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Life of the Prophet Muhammad before Starting the Mission

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This paper is an attempt to study some aspects of the Prophet Muhammad's life before his mission started. Issues such as the Prophet's birth, his nursing, the story of the splitting of his chest (*shaqq al-Sadr*) and his participation in the Sacrilegious War (*Harb al-Fijar*) are discussed.

The Prophet's Birth

Perhaps one of the most debatable subjects regarding the life of the Prophet is the biographers' dispute on the exact date of his birth. If someone were to gather all of the different opinions on this issue, there would be about twenty options to choose from.1

Of course, the year and the month of the Prophet's birth is agreed upon by the vast majority of both Sunni and Shi'i historians and narrators of hadith. It is accepted as a well-known fact that the Prophet was born in the lunar month *Rabi' al-Awwal* of the 'Year of the Elephant', i.e. 570 C. E.2 The majority of Muslim scholars agree with the consensus on the subject.3

Since the very beginning, however, there has been a difference between the Sunni and Shi'i schools on the actual day of the birth of the Prophet, and this difference is reflected in their works where they point to the birthday of the Prophet as it will be dealt with here.4

The seventeenth of *Rabi' al-Awwal* is supported by the Shi'a due to a famous saying, while the twelfth of the month is recognized by the vast majority of Sunni scholars. Among the Shi'a, it was only al-Kulayni5 who certified the date of the twelfth of the month.6

Some Sunni biographers refer to the disagreement among historians7 but conclude: "the majority… agree that Muhammad was born on the twelfth of *Rabi' al-Awwal*, the claim of Ibn Ishaq and other biographers."8 Ibn Ishaq observes that the Prophet was born on Monday, the twelfth of *Rabi' al-Awwal*,

in the 'Year of the Elephant'.[9] According to the general belief of Sunnis, Monday was the actual day of the birth of the Prophet,[10] while among the Shi'a, Friday is determined to have been the day in question.[11]

Nowadays, in Islamic Republic of Iran, there is an anniversary celebration which is held every year from the 12th to the 17th of *Rabi' al-Awwal*. The week during which the ceremony is held, is called the 'Week of Unity'. It indicates that each sect can respect the other's thought, while still focusing on what it has received through its own tradition.

The thirteenth century Shi'i biographer al-Irbili,[12] states that he believes such a disagreement on the day of the Prophet's birth is natural. To him this is because the Arabs then were unfamiliar with dates and calendars. They did not know how to record their children's birthdays. What seems amazing and unreasonable to al-Irbili is the biographers' dispute on the date of the Prophet's death.[13]

Extraordinary Events

Some biographers deny any unusual circumstance in respect to the birth of the Prophet and remark that "there was nothing unusual about Amina's pregnancy or delivery."[14] However, some extraordinary events are narrated in almost all Sunni and Shi'i biographies, events which are alleged to have happened before or very soon after the Prophet's birth.[15]

The Prophet's Suckling

Why would Muhammad have been suckled by a nurse other than his own mother? Biographers accept that the Prophet was nursed by Thuwayba, servant of Abu Lahab, for a while. Then Halima al-Sa'diyya, daughter of Abu Dhu'ayb, accepted him into her charge, because she had found no one other than this orphan child. Halima related that after she took Muhammad with her, she found all kinds of blessings and goodness. She nursed him for two whole years, and then she brought him back to his mother.[16]
Ibn Ishaq relates of Halima:
He [the Prophet] was growing up as none of the other children grew and by the time he was two he was a well-made child. We brought him to his mother, though we were most anxious to keep him with us because of the blessing which he brought us. I said to her: "I should like you to leave my little boy with me until he becomes a big boy, for I am afraid on his account of the pest in Mecca." We persisted until she sent him back with us.[17]17

Was the Prophet Spurned Because of His Orphanhood?

It is related that Halima used to say that she and other foster-mothers refused the apostle of God when he was offered to each of them, because they could not expect to get payment from the child's father.[18]
M. Hosayn Haykal (Sunni biographer) says: the prospect of an orphan child did not much attract them

(wet nurses), since they hoped to be well rewarded by the father. The infants of widows, such as Muhammad, were not attractive at all. Not one of them accepted Muhammad into her care, preferring the infants of the living and of the affluent.[19]

This point is understood from Ibn Ishaq's *sira*, according to which Halima states: "We said, 'An orphan! and what will his mother and grandfather do?', and so we spurned him because of that."3
S. Ja'far Murtada (Shi'i biographer) also refers to the same story and states that Halima at first spurned Muhammad (as her colleagues had done before her), but finally she accepted him because she found no child other than him.[20] He, however, suggests another possibility which is presented by some Shi'i scholars. They are not satisfied with this part of the story and refute it on the basis of the following considerations:

1-It is related that 'Abdullah, the Prophet's father, was alive at the time of his son's birth and died a few months after. Some say that the father's death occurred seven months after the Prophet's birth, while some other state that it was seventeen months.[21] It is also alleged by some others that 'Abdullah's death occurred twenty-eight months after his son was born.[22] Therefore, we are not sure whether the Prophet was an orphan at his birth or not.

Even if we accept that Muhammad was an orphan at his birth, he was still a descendant of an honorable and wealthy man like 'Abd al-Muttalib one of whose properties was a herd of two-hundred camels, in the "Year of the Elephant."[23] People knew his grandfather to be a generous and exalted person.

They knew that his daughter-in-law Amina also was from a wealthy family. So an orphan such as Muhammad should never have been deprived of the chance to have a foster-mother like the other children of nobles. His rights also could never be disregarded, especially when he was under the protection of his grandfather.[24] Moreover, we must consider that asking for nurses was the practice of the Makkan aristocracy[25] among whom was the leader of the Quraysh, 'Abd al-Muttalib.

The Custom of Choosing Foster-Mothers

There are good reasons as to why Muhammad, like other infants, was suckled by a desert tribe. On the whole, it was the practice of nobles of the Makka and until recently was still practiced among Makkan aristocracy. They used to send their children to the desert on the eighth day of their birth to remain there until the age of eight or ten. Some of the tribes of the desert had a reputation as providers of excellent wet nurses, specially the tribe of Banu Sa'd.[26] From the points of this view, there were some reasons behind this practice, such as:

1- Their children's physical disposition could grow sounder because they inhaled the purest of desert air, and the hardness of desert living, which caused their quick growth and equipped them with a natural adaptability towards different conditions.[27]

2– They were able to learn the purest and most classical Arabic language, since they avoided the multi-cultural conditions of Makka, which was usually crowded with different tribes, especially during the season of pilgrimage, or when the trade caravans were in Makka for their transactions. Makkans mostly used to ask the Banu Sa'd to nurse their children, for this tribe was the most preserved Arab of the tribes of the cities or the desert.[28] Thus the Prophet himself told his companions: "I am the most perfect Arab of you all. I am of Quraysh, and I was suckled and brought up among the tribe of Banu Sa'd b. Bakr."[29]

3– Inhaling the pure air of the desert caused their children to grow up brave and strong-hearted, and gave them "the spirit of personal freedom and independence."[30]

4– The nature of desert living usually agreed with their children's mental growth, and gave them purer intellect and talent, for they were far from the disturbances and difficulties of urban living, and lived a simple and more natural life.[31]

5– It is related that Halima, when returning the Prophet to his mother after two years in the desert, asked Amina to let her take him again to the desert, because of an epidemic then raging at Makka.[32]

Makka had bad and hot air, especially during the summer and children were in more danger than adults, for the warm and dry situation of this city did not suit Makkan newborns. Therefore, Makkans used to send their children to the desert where it wasn't warm and dry in order to protect them from the unhealthy air of Makka. They had to look for foster-mothers to nurse their babies far from the city for a few years until they had grown up enough. It is related that Halima brought Muhammad back to his mother when he was four, but Amina wanted her to take him again with her to the desert, because she was afraid of such diseases afflicting him.

Two of the above-mentioned reasons are related in the form of certified *hadiths*. That is to say, the second one has been related in Ibn Ishaq's *sira* [33] as one hadith, and the fifth one is presented by Ibn Athir again in the form of a hadith.[34] Also it is elaborated by al-Tabari, in his history of the Prophet,[35] and by Haykal in his *Hayat*[36] as a narrative from Halima. The rest of these reasons are the result of the biographers' understanding of the *sira*.

The Story of the Splitting of the Prophet's chest

In several sources from both Sunni and Shi'i traditions, one may find the story of the splitting of the Prophet's chest. Although the original narrative comes from Sunni tradition, the story is narrated in some Shi'i books too. Different attitudes are expressed by biographers towards this extraordinary anecdote. On the whole, most Sunni scholarship has agreed upon the authenticity of the story, while to the contrary, most Shi'i scholarship has rejected it.

According to Ibn Ishaq, quoting Halima, the story went like this:

Some months after our return, he and his brother were with our lambs behind the tents when his brother

came running and said to us, 'Two men clothed in white have seized that Qurayshi brother of mine and thrown him down and opened up his belly, and are stirring it up.' We ran towards him and found him standing up with a livid face. We took hold of him and asked him what the matter was. He said, 'Two men in white raiment came and threw me down and opened up my belly and searched therein for I know not what.' So we took him back to our tent.37

This incident was what prompted his foster-mother to return him to his mother. Ibn Ishaq then relates another *hadith* on the authority of a learned person whom he thinks was khalid b. Ma'dan. This person, on the authority of some of the Apostle's companions, told Ibn Ishaq that the Prophet said:

... I was suckled among the B. Sa 'd b. Bakr, and while I was with a brother of mine behind our tents shepherding the lambs, two men in white raiment came to me with a gold basin full of snow. Then they seized me and opened up my belly, extracted my heart and split it; then they extracted a black drop from it and threw it away; then they washed my heart and my belly with that snow until they had thoroughly cleaned them. ...
In *Sahih* of Muslim, the story is narrated through a chain on the authority of Anas b. Malik. According to the *hadith* of Anas, the extracted black drop was the portion of Satan in the Prophet's heart. At the end of this narrative, Anas mentions that he himself used to see the mark of that splitting on the chest of the prophet.38

Negative Attitude towards the story

Evaluating the story, Haykal states:
Orientalists and many Muslim scholars do not trust the story and find the evidence therefore spurious. The biographers agree that the two men dressed in white were seen by children hardly beyond their second year of age, which constitutes no witness at all, and that Muhammad lived with the tribe of banu Sa'd in the desert until he was five. The claim that this event had taken place while Muhammad was two and a half years old and that Halimah and her husband returned the child to his mother immediately thereafter, contradicts this general consensus. Consequently, some writers have even asserted that Muhammad returned with Halimah for the third time.39

As an extra proof, Haykal refers to the ideas of two Orientalists, Muir and Dermenghem. Muir states that it is difficult to discover the real fact, for the story have been invested with so many marvelous features. He concludes that the story was probably due to a fit of epilepsy, a sort of nervous or epileptic seizure, which could not at all have hurt Muhammad's healthy constitution.40

Dermenghem believes that this legend is only based on a verse from the *Qur'an*, and has no foundation other than the speculative interpretations of the verses which are depicted in *sura al-Inshirah*: "*Had We not revived* [literally "*opened*"] *your breast. And had We not removed the burden which galled your back*?"41 From point of view of Dermenghem the story of the splitting is based upon the speculative interpretation of these verses.42 Haykal comes to this conclusion:

Certainly, in these verses the *Qur'an* is pointing to something purely spiritual. It means to describe a purification of the heart as preparation for receipt of the divine message and to stress Muhammad's over-taxing burden of prophethood. Those Orientalists and Muslim thinkers who take this position *vis-à-vis* the foregoing tradition do so in consideration of the fact that the life of Muhammad was human through and through and that in order to prove his prophethood the Prophet never had recourse to miracle-mongering as previous prophets had needed to do..
This finding is corroborated by Arab and Muslim historians who consistently assert that the life of the Arab Prophet is free of anything irrational or mysterious and who regard the contrary as inconsistent with the Quranic position that God's creation is rationally analyzable, that His laws are immutable, and that the pagans are blameworthy because they do not reason.43
According to Haykal, the Prophet was never involved in 'irrational' and 'miraculous' things.
Citing from *Sahih* of Muslim, S. Ja'far Murtada, remarks that Sunni books of *hadith* and *sira* often mention such a story. According to some of these sources, the splitting of the Prophet's chest took place several times. The first time occurred in his third year of age when he was among B. Sa'd, the second one occurred when he was ten, the third one at the time of his Commission, and the fourth at the time of the night journey and his ascent to heaven. The narrators attempt to justify the repetition of the story as increasing his glory.44 Regarding the story in itself, Murtada, points out some of the attitudes which are expressed towards it as follows:

1-The story is considered a clear sign of the prophethood that appeared before the time of his Mission, and according to which the prophetic office of Muhammad was predicted.45

2-It refers to a verbal and terminological interpretation of *sura Inshirah*, as mentioned before.46

3-It does not seem to be a sound and authentic story, since the Prophet was born pure, lacking any defect, imperfection, and impurity.47

4-It is an unreal story which non-Muslim scholars have either ridiculed or taken as a proof of some of their untrue beliefs. For instance, it is advocated by some Christians that no human beings, even the Prophet of Islam, are infallible; rather they all perform faulty actions except Jesus Christ, who never was touched by Satan. They come to the conclusion that only Jesus was beyond the level of humanity, and he actually was a divine being in the shape of man.48 Thus, in their opinion, it must be assumed that Muhammad was an impure man, as it is shown by the story of splitting.

Among the Orientalists, we can find someone like Dermenghem who in his *the life of Mahomet* states: “This legend of the opened breast offers, moreover, certain dogmatic interest. The black stain removed by the angels can be linked to the stigma of original sin from which only Mary and Jesus were free.”49

Murtada, on the other hand, thoroughly refutes the story, and considers it a *jahili hadith* which is rooted in *jahiliya* thought, coming out of the opinion of the people of ignorance (*ahl al-jahiliya*). Quoting some examples from *al-Aghani*, he asserts that a legend like this has its background in the age of ignorance.

According to *al-Aghani*, the very same event occurred four times to an unlightened person named Umayya b. Abi al-Salt, when he was sleeping in his sister's house. In his case it was two birds that descended upon him, and one of them opened his chest.50

In support of his position, S. Ja'far Murtada, presents seven proofs, mostly in the form of questions. These are as follows:

1-One of the sources for this narrative is the *Sira* of Ibn Ishaq, who on the authority of a learned person, declared that what persuaded Halima to return the Prophet to his mother was something apart from the above-mentioned reason. Accordingly, it was because
... a number of Abyssinian Christians saw him with her when she brought him back after he had been weaned. They looked at him, asked questions about him, and studied him carefully, then they said to her, 'Let us take this boy, and bring him to our king and our country; for he will have a great future. We know all about him.' The person who told me this alleged that she could hardly get him away from them.51

Therefore, the *hadiths* that attest that his foster-mother was urged to bring him back to his mother by the extraordinary event of splitting his chest in the desert seem to be doubtful.52

2-How could the return of the prophet to his mother be due to the opening of his chest? On the one hand, it is alleged that this tale happened when he was three or two and some months. And on the other, it is said that he was returned to his mother when he was five years old. How can one harmonize these two claims?53

3-Is it accurate to aver that the root of evil is a black drop in the heart, and something that requires a physical splitting and operation in order to get rid of it? Does this mean that whosoever has such a black drop can be a virtuous person if the black drop is removed from his heart by an operation? Or is it acceptable to say that this fact was specific only to the Prophet, and no one else can share this event with him? Then why should the Prophet be the only one among human beings whose heart contained this black drop and no one other than him?2

4-Why should that operation have been repeated several times (four or five times) at great intervals, even a few years after the Mission, and at the time of the night journey (*isra*) and his ascent to heaven (*miraj*)? Was this repeated because the black drop, i.e. that satanic portion, was so tenacious in the Prophet's heart, to the extent that it kept growing, and returned again and again?

Was that black drop like a cancer, a single operation to excise which was useless, so that it was in need of more extensive operations, one after another? If it were so, then why did that black drop not return after the fourth or fifth operation? Further, why should Allah torture and punish His Prophet by such a chastisement? Wasn't it possible for Him to create His apostle free and pure from any satanic black drop?54

5–In the event that God does wish His servant not to be immoral and sinful, is it necessary to perform such a terrible cleansing in the sight and hearing of others? And doesn't it mean that the Prophet was obliged to do good unwillingly and automatically, since he was operated upon and cleaned in such a way by God?

6–Why must it have been only Muhammad, among all the prophets, who was chosen for this operation?55 Is it rational to believe that Muhammad was the most excellent of prophets, and at the same time he was the only prophet who was in need of such an operation because of having a black drop in his heart? Or is it possible to allege that there was the same satanic drop in the hearts of other prophets, but that they were not removed because the angels, who were responsible for the operation, did not know the method of operation yet?!56

7–And finally, doesn't a story like this contradict what is revealed in Quranic verses that affirm that Satan neither has any authority over those who believe and trust in their Lord,57 nor over His (pure) servants,58 nor over those who are sincere and purified?59 According to Islamic thought, all prophets including the Prophet of Islam are the most sincere servants of Allah who were sent by Him to people. Then how could Satan have dominance and authority over the Prophet till the time of his night journey and ascent to heaven?60

In any case, the story is related in its original form only through the authority of Sunni tradition, and that it never goes back to the sayings of one of the Imams of the Shi'a.61

The Prophet and the Sacrilegious War (Harb al-Fijar)

The war was known as sacrilegious because the tribes Kinana and Qays 'Aylan violated the holy months62 by conducting warfare therein.63

Most of Sunni biographers accepted that Muhammad took part in the *fijar* war and that "he stood on the side of his uncle." For instance, Haykal states that

there is apparent consensus as to the kind of participation that Muhammad had in this war. Some people claim that he was charged with collecting the arrows falling within the Makkan camp and bringing them over to his uncle for re-use against the enemy.64 Others claim that he himself participated in the shooting of these arrows.65

Concerning the age of the Prophet at the time of this war, Haykal continues that:
History has not established the age of Muhammad during the *fijar* war. Reports that he was fifteen and twenty years old have circulated. Perhaps the difference is due to the fact that the *fijar* war lasted at least four years. If Muhammad saw its beginning at the age of fifteen, he must have been close to twenty at the conclusion of the peace.

The circulation of the reports putting the Prophet's age at between fourteen or fifteen and twenty is found

in the *Sira* of Ibn Ishaq. That is to say, according to Ibn Hisham, Muhammad was fourteen or fifteen years old when he participated in the war.66 But in the same *Sira*, it is quoted from Ibn Ishaq that when the sacrilegious war occurred, the Prophet was twenty years old.67

Harmonizing the two reports, Haykal observes, "Since the said war lasted four years, it is not improbable that both claims are true."68 Haykal then approves of the Prophet's participation and the extent of his participation in this war through a *hadith* according to which, the Prophet, years after his commission to prophethood, said, "I had witnessed that war with my uncle and shot a few arrows therein. How I wish I had never done so!"

This is while for many Shi'i scholars it is not acceptable that the Prophet participated in the *fijar* war. To these scholars there are four proofs as follows to support this view:

1-The war broke out in the sacred months, the holiness of which was never violated by the Prophet and his uncle Abu Talib. One who studies the *sira* of Muhammad and Abu Talib will consider how they used to respect issues like the holiness of the sacred months. As mentioned in *al-Kafi*, *al-Ghadir* and some other sources of *hadith*, Abu Talib believed in the pure Abrahamic religion. furthermore, he was an executor of Abrahamic wills and beliefs. Thus, how could the violation of the holiness of such months be attributed to a religious man like Abu Talib?69 The negation of Abu Talib's participation in *fijar* means that Muhammad also, who was then under his supervision and his instruction, never participated in this war.70

2-Ya'qubi reports that it is related that Abu Talib prohibited any of Banu Hisham to take part in *fijar* war, saying that it was an oppression, a hostile act, breaking with relatives and a violation of the holiness of the sacred months. Abu Talib insisted that he would not participate in that war nor would any of his family. Among Banu Hisham it was only Zubayr b. 'Abd al-Muttalib who took part unwillingly and under the pressure of his alliances. Ya'qubi continues that 'Abdullah b. Jad'an al-Taymi and Harb b. Umayya said that they would never attend any position from which Banu Hisham kept themselves away.71

3-The conflict of *hadiths* is another reason. Some of these *hadiths* restrict his role to collecting and carrying the arrows which had fallen within the camp of the Makkans in order that they may be re-used against their enemy. Also, he was charged with protecting his uncles' equipment.72 A group of *hadiths* indicate that the Prophet shot a number of arrows against the enemy, but later on he wished that he had never done that.73 The third group of narratives state that the Prophet injured Abu Bara (the head of Banu Qays and a spear-thrower), with the result that Abu bara fell down from his horse.74

4-Some reports are contradictory, such as in what is related by Ibn Hisham. First he states that the Prophet participated in the *fijar* war when he was fourteen years old, but at the end of the story he records Ibn Ishaq's opinion that the *fijar* took place when the Prophet was twenty years old, i.e. twenty years after the Year of the Elephant.75 Another example of contradiction among the narratives is Ya'qubi's reports, according to which Harb b. Umayya did not take part in the *fijar* war, whereas

according to other narratives Harb participated in the war while he was the head of the Quraysh and the Kinana.76

We come to the conclusion that the Prophet neither partook in the *fijar* war nor cooperated with any side in the war. So this kind of inconsistency in the narratives should be attributed to the political agenda of the Umayyad, who were responsible for these fabrications.77

The Prophet's trip to Sham

Among a number of stories, we may refer to a very famous one which has been accepted by almost all historians and biographers of the Prophet. The story of his first trip to Sham alongside his uncle Abu Talib explains how the monk Bahira foretold the coming apostleship of the Prophet. According to Ibn Ishaq the story went like this:

"He (Bahira) saw the Apostle of God in the caravan when they approached, with a cloud over-shadowing him among the people. Then they came and stopped in the shadow of a tree near the monk. He looked at the cloud when it over-shadowed the tree, and its branches were bending and drooping over the apostle of God until he was in the shadow beneath it."78

After Bahira saw this extraordinary event he stared at the Prophet closely "finding traces of his description (in the Christian books)." He asked him many questions, "and what the apostle of God told him coincided with what Bahira knew of his description."

Here the monk foretold the prophethood of the Prophet and he advised Abu Talib to "guard him carefully against the Jews, for by Allah! if they see him and know about him what I know, they will do him evil; a great future lies before this nephew of yours, so take him home quickly."79

Summarizing Comments

1) The dispute surrounding the date of the Prophet's birth is a result of the differences between the *hadith* and *sira* sources from both Sunni and Shi'i sects.

2) One should be very cautious and careful about the unusual events narrated and associated with the Prophet's birth. On the whole, the narratives which imply such extraordinary events indicate the possibility that there might have been something unusual about Amina's pregnancy or delivery. They show that like some other prophets' births,80 the birth of Muhammad also was accompanied by miraculous events.

These extraordinary events may have functioned as signs for Muhammad's prophethood. Narratives that correspond to the life of the Prophet before his mission illustrate that his prophecy never occurred accidentally or by chance. Rather, many things had taken place to gradually establish the doctrine of his apostleship from God. One may express the same attitude in the case of the extraordinary events which

happened surrounding the birth of the Prophet. In short, they might be regarded as *irhas*, a kind of foretelling or prophecy. Such stories are related of previous prophets, and need not contradict the supposition that the Prophet's life was human through and through.

3) In regard to the story of the Prophet's nursing, if it is accepted that it was the practice of Makkan aristocracy to ask for nurses for their children, then on what basis do some biographers argue that Muhammad was spurned because of his orphanhood and his poverty?

Basically, if Muhammad was offered to foster-mothers, it indicates that he was from Makkan aristocracy. And if this was so, how could he have been refused by any wet-nurse to whom he was offered, especially when it is obvious that his grandfather was well-known among all the tribes for his generosity, honor and mastership of the Quraysh?[81]

It is also said that the Prophet's inheritance from his father 'Abdullah was more than enough for having a foster-mother: at least five camels, a flock of sheep, a sword, and some money. Thus, the reason that Muhammad was nursed by Halima Sa'diya was that he did not accept the breasts of any woman to whom he was offered, except those of Halima.

When she put him to her bosom to suckle him, the Quraysh infant surprisingly grasped his foster-mother's breasts, and this made his family very cheerful. 'Abd al-Muttalib then asked Halima:

"Which tribe do you belong to?" And she answered: "I am from Banu Sa 'd." He asked her name, and she said that her name was Halima. 'Abd al-Muttalib became very happy and said: "Excellent, excellent! Two praised and valuable attributes, salvation (*sa'd - sa'ada*) and patience (*hilm*). Good tidings to you Halima for having these excellent characteristics that imply eternal happiness and glory![82]

4) Concerning the story of the splitting the Prophet's chest, we realize that the story is untrue and unreasonable, and also destructive to the personality of the Prophet.

5) Regarding the 'sacrilegious war' as an offensive one, we deny the Prophet's participation in it, for this war broke the holiness of the sacred months, the fact that was always observed by the Prophet and his uncle Abu Talib, the master of Quraysh. This is why later on such a pre-Islamic social custom was affirmed by Islam, and Muslims were asked not to fight during the sacred months.

6) Biographers speak of the Prophet's first trip to Sham. They "tell how the monk recognized in Muhammad the signs of prophethood as told in Christian books."[83] The monk informed the Prophet's uncle Abu Talib that his nephew would be an apostle of Allah.[84] Certainly such a prophecy refers to something extraordinary in the life of the Prophet, and is neither denied nor ignored by most biographers. This event assured Abu Talib that Muhammad would be a messenger of God. [85]

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1. Cf. Rasuli, Tarikh, Vol. 1, p. 107.
2. Ibn Hisham, al-Sira al-Nabawiya, 1st edition, edited by ‘Umar ‘Abd al-Salam Tadmuri (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-‘Arabi,

1987),Vol. 1, pp. 183–184 ; Ya'qubi, Tarikh Ya 'qubi, Farsi translation by Muhammad Ibrahim Ayati (Tehran),Vol. 1, p. 385. There are very few historians who suggest a date other than the Year of the Elephant. They allege that it was a few years before the occurrence of the Elephant. For instance, al-Maqrizi in his book Imta' al-Asma ', refers to several opinions which concern the year of the birth. He mentions that the ideas differ from fifteen years before to forty years after the Year of the Elephant. al-Maqrizi himself gives preference to what the majority says, that is the Year of the Elephant. See: Rasuli, Tarikh, Vol. 1, footnote, pp. 107–108, from al-Maqrizi, Vol. 1, pp. 3–4.

3. Haykal, Hayat, p. 108 ; Murtada, Al-Sahih , Vol. 1, p. 78.

4. As Majlisi indicates, the 'ulama of the Imami school agree that the birth of the Prophet occurred on Friday, the seventeenth of Rabi' al-Awwal. However, most of their fellow Sunnis maintain that it took place on Monday, the twelfth, although some insist on the eighth, and others on the tenth of that month, and yet a few others declare that it happened in the month of Ramadan. Majlisi, The Life and Religion of Muhammad, English Translation of Hayat al-Qolub, Vol. 2, by James L. Merrick (1982), p. 34

5. al-Kulayni, (d. 939/ 940) a well-known Shi'i traditionist of the 4th Muslim century, in his al-Kafi, al-Usul wa al-Rawda, Vol. 7, p. 131 (Mawlid al-Nabi), agrees with the Sunni position that the Prophet was born on the 12th of Rabi' al-Awwal. However, he mentions that it was on Friday and not on Monday, as Sunni tradition says.

6. Murtada, Al-Sahih, Vol. 1, p. 78. Majlisi, in his Bihar after differentiating between the two Sunni and Shi'i traditions, says that among Shi'a it was al-Kulayni who selected, either intentionally or because of taqiya, what the Sunni tradition advocates. See: Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, (Beirut: al-Wafa', 1983), Vol. 15, p. 248.

7. Haykal, Hayat, p. 109.

8. Haykal, The Life, p. 48.

9. Ibn Hisham, al-Sira, Vol. 1, p. 183 ; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidaya wal-Nihaya, edited by Ahmad Abu Muslim et al. (Beirut: al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1980), Vol. 2, pp. 242-243 ; al-Maqrizi, Imta' al-Asma', edited by Mahmud Muhammad Shakir (Cairo: 1941), Vol. 1, pp. 3-4

10. Ibid.

11. al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, al-Usul val-Rawda, edited by Ghaffari (Tehran: al-Maktaba al-Islamiyya, 1962), Vol. 7, p. 131 ; Majlisi, Bihar, Vol. 15, p. 248, etc.

12. One of the Iraqi Shi'i biographers in Baghdad who died in 1293. He wrote his book, Kashf al- Ghumma fî Ma'rifat al-A'imma, on the biography of the Prophet and the Shi'i Imams.

13. Murtada, al-Sahiih, Vol. 1, p. 79, citing al-Irbili, Kashf, 2nd edition (Beirut: Dar al-Adwa', 1985), Vol. 1, p. 14.

14. Haykal, The Life, pp. 47 and 51.

15. For details see: Ibn Ishaq, The life of Muhammad, translated by A. Guillaume (London-New York-Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 69; Al-Tabari. Tarikh, Vol. 2, p. 156. It is also narrated by Shi'i scholars. For instance, see: al-Saduq, Ikmal al-Din wa Itmam al-Ni'ma (Najaf: 1970), pp. 189-190 ; al-Irbili, Kashf, Vol. 1, pp. 20-21.

16. Ibn Ishaq, The Life, pp. 71-72 ; Haykal, The Life, p. 49 ; Murtada, Al-Sahih, Vol. 1, p. 81.

17. Ibn Ishaq, The Life, p. 71.

18. Ibid., p. 71.

19. Haykal, The Life, p. 49.

20. Murtada, Al-Sahih, Vol. 1, p. 81.

21. al-Irbili, Kashf, Vol. 1, p. 15; Murtada, Al-Sahih, v.1, p. 81. Ya'qubi in his history says that the death of 'Abdullah happened two months after the Prophet's birth. He refutes the suggestion that the former's death was before the birth of the Prophet. He further argues that consensus is established upon the first opinion that the father died after his son's birth, to the extent of even one year after the Prophet's birth, as some historians believe. See: Ya'qubi, Tarikh, Vol. 2, p. 362.

22. Majlisi, Bihar, Vol. 15, p. 125 ; Murtada, Al-Sahih, Vol. 1, p. 81. In short, as Ibn Athir mentions, the date of 'Abdullah's death is a controversial subject among the historians. See: Ibn Athir, Usd al-Ghaba, Vol. 1, p. 20

23. See: Rasuli, Tarikh, Vol. 1, p. 182.

24. Cf. Murtada, Al-Sahih, Vol. 1, p. 81 ; Subhani, Furugh Abadiyat, 8th edition (Qum: 1993), Vol. 1, p. 160.

25. Murtada, Al-Sahih, Vol. 1, p. 81 ; Haykal, The Life, p. 49.

26. Haykal, The Life, p. 48. See also: Murtada, Al-Sahih, Vol. 1, p. 81.

27. Haykal, p. 49 ; Murtada, Vol. 1, p. 88.
28. Haykal. p. 52 ; Murtada, Vol. 1, pp. 81–82.
29. Ibn Ishaq, The Life, p. 72 ; Haykal, The Life, p. 52.
30. Haykal, The Life, pp. 51–52 ; Murtada, Al–Sahih, Vol. 1, p. 82.
31. Murtada, Al–Sahih, Vol. 1, p. 82.
32. Cf. Haykal, Hayat, p. 110 ; Ibn Athir, Usd al–Ghaba, Vol. 1, p. 21. See: al–Tabari, Tarikh, Vol. 2, p, 159 ; Majlisi, Bihar, Vol. 15, p. 401 and Rasuli, Tarikh, Vol. 1, pp. 183–184.
33. Ibn Ishaq, The Life, p. 72.
34. Ibn Athir, Usd al–Ghabah, Vol. 1, p. 21.
35. al–Tabari, Tarikh , Vol. 2, p. 159.
36. Haykal, Hayat, p. 110.
37. Ibn Ishaq, The Life, pp. 71–72.
38. Muslim, Sahih, Vol. 1, pp. 165–166, Hadith 261 ; Murtada, Al–Sahih, v.1, pp. 82–83.
39. Haykal, The Life, pp. 50–51.
40. Muir, The Life, pp. 6–7 ; Haykal, The Life, p. 51.
41. The Qur'an, 94 : 1–2.
42. Haykal, The Life, p. 51. Dermenghem states that "a wholly mystical operation, the opening and cleansing of a heart destined to receive without reserve and transmit faithfully the divine message, thus bearing the heavy burden of its mission." He then continues that "The cleansing of the heart takes a well–known place in mystic symbolism. Dermenghem, The Life, pp. 32–33.
43. Haykal, The Life, p. 51.
44. Murtada, Al–Sahih, Vol. 1, pp. 83–84.
45. Murtada, Al–Sahih, Vol. 1, p. 84, citing al–Bu'i, Fiqh al–Sira, pp. 62–63.
46. Ibid., citing Haykal Hayat, p. 111.
47. Ibid., citing Tabataba'i, al–Mizan, Vol. 13, pp. 32–33, citing al–Tabarsi, "Majma ' al–Bayan", Vol. 3, p. 395.
48. Ibid., pp. 84 & 87–88.
49. Dermenghem, The Life, p. 33.
50. Murtada, Al–Sahih, Vol. 1, pp. 88–89 ; Abu al–Faraj al–Isfahani, al–Aghani, Vol. 4. pp. 132–135.
51. Ibn Ishaq, The Life, p. 73. See: Murtada, Al–Sahih, Vol. 1, p. 85.
52. Murtada, Al–Sahih, Vol. 1, p. 85.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid., pp. 85–86.
55. Halabi in his Sira maintains that it was only the Prophet of Islam who was operated in this way. By this al–Halabi considers such an operation as an increase in the Prophet's excellency and honor. See: al–Halabi, al–Sira, Vol. 1, p. 167.
56. Murtada, Al–Sahih, Vol. 1, p. 86.
57. The Qur'an, 16 : 99.
58. Ibid., 17 : 65.
59. Ibid., 15 : 39–40.
60. Murtada, Al–Sahih, Vol. 1, p. 87.
61. Majlisi, Bihar, Vol. 15, pp. 349–357. Rabbani, the commentator of Bihar indicates that there is no need to confirm the excellent character of the Prophet through such an extraordinary and miraculous event. Ibid., Footnote # 2.
62. Most of the Muslim commentators believe that there are four sacred months and they are as follows: Dhu al–qa'da, Dhu al–Hijja, Muharram, and Rajab.
63. Ibn Ishaq, The Life, p. 822. Also see: Haykal, The Life, p. 56 & Murtada, Al–Sahih, Vol. 1, p. 95.
64. Haykal, The Life, p. 57. Also see: Ibn hisham, al–Sira, Vol. 1, p. 210.
65. Ibid., p. 57.
66. Ibn Hisham, al–Sira, Vol. 1, p. 208.
67. Ibid., p. 211 ; Ibn Ishaq, The Life, p. 82.

68. Haykal, The Life, p. 57.
69. Murtada, Al-Sahih, Vol. 1, p. 95.
70. Since this natural conclusion seems clear to Murtada, he does not mention it at the end of his first argument.
71. Murtada, Al-Sahih, Vol. 1, pp. 95-96, citing al-Ya 'qubi, Tarikh, Vol. 2, p. 371.
72. Ibid., p. 96, citing Ibn Hisham, al-Sira, Vol. 1, p. 210.
73. Ibid., citing al-Halabi, al-Sira, Vol. 1, p. 207.
74. Ibid., citing al-Halabi, al-Sira, Vol. 1, p. 208.
75. Ibid., citing Ibn Hisham, al-Sira, Vol. 1, pp. 208, 211.
76. Ibid., pp. 96-97.
77. Ibid., p. 97.
78. Ibn Ishaq, The Life, p. 80.
79. Ibid., p. 81.
80. As it is depicted in the Qur'an, the births of the prophets like 'Isa Ibn Maryam', 'Yahya Ibn Zakariya, etc. were accompanied by some miracles and extraordinary events. See: The Qur'an, 19 : 7-33.
81. Cf. Murtada, Al-Sahih, Vol. 1, p. 125.
82. See: Ibn Athir, Usd al-Ghaba, Vol. 1, p. 21 ; Rasuli, Tarikh, Vol. 1, p. 182 ; Majlisi, Bihar, Vol. 15. p. 125 & 442 ; Sobhani, Furugh , Vol. 1, p. 160 ; Halabi, Sira, Vol. 1, p. 147.
83. Haykal, The Life, p. 54.
84. Murtada, Al-Sahih, Vol. 1, p. 91.
85. "They will ask you about fighting during the hallowed month. Say: 'Fighting therein is a great (transgression), while obstructing God's way, disbelief in Him and the Hallowed Mosque', " The Qur'an, 2: 217.

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