take it from him as a gift, and Muhammad kept refusing. Once he left him, he said to us, “Do you accept my advice? This, by Allah, is the last Prophet! By Allah, he will soon invite people to testify that: *La ilaha illa Allah, Muhammadun Rasool-Allah*; so, when he does so, you should follow him.’ Then he asked us, “Does his uncle Abu Talib have a son named Ali?’ We answered him by saying, “No.’ “He must have either been born, or he will be born this year[14].

He will be the first to believe in him. We know him, and we have a description of him as the *wasi* just as we have Muhammad described as the Prophet. He shall be the master and the scholars of the Arabs among whom he will be like Thul-Qarnain. He will be the most prominent among all creation on the Day of Judgment next only to the prophets. Angels call him “the victorious hero;’ wherever he goes, victory shall go with him. By Allah, he is more known in the heavens than the shining sun.’[15]

One of Muhammad's observations when he was in that Syrian city was the historical fact that a feud was brewing between the Persian and Roman empires, each vying for hegemony over Arabia's fertile crescent. Indeed, such an observation was quite accurate, for after only a few years, a war broke out between the then mightiest nations on earth that ended with the Romans losing it, as the Holy Qur'an tells us in Chapter 30 (The Romans), which was revealed in 7 A.H./615-16 A.D., only a few months after the fall of Jerusalem to the Persians, just to win in a successive one.

Only four years prior to that date, the Persians had scored a sweeping victory over the Christians, spreading their control over Aleppo, Antioch, and even Damascus. Muhammad was concerned about either of these two empires extending its control over the land inhabited by Muhammad's fiercely independent Pagan people. The loss of Jerusalem, birthplace of Christ Jesus son of Mary, was a heavy

blow to the prestige of Christianity. Most Persians were then following Zoroastrianism, a creed introduced in the 6th century before Christ by Zoroaster (628–551 B.C.), also known as Zarathustra, whose adherents are described as worshippers of the "pyre,' the holy fire. "Persia,' hence, meant "the land of the worshippers of the pyre, the sacred fire.'

Modern day Iran used to be known as "Aryana,' land of the Aryan nations and tribes. Not only Iranians, but also Kurds, and even Germans, prided in being Aryans, (Caucasian) Nordics or speakers of an Indo–European dialect. Some Persians had converted to Christianity as we know from Salman al–Farisi who was one such adherent till he fell in captivity, sold in Mecca and freed to be one of the most renown and cherished *sahabis* and narrators of *hadith* in Islamic history, so much so that the Prophet of Islam said, "Salman is one of us, we Ahl al–Bayt (People of the Household of Prophethood).'

The war referred to above was between the then Byzantine (Eastern Roman) emperor Heraclius (575 – 641 A.D.) and the Persian king Khusrau (Khosrow) Parwiz (Parviz) or Chosroes II (d. 628 A.D.). It was one of many wars in which those mighty nations were embroiled and which continued for many centuries. Yet the hands of Divine Providence were already busy paving the path for Islam: the collision between both empires paved the way for the ultimate destruction of the ancient Persian empire and in Islam setting root in that important part of the world.

Moreover, Muhammad's (and, naturally, Khadija's) offspring came to marry ladies who were born and raised at Persian as well as Roman palaces. Imam Husain ibn Ali ibn Abu Talib, Muhammad's grandson and our Third Holy Imam, married the daughter of the last Persian emperor Jazdagird (Yazdegerd) III son of Shahryar and grandson of this same Khusrau II. Jazdagerd ruled Persia from 632–651 A.D. and lost the Battle of Qadisiyyah to the Muslim forces in 636 A.D., thus ending the rule of the Sassanians. Having been defeated, he fled for Media in northwestern Iran, homeland of Persian Mede tribesmen, and from there to Merv, an ancient Central Asian city near modern day Mary in Turkmenistan (until very recently one of the republics of the Soviet Union), where he was killed by a miller.

Three–story House of Lady Khadija (*a.s.*) (*left side of the photo*) *which used to be home of the Prophet* (*s.a.w*) *and where Fatima al–Zahra* (*a.s*) *was born. It appears to be a 3–story Yemenite style building. It was located in the goldsmiths' market in Mecca. The Saudi government demolished it in 1413 A.H./1992 A.D.*

The profits Khadija reaped from that trip were twice as much as she had anticipated. Maysarah was more fascinated by Muhammad than by anything related to the trip. Muhammad, on the other hand, brought back his impressions about what he had seen and heard, impressions which he related to his employer. You see, those trade caravans were the only links contemporary Arabs had with their outside world: they brought them the news of what was going on beyond their drought–ridden and Õfamine–stricken desert and sand dunes.

Like Bahiyrah (or Buhayrah), the monk who had met and spoken to Muhammad when Muhammad was a lad, Waraqah ibn Nawfal adhered to the Nestorian Christian sect. He heard the accounts about the personality and conduct of young Muhammad from both his cousin Khadija and her servant Maysarah, an account which caused him to meditate for a good while and think about what he had heard. Raising his head, he said to Khadija, “Such manners are fit only for the messengers of God. Who knows? Maybe this young man is destined to be one of them.’ This statement was confirmed a few years later, and Waraqah was the very first man who recognized Muhammad as the Messenger of Allah immediately after Muhammad received the first revelation at Hira cave.

The trip's measure of success encouraged Khadija to employ Muhammad again on the winter trip to southern Arabia, i.e. Yemen, the land that introduced the coffee beans to the rest of the world, the land where the renown Ma’rib irrigation dam was engineered, the land of Saba’ and the renown Balqees, the Arabian Queen of Sheba (Saba’) of Himyar, who married prophet Solomon (Sulayman the wise, peace be upon him), in 975 B.C. (after the completion of the construction of the famous Solomon's Temple16), the land of natives skilled in gold, silver and other metal handicrafts, not to mention their ingenuity in the textile industry and domestic furniture..., and it may even be the land that gave Arabic its first written script which, as some believe, was modelled after written Amheric, then the official language in Ethiopia and its colonies. Yemen, at that time, was being ruled by an Ethiopian regent. This time Khadija offered Muhammad three times the usual commission. Unfortunately, historians do not tell us much about this second trip except that it was equally profitable to both employer and employee. Some historians do not mention this trip at all.

Khadija was by then convinced that she had finally found a man who was worthy of her, so much so that she initiated the marriage proposal herself. Muhammad sat to detail all the business transactions in which he became involved on her behalf, but the wealthy and beautiful lady of Quraish was thinking more about her distant cousin than about those transactions. She simply fell in love with Muhammad just as the daughter of the Arabian prophet Shu’ayb had fallen in love with then fugitive prophet Moses. Muhammad was of medium stature, inclined to slimness, with a large head, broad shoulders and the rest of his body perfectly proportioned.

His hair and beard were thick and black, not altogether straight but slightly curled. His hair reached midway between the lobes of his ears and shoulders, and his beard was of a length to match. He had a noble breadth of forehead and the ovals of his large eyes were wide, with exceptionally long lashes and extensive brows, slightly arched but not joined. His eyes were said to have been black, but other accounts say that they were brown, or light brown. His nose was aquiline and his mouth was finely shaped. Although he let his beard grow, he never allowed the hair of his moustache to protrude over his upper lip. His skin was white but tanned by the sun. And there was a light on his face, a glow, the same light that had shone from his father, but it was more, much more powerful, and it was especially apparent on his broad forehead and in his eyes which were remarkably luminous.

By the time he was gone, Khadija sought the advice of a friend of hers named Nufaysa daughter of Umayyah. The latter offered to approach him on her behalf and, if possible, arrange a marriage between them. Nufaysa came to Muhammad and asked him why he had not married yet. “I have no means to marry,’ he answered. “But if you were given the means,’ she said, “and if you were bidden to an alliance where there is beauty and wealth and nobility and abundance, would you not then consent?’ “Who is she?!’ he excitedly inquired. “Khadija,’ said Nufaysa. “And how could such a marriage be mine?!’ he asked. “Leave that to me!’ was her answer. “For my part,’ he said, “I am willing.’

Nufaysa returned with these glad tidings to Khadija who then sent word to Muhammad asking him to come to her. When he came, she said to him: son of my uncle! I love you for your kinship with me, and for that you are ever in the center, not being a partisan among the people for this or for that. And I love you for your trustworthiness, and for the beauty of your character and the truth of your speech.

Then she offered herself in marriage to him, and they agreed that he should speak to his uncles and she would speak to her uncle ‘Amr son of Asad, since her father had died. It was Hamzah, despite being relatively young, whom the Hashemites delegated to represent them on this marriage occasion, since he was most closely related to them through the clan of Asad; his sister Safiyya had just married Khadija's brother ‘Awwam.

It was Abu Talib, Muhammad's uncle, who delivered the marriage sermon saying,
All praise is due to Allah Who has made us the progeny of Ibrahim (Abraham), the seed of Isma’eel (Ishmael), the descendants of Ma’ad, the substance of Mudar, and Who made us the custodians of His House and the servants of its sacred precincts, making for us a House sought for pilgrimage and a shrine of security, and He also gave us authority over the people.

This nephew of mine Muhammad cannot be compared with any other man: if you compare his wealth with that of others, you will not find him a man of wealth, for wealth is a vanishing shadow and a fickle thing. Muhammad is a man whose lineage you all know, and he has sought Khadija daughter of Khuwaylid for marriage, offering her such-and-such of the dower of my own wealth.

Nawfal then stood up and said, All praise is due to Allah Who has made us just as you have mentioned and preferred us over those whom you have indicated, for we, indeed, are the masters of Arabs and their leaders, and you all are worthy of this (bond of marriage). The tribe (Quraish) does not deny any of your merits, nor does anyone else dispute your lofty status and prestige. And we, furthermore, wish to be joined to your rope; so, bear witness to my words, O people of Quraish! I have given Khadija daughter of Khuwaylid in marriage to Muhammad ibn ‘Abdullah for the dower of four hundred dinars.

Then Nawfal paused, whereupon Abu Talib said to him, “I wished her uncle had joined you (in making a statement).’ Hearing that, Khadija's uncle stood up and said, “Bear witness, O men of Quraish, that I have given Khadija daughter of Khuwaylid in marriage to Muhammad ibn ‘Abdullah.’

All this took place in the same year: 595 A.D. These details and more are recorded in Ibn Hisham's

Seera. After his marriage, Muhammad moved from his uncle's house to live with his wife. That house stood at the smiths' market, an alley branching out of metropolitan Mecca's long main bazaar, behind the *mas'a*, the place where the pilgrims perform the seven circles during the *hajj* or *umra*. In that house Fatima was born and the revelation descended upon the Messenger of Allah many times. This house, as well as the one in which the Prophet of Islam was born (which stood approximately 50 meters northwards), were both demolished by the ignorant and fanatical Wahhabi rulers of Saudi Arabia in 1413 A.H./1993 A.D. and turned into public bathrooms... The grave sites of many family members and companions of the Prophet had already been demolished by the same Wahhabis in 1343 A.H./1924 A.D. against the wish and despite the denunciation of the adherents of all other Muslim sects and schools of thought world-wide.

The marriage was a very happy one, and it produced a lady who was one of the four perfect women in all the history of mankind: Fatima daughter of Muhammad. Before her, Qasim and 'Abdullah were born, but they both died at infancy.

By the time Khadija got married, she was quite a wealthy lady, so wealthy that she felt no need to keep trading and increasing her wealth; instead, she decided to retire and enjoy a comfortable life with her husband who, on his part, preferred an ascetic life to that of money making.

The Messenger of Allah had no desire to accumulate wealth; that was not the purpose for which he, peace and blessings of Allah upon him and his progeny, was created. He was created to be the savior of mankind from the darkness of ignorance, idol worship, polytheism, misery, poverty, injustice, oppression, and immorality. He very much loved to meditate, though his meditation deepened his grief at seeing his society sunk so low in immorality, lawlessness, and the absence of any sort of protection for those who were weak and oppressed. Khadija's period of happiness lasted no more than 15 years after which her husband started his mission to invite people to the Oneness of God, to equality between men and women, and to an end to the evils of the day.

Ali is Born (600 A.D.)

Fatima bint Asad, Abu Talib's wife, raised Muhammad for a number of years. She was pregnant when Muhammad's second son, 'Abdullah, died. Having seen how Muhammad had lost both his sons Qasim and 'Abdullah, she felt very sorry for Muhammad. She told him that upon birth, her child, whether male or female, would be his. Fatima bint Asad felt how her unborn baby compelled her to stand up in order to express her respect for Muhammad whenever he came to visit them and never allowed her to turn her face from his as long as he was there.

Ordinarily, it should have been the other way around because Fatima was Muhammad's aunt and senior in age; he, not she, would have been the one to stand up for her... Her offer proved to be a divine decree because when she delivered, the newborn was none other than Ali who was destined to be Muhammad's right hand.

Ali was born in 600 A.D. inside the precincts of the Ka'ba, the holiest of holy places, where no other human being besides him was ever born. Muhammad was then thirty years old. Ali first opened his eyes on the sacred face of Muhammad who lovingly took him in his arms and gave him his first bath. That was a prediction that this same baby would give Muhammad his very last bath, his funeral bath, one's favour reciprocated by the other.

For several days after his birth, Ali accepted no milk but the moisture of Muhammad's tongue which he sucked and whereby he was nourished. Ali felt comfortable in Muhammad's lap and slept often by his side in the same bed, enjoying the warmth of his cousin's body and inhaling the sacred fragrance of his breath. When he grew up, Ali followed Muhammad like his shadow and on many occasions offered his life as a sacrifice for his own.

Reconstruction of The Ka'ba (605 A.D.)

Five years later, that is, in about 605 A.D., when the Prophet was 35 years old, a flood swept Mecca and the building structure of the Ka'ba was badly damaged. Quraish decided to rebuild it. Due to the fact that the Ka'ba did not have a roof, some thieves had clambered over the walls and stolen some of its precious relics which were, however, recovered. It was decided to raise the walls to a greater height (in order to make them inaccessible to thieves) and to cover the Ka'ba with a roof. A Greek ship had been wrecked on the shores of the Red Sea near Shu'ayba, ancient harbor of Mecca. Al-Walid ibn al-Mughirah purchased the timber of the wrecked ship and commissioned its captain, Baqum, who was also a skilled architect, to assist in the reconstruction of the Ka'ba.

When the walls reached a certain height, a dispute arose between various clans as to whom should the honour of placing the Black Stone (al-Hajar al-Aswad) in its place go. This dispute threatened to assume serious proportions. At last, Abu Umayyah, who belonged to Banu Makhzum, and who was brother of the above-mentioned al-Walid, father of the renown military commander Khalid ibn al-Walid, being the oldest, suggested that anyone who happened to enter the sacred precincts of the Ka'ba through the gate of Banu Shaybah should be chosen to arbitrate in the dispute or he himself would place the Black Stone.

As luck would have it, that first person was none but Muhammad. Quraish were pleased with the turn of the events because the Prophet was well-recognized as the Truthful and Trust-worthy.
Muhammad took two steps in order to solve the dispute:

First, he divided the numerous clans comprising Quraish into four bodies. These were: 1) Banu 'Abd Munaf, including the descendants of Hashim, 'Abd Shams, and Banu Zuhra; 2) Banu Asad and 'Abd al-Dar; 3) Banu Makhzum and Banu Taym; and 4) Banu Sahm, 'Adi and 'Amr ibn Lu'ay.

Second, he put his own mantle on the ground and put the Black Stone on it, telling the disputing clans to send one representative each to hold the corners of the mantle and to raise it. When the mantle was

raised to the required level, he took hold of the Stone and put it in its place. This was a judgement which settled the dispute to the satisfaction of all parties concerned.

At this time, he had occasion to enter into several business partnerships and always acted with great integrity in his dealings with his business partners. ‘Abdullah, son of Abu Hamzah, narrates that he had entered into a transaction with Muhammad. Its details had yet to be finalized when he had suddenly to leave promising that he would return soon. After three days, when he went again to the spot, he found Muhammad waiting for him. Muhammad did not remonstrate with him. He just said that he had been there for all those three days waiting for him. Saib and Qays, who also had business transactions with him, testify to his exemplary dealings. People were very impressed by his uprightness and integrity, by the purity of his life, his unflinching fidelity, and his strict sense of duty.

Arabia's Jahiliyya

It was an age of ignorance (*Ayyamul–Jahiliyyah*) in which, generally speaking, moral rectitude and the spiritual code had long been forgotten. The tenets of the Divine religion had been replaced by superstitious rites and dogmas.

Only a few Quraishites (the forefathers of the Prophet) and a handful of others remained followers of the religion of Ibrahim, but they were an exception and were not able to exert any influence on others who were deeply submerged in pagan rites and beliefs.

There were those who did not believe in God at all and thought that life was just a natural phenomenon. It is about these people that the Qur'an says:

And they say: There is nothing but our life of this world; we live and die and nothing but time annihilates us. **(Qur'an, 45:24)**

Some believed in God but not in the Day of Resurrection and reward and punishment. It is against their belief that the Qur'an says:

Say: He will give life to them Who brought them into existence at first. **(Qur'an, 36:79)**

While a few believed in God as well as in the reward and punishment in the life hereafter, they did not believe in Prophethood. It is about them that the Qur'an has said:

And they say: What sort of prophet is he that eats and goes about in the market? **(Qur'an, 25:7)**

But, by and large, the Arabs were idolaters. They did not, however, recognize idols as God but only as intermediaries to God. As the Qur'an has pointed out, they said:

We do not worship them save so that they may bring us nearer to Allah. **(Qur'an, 39:3)**

Some tribes worshipped the sun, others the moon. But the great majority, while indulging in idolatry, believed that there was a Supreme Being, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, Whom they called "Allah.' The Qur'an says:

And if you ask them: Who has created the heavens and the earth and made the sun and the moon subservient?, they will cry out 'Allah'. Then whither are they going?! **(Qur'an, 29:61)**

***And when they sail in boats, they sincerely solicit the aid of Allah, but when He brings them safely to the land, behold! They ascribe others (to Him).* (Qur'an, 29:65)**

Christianity and Judaism, in the hands of their then followers in Arabia, had lost their appeal. As Sir William Muir writes, "Christianity had now and then feebly rippled the surface of Arabia and the sterner influences of Judaism had been occasionally visible in a deeper and more troubled current, but the tide of indigenous idolatry and superstition, setting out from every quarter with an unbroken and unebbing surge towards the Ka'ba, gave ample evidence that the faith and worship of the Ka'ba held the Arab mind in thraldom, vigorous and undisputed. After five centuries of Christian evangelization, it could only claim a sprinkling of disciples among the tribes, and as a converting agent was no longer operative.'

1. Minaeans are Arabs of Ma`in who ruled parts of southern Arabia, which now includes both Yemen and South Arabia, from 1200 – 650 B.C. Recent excavations have revealed inscriptions of their language that date back to about the 8th century before Christ. They are also said to be Yemen's first settlers.
2. al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 15, p. 145.
3. al-Majlisi's full name is Muhammed Baqir ibn Muhammed Taqi al-Majlisi. He was born in 1037 A.H./1628 A.D. and died in Isfahan, Iran, in 1111 A.H./1699 A.D. He is the greatest writer in the 11th Hijri century, author of 25 titles in Arabic and 53 in Persian, his mother tongue. Many of these titles are in several volumes each. For example, one edition of Bihar al-Anwar, one of the references of this book, runs in 111 volumes. His proficiency and prolific pen are truly baffling, unsurpassed.
4. Pahlavi was the Persian language of the Zoroastrian literature from the 3rd to the 10th centuries. It is derived from the Aramaic alphabet. Aramaic, by the way, was the mother tongue of Jesus Christ (a.s). Aramaic is still poken in a Syrian town till this day.
5. Nestorians are Christians of Asia Minor and Syria who refused to accept the condemnations of Nestorius and his teachings by the councils of Ephesus (an ancient Ionian Greek city in today's Turkey, site of the ancient temple of Artemis, or Diana) of 431 A.D. and Chalcedon (modern day Kadikoy, ancient maritime town of Bithynia opposite Istanbul, Turkey) of 451 A.D. Most of present day's Nestorians live in Iraq, Syria and Iran. Nestorius, founder of this sect, had been anathematized at Ephesus (in 431 A.D.) for denouncing the use of the title Theotokos ("God-bearer") for Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus Christ, insisting that this compromised the reality of Christ as a human being. Those who refused to accept Nestorius' condemnation formed a center of resistance at the renowned theological school of Edessa (chief city of Greek Macedonia on a steep valley of the Loudhias Potamos River). When the school was closed by imperial order in 489 A.D., a small yet vigorous Nestorian remnant migrated to Persia. Nestorius was born in late 4th century A.D. and died in modern day Maras, Turkey, in 451 A.D. He was once banished to the Libyan Desert where he was confined from 436 – 437 A.D.
6. al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 15, p. 201.
7. al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 15, pp. 201-202. This text also exists on p. 111 of Kamal al-Deen wa Itmam al-Ni`ma.
8. al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 15, p. 180.
9. Ibid., pp. 180-181. Also see Faraj al-Mahmoom, p. 29.
10. al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 15, p. 181. This text also exists in Vol. 2, p. 9 of Al-Khisal.
11. One of the offspring of Prophet Muhammed, "Abu Muhammed", Imam Hasan al-`Askari, was the son of Imam Ali al-

Naqi and father of the Awaited Imam, the Mehdi, peace and blessings of the Almighty be upon all of them. He was born in Medina on Rabi`` II 10, 232 A.H./December 4, 846 A.D. and was martyred in Samarra, Iraq, on Rabi`` I 8, 260 A.H./January 1, 874 A.D. poisoned by the `Abbaside ruler al-Mu`tamid. If the reader wishes to learn more about him and about the other Infallible Fourteen, I strongly recommend the book titled Biographies of Leaders of Islam by his eminence Sayyid Ali Naqi Naqwi which I edited. It is available from Imam Hussain Foundation, P.O. Box 25-114, Beirut, Lebanon.

12. al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 17, pp. 307-311. The pages following these ones narrate numerous other miracles of the Prophet.

13. al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 15, pp. 193-198.

14. Actually, Ali was born in 600 A.D., five years later.

15. Ibid., pp. 202-204.

16. This temple was built by Solomon (Prophet Sulayman) to express his gratitude for what the Almighty had granted him. Solomon had in advance obtained his Lord's permission to erect it. A glimpse of its grandeur is described in the Holy Qur'an in 27:44: "It was said to her (to Balqees, the Queen of Sheba): Enter the palace; but when she saw it, she deemed it to be a great expanse of water," that is, its marble floors shone like glass, reflecting her image as water does. This temple was later ordered by Solomon to be demolished in its entirety, and the claim of the Jews that the al-Aqsa mosque is built on its very foundations is false. The Jews plot to demolish the al-Aqsa mosque in order to rebuild Solomon's Temple. The Jews intend to do so at the right time, when they realize that the Muslims of the world, because of the weakness and hypocrisy of most of their rulers, are too weak to stand between them and the achievement of their most vile goals, and when the "Christian" West will be ready, more so than now, to help them achieve their objectives. The West has been supporting the Jews against the Muslims, and there will never be any reversal to this trend... We are Allah's, and to Him shall we return...

Source URL: https://www.al-islam.org/muhammad-yasin-t-al-jibouri/birth-and-dawah#comment-0