

Muhammad's Life

In Brief

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IN THE NAME OF GOD, MOST GRACIOUS,
MOST MERCIFUL

Muhammad the Child

- Muhammad was born in Mecca, a city located in modern-day Saudi Arabia, in 570 AD (53 BH)**.
- His father, Abd Allah bin Al-Muttalib, died before his birth.
- His mother, Aminah bint Wahab, died of illness when he was six years old.
- As an orphan, Muhammad was sent to be raised by his grandfather, who died two years later.
- Finally, the young boy passed to the care of one of Abu Talib, his parental uncle.

Personal Character

- As a young man, Muhammad worked as a shepherd. Later he began working for his uncle as an apprentice trader.
- As he grew, Muhammad gained a reputation for thoughtfulness and integrity. People nicknamed him Al-Sadiq (The Truthful), because he never told a lie, and Al-Amin (The Trustworthy), because he

never cheated. He was called upon frequently to mediate disputes between the people of Mecca.

- Muhammad was also known for his disdain of the pagan culture that predominated among the people of Mecca. He never worshipped the idols of Quraysh, the tribe to which he belonged. Instead, he made long retreats to a mountain cave called Hira' outside of Mecca where he meditated.
- When he was 25 years old, Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, a 40-year-old Meccan widow known for her strong character and successful trading business; proposed to him. They married in the year 595 AD (28 BH).

The First the Revelation

- At the age of 40, while in solitude at Hira', Muhammad experienced the first incident of revelation. He said the Angel Gabriel came to him and instructed him in the following words, which later became known as the first revealed verses of the Quran:

"Read! In the name of your Lord and Cherisher, Who created, Created man, out of a mere clot of congealed blood.

Proclaim! and you Lord is Most Bountiful, He Who taught man the use of pen, taught man that which he knew not.” (96:1-5)

- Muhammad’s response to this experience was fear and shock. However, after returning to his home, Muhammad was comforted by Khadijah, who later became the first believer in his message.
- In the following years, the Angel Gabriel instructed Muhammad to take the words of the Quran to the public.
- Mecca, at that time, was a center for trade and idol worship in Arabia. This made it a city of considerable prestige and wealth. The city’s leaders feared Muhammad’s monotheistic message would jeopardize this status, which brought them considerable riches.

His Teachings

- Muhammad led a humble life, never distinguishing himself from the common person--living as a neighbor without guards and moved without entourage. He told people his job as a messenger of God was simply to reaffirm what God had already revealed to humanity through previous prophets, including Adam, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus.
- In the monotheistic worldview, God created humankind as dignified creatures endowed with free will. Men and women are entrusted with leading a life of goodness in the hope of reaping the ultimate benefits in the next life. Although no single verse summarizes all the teachings of Islam, the following excerpts from the Quran represents the Straight Path God has chosen for believers:

“Say: 'come let me recite to you what your Lord Has forbade for you: that you should not set-up anything [for the sake of worship] with Him; And be kind to your parents; and do not kill your unborn children for fear of poverty, We provide for you and for them; and do not come near evil, what is openly of it, or secretly; and do not kill the soul which God has forbidden, except in justice And do not come near the money of the orphan, except for what is best, until he reached his maturity; and give honestly full measure and weight equitably—we do not burden a soul except by what it can bear; And if you speak then be just even if against a relative; and with pledges made to God you shall observe. this He Has enjoined you that you may remember; And this is My path, a Straight One, so you shall follow it, and do not follow the other paths lest they divert you from His path. That is what He has enjoined you to that you may be righteous.” (6:151-153).

- The poor, the oppressed and women were among the early believers in Islam. The Quran declared equality as a universal value that applied to all. Additionally, the Quran prohibited Mecca’s unacceptable pagan practices, such as female infanticide, and encouraged freeing slaves. Muhammad taught that there should be no distinction between Arabs and non-Arabs or between whites and blacks. Muhammad said all humans are the same in the sight of God.

Persecution

- The stunning rhythm and depth of content contained in the Quran’s verses

captured the attention of even the most eloquent Arabs.

- Mecca's pagans disparaged Muhammad as a mere poet, but the Muslims believed in the Quran as the ultimate miracle of the faith, a testimony in support of Muhammad's Prophethood. The early Muslims cherished the verses, memorized them, wrote them down, and struggled to live by them. The pagans of Mecca ridiculed Muhammad's claim to Prophethood and rejected his teachings.
- For the next decade, Muhammad and early Muslims were subjected to inhumane treatment. Muslims were killed, tortured and boycotted; their property was taken by force.
- In response, Muhammad encouraged his followers to migrate to neighboring cities and states. He told them Christian Abyssinia (today's Ethiopia) would offer a good refuge because it was ruled by a just king.
- Muhammad tried to take his message outside Mecca. He went to a nearby mountain town called Tai'f, but leaders there sent their youth to throw stones at Muhammad until, after suffering considerable physical injury, he left.

Migration

- Muhammad's hardships mounted when his uncle Abu Talib passed away, leaving him without a strong ally in Mecca.
- But then he was secretly visited by leaders of the two major tribes of Madinah, a town 300 miles to the northeast of Mecca. The leaders, whose tribesmen fought one another in lengthy wars, converted to Islam and invited

Muhammad and the Meccan Muslims to live in Madinah.

- Meccan Muslims left their homes gradually. Their departure was soon discovered by the leaders of Quraysh, who decided to eliminate Muhammad, the last to leave. But on the night they were to kill him, Muhammad left Mecca for Madinah with his closest friend Abu Bakr.
- In Medina, safe from Meccan persecution, Muhammad was now free to call to Islam, and his followers increased rapidly. To Muslims, he was both a messenger of God who shared with them divine revelation and a political leader who governed their public affairs.
- Under the guidance of Muhammad, the Charter of Madinah was developed. Some people argue that the Charter was the first pluralistic constitutional framework known to mankind. Not only did it recognize the several tribes engaging in free trade inside and outside Madinah, it also acknowledged Jewish tribes as a collective entity bonded with Muslims through attachment to a system of rights and obligations. The Charter of Madinah created an environment where all could lead a moral life and band together to oppose aggression of any sort.
- Mecca's leadership attempted to prevent Muhammad's movement from taking root in Madinah. They organized military expeditions against the city, but were eventually beaten back.

Spread of Islam

- Forced to recognize that they could not eliminate Islam or defeat the Muslims,

the pagans of Mecca concluded the Treaty of Hudaibiyah with Muslims, agreeing to maintain peace and to observe neutrality in their conflicts with third parties.

- Effectively, the treaty recognized Muslims as a new force in Arabia and acknowledged their freedom to move unmolested throughout the region. In the months of tranquility that followed Muslims sent preachers in all directions; many people and tribes in Arabia converted to Islam.
- In 630 AD (8 AH) Meccan allies breached the treaty when they massacred a group of traveling Muslims.
- Following the attack, Muslims gathered in Madinah in great numbers. This army then marched on Mecca. The numbers and dedication of Muslims stunned the leaders of the city. They decided not to fight.
- Entering Mecca, Muhammad gave amnesty to all people who stayed in their homes, wishing not to fight. Except for few minor incidents, the opening of Mecca was one of the most astonishingly bloodless military victories in world history.
- The people of Mecca, who had relentlessly oppressed Muhammad and his followers for more than two decades, feared retribution. However, they were treated with the greatest magnanimity. In a grand public gathering at the town center, Muhammad asked them, "What do you think I will do with you?" "You're kind and son of a kind brother," their leaders answered. "Go, you are free!" Muhammad replied. The Muslims understood these words to mean total forgiveness. No home was pillaged; no property was confiscated.

- Over the years, the pagan Meccans converted to Islam. The Prophet removed all the idols in and around the Ka`bah, the cubic monument at the center of the city believed to have been built by Abraham and his son Ishmael. Ever since, the Muslim call to prayer has been heard five times a day in this ancient sanctuary.

Muhammad's Final Years

- Muhammad returned to Madinah, which continued to be the political capital of the Islamic city-state. In 632 AD (10 AH) Muhammad went to Mecca as a pilgrim, and he felt it was for the last time because the revelation he received there included the verse "Today I have perfected your religion for you and completed My favor to you." (5:3).
- A few months after returning to Madinah, Muhammad died after a brief illness. He is buried in the grand Prophet's Mosque in Madinah.

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