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Ministry of the Holy Prophet

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The Holy Prophet Muhammad (S) was appointed as a prophet on 27th Rajab in the year 610 A.D. at the age of forty years.^{[1](#)} It is mentioned in history that before his appointment also, he often used to see signs in his sleep and wakefulness; he saw Jibraeel and heard his voice; so much so that he sometimes addressed him as the Messenger of Allah (S).

Bulazari writes:

When Almighty Allah wanted to exalt the status of Muhammad (S) and to begin his prophethood, it so happened that he came out of the town to answer the call of nature and retired into the passes and caves and he did not pass a single tree, but that it greeted him saying: Peace be on you, O Messenger of Allah (S). Thus His Eminence looked here and there but could see no one.^{[2](#)}

Sometimes during sleep and wakefulness, he used to see a person who said to him: Peace be on you, O Messenger of Allah (S). He asked him: Who are you? He replied: I am Jibraeel. Allah has sent me so that I may select you for prophethood. The Messenger of Allah (S) witnessed such incidents, but he did not speak about them to anyone.^{[3](#)}

Sometimes he mentioned the matter to his wife, Khadija and she told him that she was hopeful that it would be as such.^{[4](#)}

Bulazari writes:

The first stage of revelation was a true dream. He never dreamed except that it was clear to him like daylight. Thus he became inclined to seclusion and retired to Hira Cave and remained there in seclusion, worshipping his God. He stayed there in Etekaf for some nights. After that he came back to Khadija and continued to lead his family life. Till the time that in the Cave of Hira, he realized the truth and Jibraeel spoke to him.^{[5](#)}

The life history of the Messenger of Allah (S) was such that every year for a period of at least one month, he remained in the cave of Hira engrossed in worship.^{[6](#)}

Ubaid ibn Umair says:

The Messenger of Allah (S) retired to the cave of Hira for a month every year and remained there engrossed in worship. During those days he fed the poor. When the period of his stay was over he returned to Mecca and before entering his house circled the Kaaba seven or more times.[7](#)

Hira is a tall mountain to the north of Mecca having elevations towards Mina. Previously it was at a distance of one Farsakh from the city, but today the city has expanded to reach within the vicinity of this mountain. At the center of this mountain there is a cave having the capacity to house three persons and this cave is called as the Cave of Hira. It is the place of Etekaf and worship of Prophet Muhammad (S) and the location of the descent of the angel of revelation. For months he remained in sincere worship in this illuminated cave and day and night was engrossed in the worship of the Lord of the worlds and spoke confidentially to Him.

He sat on a rocky platform and spent hours in religious contemplation and pondered on the amazing aspects of creation. He was amazed at the stars that filled the beautiful sky of Mecca. He witnessed the beautiful sunrise and sunset for this same place. He pondered on the amazing aspects of human body, trees, vegetation, animals, mountains and plains, oceans and the turbulent waves and prostrated before the greatness and might of the God creator of the universe.

Sometimes he felt sorry for the ignorance of people in leaving the creator of the world and taking up the worship of idols having no specialty.

At other times he thought about the oppression of nobles and rich and oppression of the deprived and troubles and he searched for its solution. When he was aggrieved from all sides, he turned to Almighty Allah and spoke to Him from the depths of his heart and sought His help in solving the religious and social problems of man.

When the month of Etekaf came to an end, he returned to Mecca with a satisfied and illuminated heart and a heart filled with contentment and hope and after circling the Kaaba went home and continues living a normal life.

The life of the Prophet of Islam till the age of forty passed in this way and after that came the time of his ministry.

When the Messenger of Allah (S) was forty years of age, as per his habit, he retired to the Cave of Hira for contemplation and worship. This year he chose the month of Rajab for Etekaf. Contemplation and worship of His Eminence, in this year was more and deeper than that of the previous years. He prolonged his prostrations further and adopted more sincerity in speaking to Almighty Allah directly; similarly his contemplation was also deeper as if he was having completely different surroundings. His religious emotion was charged and his being had become illuminated with effulgence of his future ministry pulling him towards the heights of ethereal luminosity.

Days and nights of Rajab passed in this way and along with it more intense spiritual emotions overtook him and the soul of Prophet Muhammad (S) became more and more prepared to establish a connection with the unseen world and to receive divine revelations.

The 27th of Rajab arrived and The Holy Prophet Muhammad (S) was immersed in contemplation, when Jibrael came down and announced: You are the Messenger of Allah and you have been appointed to convey the message of God.⁸

Imam Hadi (a.s.) has recounted the incident of revelation as follows:

When the Messenger of Allah (S) returned from trade in Syria he distributed all that he had earned on the way among the poor and needy. He went to the cave of Hira every day and climbed its summit and saw the signs of divine mercy and amazing wisdom of God. He looked at the earth and the sky, the seas and wilderness and gained lessons from them. He worshipped Almighty Allah as He deserves to be worshipped.

When he reached the age of forty, Almighty Allah made his heart as the best and most obedient and humble of all the hearts; thus the doors of heavens opened for him so that he may see them. He permitted the angels to descend and Muhammad (S) looked at them. He sent down His mercy and it surrounded everything from the Throne to the head of Muhammad. He saw Jibrael (the trustworthy spirit) come down to him in a halo of light. Jibrael held the arm of the Prophet and pressed it saying: O Muhammad, read. He asked: What should I read? Jibrael said: O Muhammad,

إِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ / خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ / اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ / الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ / عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

“Read in the name of your Lord Who created. He created man from a clot. Read and your Lord is Most Honorable, Who taught (to write) with the pen Taught man what he knew not.” (96: 1-5)

At that moment Jibrael revealed to Muhammad (S) what he had brought from Almighty Allah and returned to the heavens.

Muhammad (S) came down from Mount Hira while as a result of witnessing the majesty of God he was in a trance-like condition. Seeing Jibrael and bearing the divine revelation weighed so much on Muhammad (S) that he shook like a feverish person. He was in fact fearful of the fact that Quraish would refute him and allege that he was insane. Whereas the truth was that he was the most sensible and the most honored of the people there. He was absolutely aloof of the Satan and the words and deeds of insane persons.

Thus Almighty Allah intended to expand his breast and give peace to him. Therefore the mountains, rocks, pebbles on which he walked, all saluted him and said: Peace be on you, O Muhammad, Peace be on you, O the saint of Allah, Peace be on you, O Messenger of Allah (S). Glad tidings be to you that God

has given you excellence and elegance and exalted you over all the past and future men. Do not be aggrieved that Quraish would label you as a madman, because one who is given excellence by Allah is the one who is excellent in the real sense and one whom Allah has made noble is the one who is noble in the real sense. Do not be discouraged by the condemnation of Quraish and evil among the Arabs, Allah would soon convey you to the loftiest position and the most honored rank.[9](#)

On seeing Jibraeel and on receiving revelation, the complete being of The Holy Prophet Muhammad (S) became illuminated by a powerful faith and a confident conscience and he returned home from mount Hira.

Ibn Shahr Ashob writes:

Muhammad (S) came home and the house was illuminated with his effulgence. His wife, Khadija was amazed and she asked: What effulgence is this? The Holy Prophet (S) replied: It is the effulgence of prophethood. Say: I testify that there is no god, except Allah; Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. Khadija asked: I have been aware of this since a long time and she embraced Islam at that time.[10](#)

There is difference of opinion among scholars with regard to the matter that which was the first chapter to be revealed on the Messenger of Allah (S). Most historians consider Surah Alaq to be the first in this regard and the same point is mentioned in some traditions.

Ali ibn Sirri has narrated from Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a.s.) that he said:

The first chapter to be revealed on the Messenger of Allah (S) was this:

إِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ

“In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. Read in the name of your Lord...” (96: 1)

And the last chapter was:

إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ

“When there comes the help of Allah...” (110: 1)[11](#)

[1.](#) Biharul Anwar, Vol. 18, Pg. 189.

[2.](#) Ansabul Ashraf, Vol. 1, Pg. 104.

[3.](#) Biharul Anwar, Vol. 18, Pg. 184.

[4.](#) Biharul Anwar, Vol. 18, Pg. 194.

[5.](#) Ansabul Ashraf, Vol. 1, Pg. 105.

[6.](#) Seerat Ibne Hisham, Vol. 1, Pg. 251.

[7.](#) Seerat Ibne Hisham, Vol. 1, Pg. 252.

[8.](#) Story of the beginning of ministry and the first time Jibraeel came down is mentioned in books of history in different ways. Some of them do not befit the position of prophethood. That is why in reporting this extraordinary incident we have relied only on traditions of Ahle Bayt (a.s.) as they were more knowledgeable than others.

[9.](#) Biharul Anwar, Vol. 18, Pg. 205.

[10.](#) Manaqib Aale Abi Talib, Vol. 1, Pg. 72.

[11.](#) Al-Kafi, Vol. 2, Pg. 628.

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