THE PROPHET'S SIRAH

SERIES 2

THE TRUSTWORTHY AMONG HIS PEOPLE

The Youth and Adulthood of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ Before Prophethood According to the Qur'an and Authentic Hadith



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وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

"And indeed, you are of a great moral character."

SURAH AL-QALAM 68:4

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah, who protected His Messenger from childhood and adorned him with a sublime character. Blessings and peace be upon our master, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, and upon his family and his Companions.

This eBook is specially dedicated to my beloved wife,

ZAHARAH MOHD LATIF;

my dear children,

MUHAMMAD HAFIZ, NOOR HAZWANI, ABDUL HAKIM, NOOR HIDAYAH, NOR AQILA and **NOR ATIQAH**;

and my sons- and daughters-in-law,

FAZILAH, MALEK, HANIN, FAIRIZAL and **FIRWAN**.

This second book of The Prophet's Sirah follows the Messenger of Allah ﷺ from his youth to the eve of the first revelation — when his people called him al-Amin, the Trustworthy. May his character be a mirror for us, and may this knowledge be 'ilmun yuntafa'u bih, knowledge that brings benefit.

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ABOUT THE COVER OF THIS EBOOK

This eBook's cover does not depict any human being. It shows **the valley of Makkah at dusk**: rows of barren **rocky hills**, **Jabal an-Nur** rising in the distance, and a **camel caravan** moving slowly along a desert track towards the north.

The caravan recalls the trade journeys of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to Syria, while Jabal an-Nur — where the Cave of Hira' lies — marks the end of the period before prophethood told in this eBook.

The **dark blue band** at the bottom, framed by **fine gold lines**, is where the author's name appears.

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Colour guide: green box = verses of the Qur'an; gold box = Hadith; brown box = sirah note (report from the books of sirah); blue table = comparison. Underlined blue narrator names can be clicked to open the narrator's page on sunnah.com.

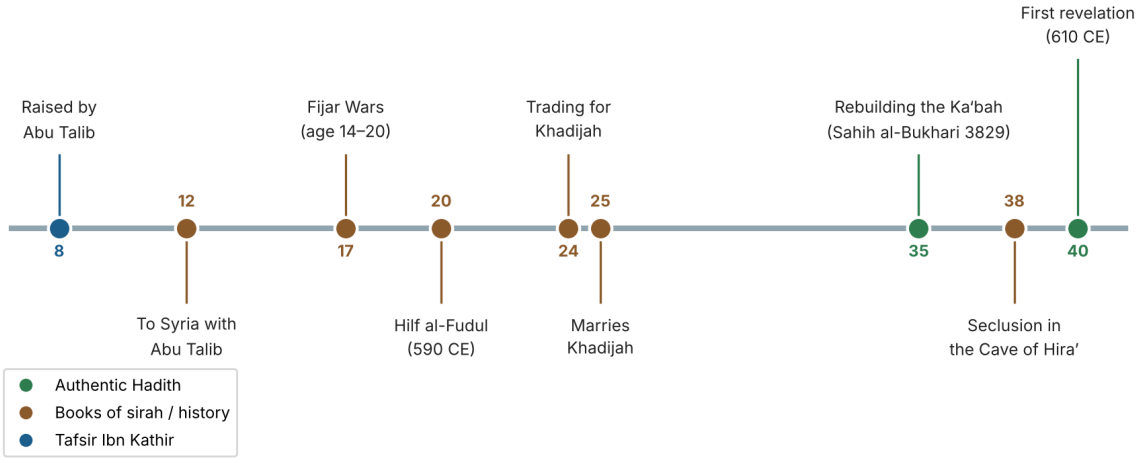
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THE TRUSTWORTHY AMONG HIS PEOPLE

The first book of The Prophet's Sirah ended with an orphan herding sheep in the care of his uncle, Abu Talib. This second eBook continues his story: from ***a working youth***, to ***a young man who defended the wronged***, ***an honest trader***, ***a husband and father***, to ***a man of forty*** in seclusion in the Cave of Hira'.

Throughout this period, his people gave him a title rarely given to anyone: ***al-Amin***, the Trustworthy. The Qur'anic verses and authentic Hadith in this eBook are chosen carefully — only those truly relevant — while stories from the books of sirah are placed in "Sirah Note" boxes and assessed.

Timeline: From Youth to the First Revelation (approximate ages)



Numbers are his age. Most ages are estimates from the books of sirah; sources differ.

Figure 1: Timeline from his youth to the first revelation.

Note: The Qur'anic translation in this eBook is Sahih International. The grade of every Hadith is stated in its box. Information from the books of sirah is placed in brown "Sirah Note" boxes, and historical facts come with source links.

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LIVING AMONG HIS PEOPLE

SURAH YUNUS 10:16

قُل لَّوۡ شَآءَ ٱللَّهُ مَا تَلَوۡتُهُۥ عَلَيۡكُمۡ وَلَآ أَدۡرَىٰكُم بِهِۦۖ فَقَدۡ لَبِثۡتُ فِيكُمۡ عُمُرٗا مِّن قَبۡلِهِۦٓۚ أَفَلَا تَعۡقِلُونَ ١٦

Say, "If Allah had willed, I would not have recited it to you, nor would He have made it known to you, for I had remained among you a lifetime before it. Then will you not reason?"

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/10:16

EXPLANATION OF VERSE 10:16

Allah commands His Messenger to say: ***"I had remained among you a lifetime before it"***. Ibn Kathir explains: he lived among Quraysh ***for forty years*** before revelation, and they never found him lying. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 10:16.

This verse makes ***his life before prophethood*** a proof. How could someone who never lied about people suddenly lie about Allah? That is why these forty years are so important to study — they are ***evidence of the truth*** of his message.

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WHAT WE WILL LEARN

STAGE	MAIN EVENTS
Youth (age 8–20)	Abu Talib's house, the journey to Syria, the Fijar Wars, Hilf al-Fudul
Young adult (age 20–25)	Trading for Khadijah, marriage
Adult (age 25–35)	Household, Zayd ibn Harithah, 'Ali, rebuilding the Ka'bah
Eve of prophethood (age 35–40)	The title al-Amin, signs of prophethood, the Cave of Hira'

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A YOUTH IN ABU TALIB'S HOUSE

After his grandfather 'Abd al-Muttalib died, he lived with ***Abu Talib*** from about the age of eight. The house was small and simple: Abu Talib was poor and had many children (Book 1). In this setting he grew up as a youth who ***worked***, helping the family by herding the sheep of Makkah's people.

SIRAH NOTE: AN UNCLE'S LOVE

The books of sirah mention that Abu Talib loved his nephew dearly, ***taking him along*** on trade journeys, unable to part with him. This love lasted until Abu Talib died, around 619 CE.

REFERENCES:

Wikipedia, "Abu Talib ibn Abd al-Muttalib". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abu_Talib_ibn_Abd_al-Muttalib

A YOUTH WITHOUT LUXURY

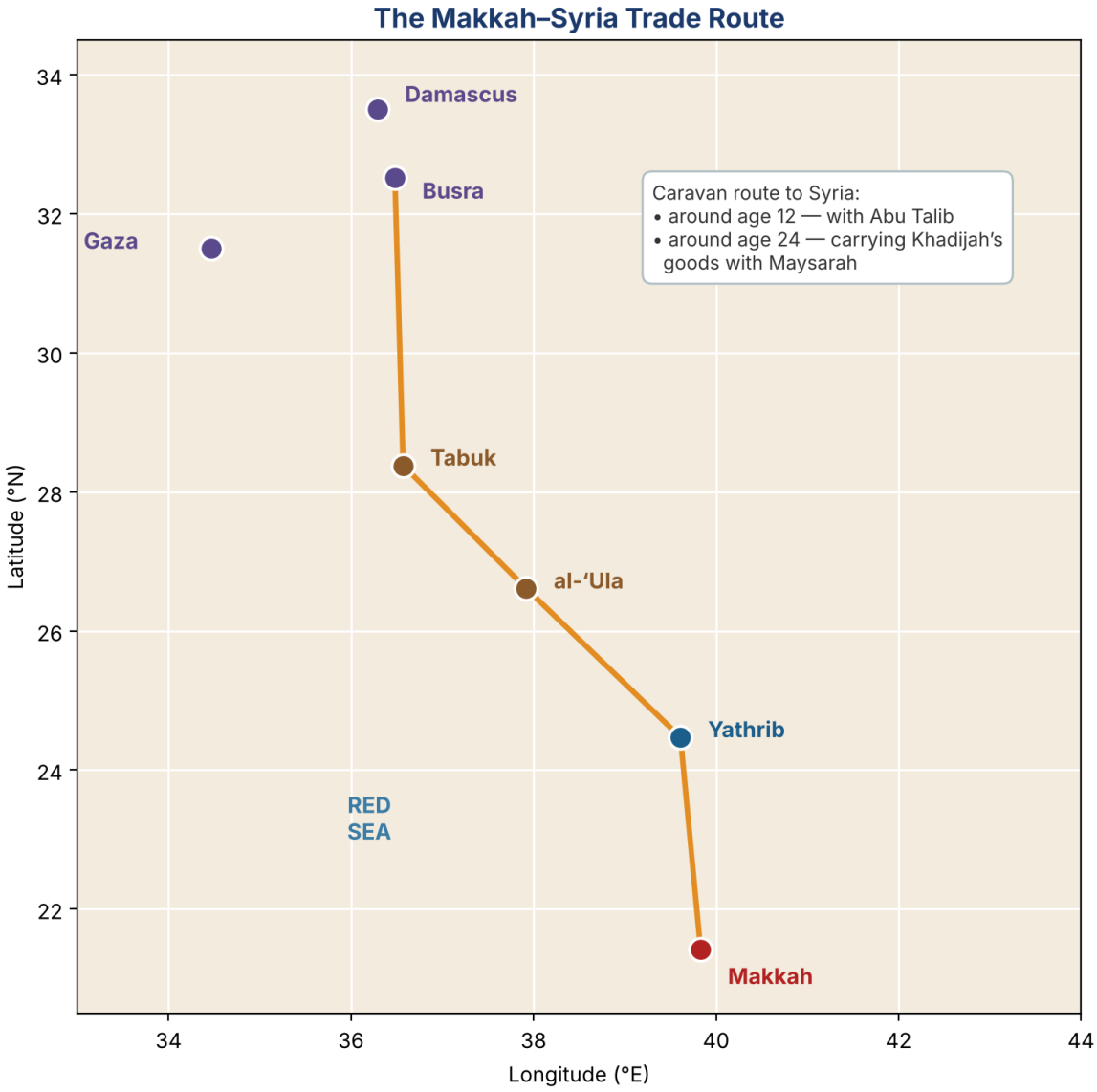
There was no school and no inheritance. His education came from ***work, nature and society***: the pastures around Makkah, the caravans coming and going, and the gatherings of his people. Yet Allah protected him from the deeds of the Jahiliyyah, as we will see in the rebuilding of the Ka'bah.

The lesson: ***hardship in youth*** is no barrier to greatness. It can be a school that shapes patience, simplicity and responsibility.

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THE FIRST JOURNEY TO SYRIA

Quraysh traded with Syria every summer (Book 1). According to the books of sirah, when he was about ***twelve***, Abu Talib took him along with the caravan to Syria. This was the first time he travelled far from Makkah.



Schematic map; approximate route through the Hijaz oases. Sources: Wikipedia, "Quraysh", "Bosra", "Khadija bint Khuwaylid".

Figure 2: The Makkah–Syria trade route (schematic map).

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BOSRA: A ROMAN CITY AT THE EDGE OF THE DESERT

The Quraysh caravans' destinations included ***Bosra***, in the Hauran region of today's southern Syria. According to Wikipedia, after the Romans conquered the Nabataean kingdom in ***106 CE***, Bosra became capital of the Roman province of ***Arabia Petraea***. In Byzantine times it was a bishopric with a ***large cathedral*** built in the sixth century.

HISTORIC REMAINS AT BOSRA	DETAILS
Roman theatre	Built in the second century CE; the only monument of its kind with its upper gallery fully preserved.
UNESCO World Heritage	"Ancient City of Bosra" inscribed in 1980.
Muslim conquest	Taken by Muslim forces under Khalid ibn al-Walid in 634 CE.

Source: Wikipedia, "Bosra".

Imagine a youth from the barren valley of Makkah seeing a Roman city of great stone buildings. This journey opened his eyes to ***the wider world***, its empires and their religions — a world that would later receive his letters of invitation.

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THE STORY OF THE MONK BAHIRA: AN ASSESSMENT

The journey to Syria is often linked to ***a monk named Bahira***. Because the story is so well known, we need to look honestly at its standing.

SIRAH NOTE: WHAT IS NARRATED

According to Ibn Ishaq's version, the monk Bahira at Bosra saw ***a cloud shading*** a boy in the Quraysh caravan, and saw ***the seal of prophethood*** on his back. He advised Abu Talib to take his nephew back to Makkah quickly. At-Tirmidhi also narrates a version of this story.

REFERENCES:

Wikipedia, "Bahira". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bahira

THE SCHOLARS' ASSESSMENT

ASPECT	ASSESSMENT
Source	Ibn Ishaq and at-Tirmidhi; not found in Sahih al-Bukhari or Sahih Muslim.
Al-Dhahabi's critique	At-Tirmidhi's version mentions Abu Bakr and Bilal, yet Abu Bakr was then a boy and Bilal not yet born.
Conclusion	Parts of the story are disputed; its details cannot be relied on.

Source: Wikipedia, "Bahira".

For this reason, this eBook ***builds no lessons*** on the details of the Bahira story. What is certain is that he went to Syria with trade caravans — common for young men of Quraysh — and the truth of his prophethood ***does not depend*** on the recognition of a monk.

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THE FIJAR WARS

SIRAH NOTE: WAR IN THE SACRED MONTHS

According to Wikipedia, ***the Fijar Wars*** took place in the late sixth century between ***Quraysh and Kinanah*** on one side and ***the Qays tribes***, including Hawazin and Thaqif, on the other. They began when a caravan leader was killed ***during the sacred months***, when fighting was forbidden — hence the name ***"Fijar"*** (sacrilege).

The battles took place around ***the market of 'Ukaz*** and the land between Makkah and Ta'if, over about four years. Eventually peace was restored.

REFERENCES:

Wikipedia, "Fijar Wars". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fijar_Wars

HIS ROLE

The sources say his uncles took him to the battlefield, and he ***shielded them from enemy arrows***, but ***did not fight***. His age is given as between ***14 and 20*** — the sources differ.

These wars show how ***readily the Arab tribes went to war***, even in months they themselves held sacred. Witnessing the effects of war forms the background to the famous peace pact in the next chapter.

The lesson: Islam later ***kept the sanctity of the sacred months*** (At-Tawbah 9:36), and taught that war is not for tribal pride, but only to uphold justice and repel oppression.

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HILF AL-FUDUL: A PACT TO DEFEND THE WRONGED

SIRAH NOTE: THE PACT AT THE HOUSE OF 'ABDULLAH IBN JUD'AN

According to Wikipedia, ***Hilf al-Fudul*** was sealed in ***590 CE***, a month after the Fijar Wars ended, in Dhu al-Qa'dah. The leaders gathered at ***the house of 'Abdullah ibn Jud'an*** and pledged to ***support anyone who was wronged***.

Its cause: ***a Yemeni merchant from Zabid*** sold goods to ***al-'As ibn Wa'il***, who refused to pay. The merchant had no powerful kin in Makkah, so he appealed for justice. The pact secured his rights and made good his loss.

REFERENCES:

Wikipedia, "Hilf al-Fudul". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hilf_al-Fudul

THE CLANS THAT JOINED

CLAN	NOTE
Banu Hashim	The clan of the Messenger ﷺ
Banu al-Muttalib	Allies of Banu Hashim
Banu Zuhrah	His mother's clan
Banu Asad	Khadijah's clan
Banu Taym	Abu Bakr's clan; 'Abdullah ibn Jud'an was also of this clan

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HIS ATTITUDE AFTER PROPHETHOOD

According to Wikipedia, after becoming the Messenger, he still ***recognised the value of this pact*** even though most of its members were not Muslim. The books of sirah report his words that if he were invited to such a pact in Islam, he would answer. This report is ***not found in the two Sahihs***.

The lesson: ***justice is a universal value***. Islam supports every effort to defend the weak and oppose oppression, even when begun by non-Muslims. Today, supporting bodies that defend victims of injustice continues the spirit of Hilf al-Fudul.

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WORKING AND TRADING

After his years of herding sheep (Book 1), he entered the world of ***trade***, the main occupation of Quraysh. Makkan trade depended on ***trust***: owners of capital handed goods to others to take to Syria or Yemen, and the profit was shared between them.

In such a system, ***a good name*** is the most valuable capital. An honest, trustworthy young man would be sought by owners of wealth, even if he owned nothing himself — and that is what happened to him.

THE ETHICS OF A TRADER

QUALITY	PRACTICE TODAY
Honesty	Describing goods truthfully, including their defects.
Trustworthiness	Guarding a client's or partner's property like one's own.
Keeping promises	Delivering goods and paying debts on time.
Fairness	Not short-changing weights and measures.
Leniency	Making things easy for a buyer in difficulty.

These qualities later became Islamic teaching on commercial dealings. He ***practised them*** before they were commanded.

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CARRYING KHADIJAH'S GOODS

SIRAH NOTE: THE JOURNEY WITH MAYSARAH

According to Wikipedia, ***Khadijah bint Khuwaylid*** was a successful merchant. She did not travel with her caravans, but ***hired others*** on commission. Her caravans were said to equal those of all other Quraysh traders combined.

She hired him, then in his ***early twenties***, to trade in Syria for ***double her usual commission***. With Abu Talib's permission, he went with ***Maysarah***, Khadijah's servant, and returned with ***twice the expected profit***.

REFERENCES:

Wikipedia, "Khadija bint Khuwaylid". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khadija_bint_Khuwaylid

MAYSARAH'S REPORT

The books of sirah relate that Maysarah told Khadijah about his ***honesty and character*** throughout the journey. Some reports add marvellous stories from the journey; these additions ***are not authentic*** and are not included here.

The lesson: ***success at work*** comes from trustworthiness and diligence, not trickery. A wise employer judges a worker by ***character***, not just skill.

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KHADIJAH AND A BLESSED MARRIAGE

Khadijah came from ***Banu Asad*** of Quraysh. Her father, ***Khuwaylid ibn Asad***, was a merchant and leader. According to Wikipedia, she had been married before, and the sources name two earlier husbands, ***'Atiq ibn 'A'idh*** and ***Malik ibn Nabbash***.

> **SIRAH NOTE: A PROPOSAL THROUGH NAFISAH**
>
> According to Wikipedia, Khadijah asked her friend ***Nafisah*** to find out whether he would consider marriage. Then both families agreed, and his uncles made the formal proposal; the sources differ on who attended.
>
> **REFERENCES:**
> Wikipedia, "Khadija bint Khuwaylid". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khadija_bint_Khuwaylid

THEIR AGES AT MARRIAGE

ITEM	WHAT THE SOURCES SAY
His age	About 25 (some sources: 22–25).
Khadijah's age	Well known: 40; some sources: about 28.
Year	Around 595 CE.
Length of marriage	About 25 years, until Khadijah died in 619 CE.

Source: Wikipedia, "Khadija bint Khuwaylid".

Whatever the differences about age, what is certain is that this marriage was built on ***character***, not wealth or looks. He married no other woman while Khadijah lived — a loyalty he remembered all his life.

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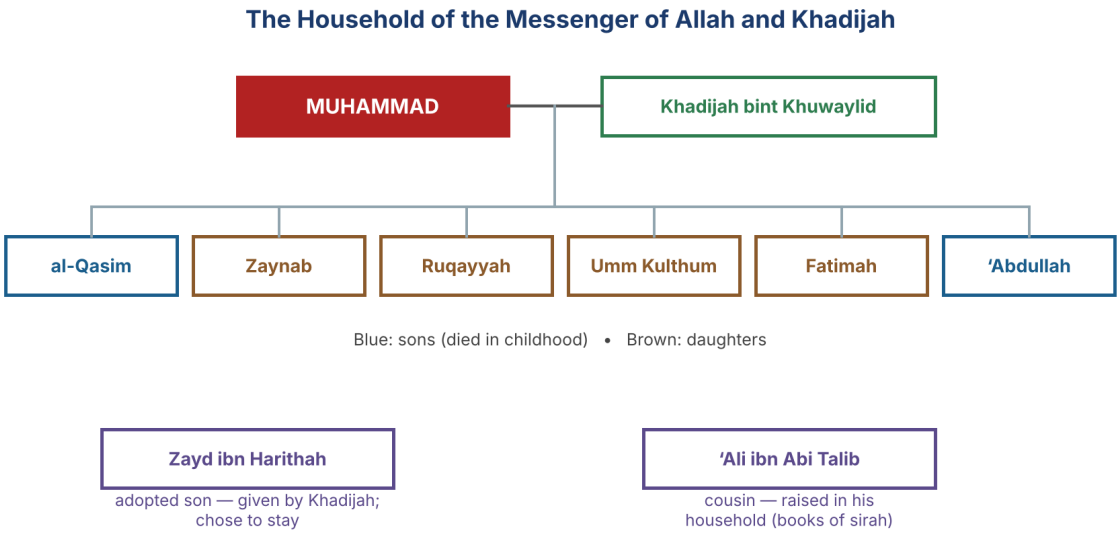
KHADIJAH'S STANDING IN ISLAM

Khadijah رضى الله عنها was ***the first*** to believe in him when revelation came, and she comforted and supported him with her wealth and herself. In Sahih al-Bukhari, Jibril عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ conveyed ***greetings of peace from her Lord*** to Khadijah and glad tidings of a house in Paradise (Sahih al-Bukhari 3820).

KHADIJAH'S QUALITY	AN EXAMPLE FOR US
A wise merchant	Women can succeed in business by lawful means.
Judging a man by character	Choose a spouse for faith and character.
A loyal supporter	A wife who comforts and supports her husband in his struggle.
Generous	Using wealth for good and for da'wah.

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THE HOUSEHOLD AND THE CHILDREN



Sources differ on the number of children (six or eight). Sources: Wikipedia, "Khadija bint Khuwaylid", "Zayd ibn Haritha al-Kalbi".

Figure 3: The household of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and Khadijah رضى الله عنها.

According to Wikipedia, his children with Khadijah were two sons — ***al-Qasim*** and ***'Abdullah***, both of whom died in childhood — and four daughters: ***Zaynab, Ruqayyah, Umm Kulthum and Fatimah***. His kunyah ***Abu al-Qasim*** came from the name of his eldest son.

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Years after Khadijah died, he still remembered her. 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها relates:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 3818

حَدَّثَنِي عُمَرُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ حَسَنٍ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبِي، حَدَّثَنَا حَفْصٌ، عَنْ هِشَامٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ عَائِشَةَ ـ رضى الله عنها ـ قَالَتْ مَا غِرْتُ عَلَى أَحَدٍ مِنْ نِسَاءِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم مَا غِرْتُ عَلَى خَدِيجَةَ، وَمَا رَأَيْتُهَا، وَلَكِنْ كَانَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم يُكْثِرُ ذِكْرَهَا، وَرُبَّمَا ذَبَحَ الشَّاةَ، ثُمَّ يُقَطِّعُهَا أَعْضَاءً، ثُمَّ يَبْعَثُهَا فِي صَدَائِقِ خَدِيجَةَ، فَرُبَّمَا قُلْتُ لَهُ كَأَنَّهُ لَمْ يَكُنْ فِي الدُّنْيَا امْرَأَةٌ إِلاَّ خَدِيجَةُ. فَيَقُولُ إِنَّهَا كَانَتْ وَكَانَتْ، وَكَانَ لِي مِنْهَا وَلَدٌ.

TRANSLATION:

'A'ishah رضى الله عنها said: **"I was never as jealous of any of the wives of the Prophet ﷺ as I was of Khadijah, though I never saw her. But the Prophet ﷺ used to mention her often."** Sometimes he would slaughter a sheep, cut it into portions and send them to Khadijah's friends. Sometimes I said to him: "It is as if there were no woman in the world except Khadijah!" He would say: **"She was such and such, and from her I had children."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from 'Umar ibn Muhammad ibn al-Hasan, from his father, Muhammad ibn al-Hasan, from Hafs ibn Ghiyath, from Hisham ibn 'Urwah, from his father, 'Urwah ibn az-Zubayr, from 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Merits of the Ansar, chapter on the Prophet's ﷺ marriage to Khadijah and her virtue, Hadith No. 3818. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 2435).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:3818

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

First: A loyalty that never faded. He always mentioned Khadijah and ***honoured her friends*** with gifts.

Second: Valuing a spouse. A wife's goodness ***is not forgotten*** even after she is gone.

Third: Human nature. This hadith also shows 'A'ishah's honesty about her jealousy — and how gently he answered it.

ZAYD IBN HARITHAH: THE SON WHO CHOSE LOVE

SIRAH NOTE: THE KIDNAPPED BOY

According to Wikipedia, ***Zayd ibn Harithah*** came from the tribe of ***Kalb***. As a boy he was kidnapped and sold at ***the market of 'Ukaz***. ***Hakim ibn Hizam*** bought him for his aunt, Khadijah, who later gave him to the Prophet.

When his father and uncle came to ransom him, Zayd ***chose to stay*** with the Prophet. He then declared him his adopted son, and he became known as ***Zayd ibn Muhammad***.

REFERENCES:

Wikipedia, "Zayd ibn Haritha al-Kalbi". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zayd_ibn_Haritha_al-Kalbi

WHY DID ZAYD CHOOSE?

A boy chose not to return to his own father — this shows how ***lovingly he treated Zayd***, not as a slave. His good character was felt first by those closest to him.

THE LATER RULING ON ADOPTION

After Surah Al-Ahzab 33:5 was revealed, adopted children ***were named after their birth fathers***, and Zayd became known again as Zayd ibn Harithah. Zayd was among ***the earliest to embrace Islam***, and was martyred at ***the Battle of Mu'tah*** in 629 CE.

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THE ONLY COMPANION NAMED IN THE QUR'AN

Zayd ibn Harithah is ***the only Companion*** whose name is mentioned explicitly in the Qur'an, in Surah Al-Ahzab 33:37. This honour came to a man who had once been a slave sold in a market — a sign that ***honour with Allah*** lies not in lineage or wealth.

His son, ***Usamah ibn Zayd***, was later appointed by the Prophet as an army commander while still young. The Prophet's love for Zayd's family continued from one generation to the next.

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'ALI IN THE HOUSE OF THE MESSENGER ﷺ

SIRAH NOTE: REPAYING ABU TALIB'S KINDNESS

The books of sirah relate that in ***a year of drought***, Quraysh suffered hardship. Abu Talib had many children and little wealth. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ invited his uncle al-'Abbas to ***ease Abu Talib's burden***: he took ***'Ali***, and al-'Abbas took ***Ja'far***.

'Ali thus grew up in the house of the Prophet and Khadijah, and was among ***the very first*** to believe when revelation came.

LESSONS

First: Repaying kindness. Abu Talib raised him as a child; as an adult he ***eased Abu Talib's burden***.

Second: A home that educates. The home of the Prophet and Khadijah ***raised*** Zayd and 'Ali — two great figures of Islam.

Third: Family cooperation. In hardship, the extended family ***helped one another***. Today, helping relatives in need — including supporting their children's education — is a living sunnah.

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REBUILDING THE KA'BAH

When he was about ***thirty-five***, the Ka'bah was in a weak state. According to Wikipedia, ***a fire*** had weakened its structure, and ***a flood*** later damaged it. Quraysh decided to demolish and rebuild it.

SIRAH NOTE: TIMBER FROM A BYZANTINE SHIP

According to Wikipedia, the timber came from ***a Byzantine ship*** wrecked at ***Shu'aybah*** on the Red Sea coast. A Coptic carpenter from Egypt aboard the ship, named ***Baqum***, did the carpentry.

REFERENCES:
Wikipedia, "Kaaba". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaaba

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ himself ***carried stones*** with his uncle al-'Abbas. In this event something happened that shows how Allah ***protected*** him even before prophethood:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 3829

حَدَّثَنِي مَحْمُودٌ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الرَّزَّاقِ، قَالَ أَخْبَرَنِي ابْنُ جُرَيْجٍ، قَالَ أَخْبَرَنِي عَمْرُو بْنُ دِينَارٍ، سَمِعَ جَابِرَ بْنَ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ـ رضى الله عنهما ـ قَالَ لَمَّا بُنِيَتِ الْكَعْبَةُ ذَهَبَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم وَعَبَّاسٌ يَنْقُلاَنِ الْحِجَارَةَ، فَقَالَ عَبَّاسٌ لِلنَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم اجْعَلْ إِزَارَكَ عَلَى رَقَبَتِكَ يَقِيكَ مِنَ الْحِجَارَةِ، فَخَرَّ إِلَى الأَرْضِ، وَطَمَحَتْ عَيْنَاهُ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ ثُمَّ أَفَاقَ فَقَالَ «إِزَارِي إِزَارِي». فَشَدَّ عَلَيْهِ إِزَارَهُ.

TRANSLATION:

Jabir ibn 'Abdullah رضى الله عنهما said: When the Ka'bah was rebuilt, the Prophet ﷺ and al-'Abbas went to carry stones. Al-'Abbas said to the Prophet ﷺ: "Put your waist-wrapper over your neck to protect you from the stones." He fell to the ground, his eyes gazing up at the sky. Then he came to and said: **"My waist-wrapper! My waist-wrapper!"** And his waist-wrapper was tied back on him.

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Mahmud ibn Ghaylan, from 'Abd ar-Razzaq, from Ibn Jurayj, from 'Amr ibn Dinar, from Jabir ibn 'Abdullah رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Merits of the Ansar, chapter on the building of the Ka'bah, Hadith No. 3829. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 340).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:3829

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LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

Uncovering oneself in public was common for labourers in the Jahiliyyah. But Allah ***protected the modesty*** of His Messenger: he fell unconscious as soon as his waist-wrapper was lifted, and came to asking for it. His modesty was guarded by Allah before the law prescribed it.

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WHY DID THE KA'BAH BECOME SMALLER?

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 1584

حَدَّثَنَا مُسَدَّدٌ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو الأَحْوَصِ، حَدَّثَنَا أَشْعَثُ، عَنِ الأَسْوَدِ بْنِ يَزِيدَ، عَنْ عَائِشَةَ ـ رضى الله عنها ـ قَالَتْ سَأَلْتُ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم عَنِ الْجَدْرِ أَمِنَ الْبَيْتِ هُوَ قَالَ «نَعَمْ». قُلْتُ فَمَا لَهُمْ لَمْ يُدْخِلُوهُ فِي الْبَيْتِ قَالَ «إِنَّ قَوْمَكِ قَصَّرَتْ بِهِمُ النَّفَقَةُ». قُلْتُ فَمَا شَأْنُ بَابِهِ مُرْتَفِعًا قَالَ «فَعَلَ ذَلِكِ قَوْمُكِ لِيُدْخِلُوا مَنْ شَاءُوا وَيَمْنَعُوا مَنْ شَاءُوا، وَلَوْلاَ أَنَّ قَوْمَكِ حَدِيثٌ عَهْدُهُمْ بِالْجَاهِلِيَّةِ فَأَخَافُ أَنْ تُنْكِرَ قُلُوبُهُمْ أَنْ أُدْخِلَ الْجَدْرَ فِي الْبَيْتِ وَأَنْ أُلْصِقَ بَابَهُ بِالأَرْضِ».

TRANSLATION:

'A'ishah رضى الله عنها said: I asked the Prophet ﷺ about the semicircular wall (al-Hijr): is it part of the House?

He said: **"Yes."** I said: "Why did they not include it in the House?" He said: **"Your people ran short of funds."** I said: "Why is its door raised?" He said: **"Your people did that so they could admit whom they wished and keep out whom they wished. Were it not that your people have only recently left the Jahiliyyah, and I fear their hearts would reject it, I would include the wall in the House and bring its door down to the level of the ground."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Musaddad, from Abu al-Ahwas, from Ash'ath ibn Abi ash-Sha'tha', from al-Aswad ibn Yazid, from 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Hajj, chapter on the virtue of Makkah and its buildings, Hadith No. 1584. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 1333).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:1584

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

First: Only lawful wealth. Quraysh ***ran short of funds***, so part of the Ka'bah was left outside the building — the area now known as ***Hijr Isma'il***.

Second: Wisdom in change. He wished to correct it, but ***postponed*** it, fearing his people, so recently out of the Jahiliyyah, would reject it. A wise leader weighs ***people's readiness***.

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THE BLACK STONE AND A CLOAK

When the building reached the place of ***the Black Stone***, the clans of Quraysh ***quarrelled***: each wanted the honour of setting the stone in place. The dispute nearly led to bloodshed.

SIRAH NOTE: A JUST SOLUTION

According to the books of sirah, they agreed to accept the judgement of ***the first person to enter*** the Sacred Mosque. That person was ***Muhammad***, and they said: "This is al-Amin; we accept him."

According to Wikipedia, he asked for a ***cloak***, placed the Black Stone on it, and had ***the leaders of every clan*** hold its edges and lift it together. Then he himself ***set the stone*** in its place with his own hands.

REFERENCES:

Wikipedia, "Kaaba". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaaba

LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP

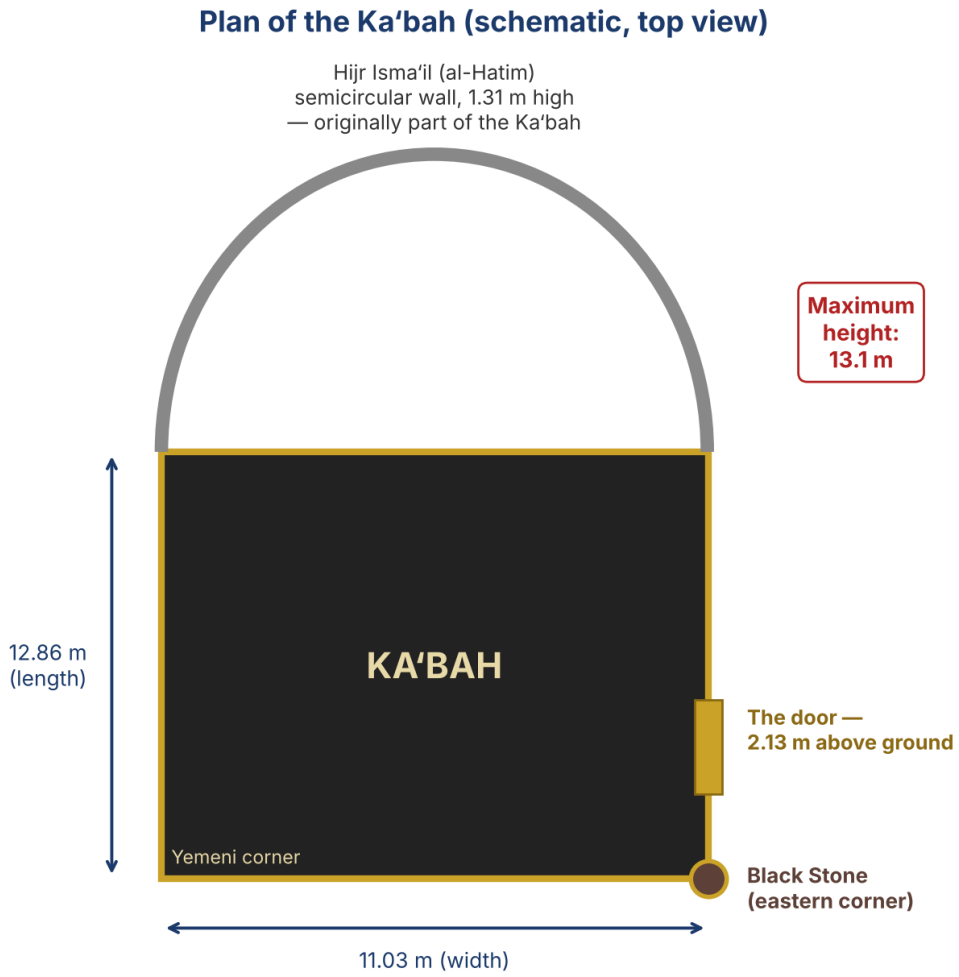
HIS STEP	LESSON
Asking for a cloak	Look for a creative, simple solution.
Every clan holds an edge	Involve everyone; let no one feel excluded.
He himself sets the stone	A leader acts, not merely directs.
Accepted because trustworthy	Trust is built for years before it is needed.

This story is well known in the books of sirah and is narrated through various chains outside the two Sahihs. Its essence — that he settled the dispute over the Black Stone — is widely accepted by historians.

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THE KA'BAH IN NUMBERS

The Ka'bah we see today still stands on ***the Quraysh foundations***. According to Wikipedia, after 'Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr's rebuilding in 683 CE, which included the Hijr, Caliph 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan in ***693 CE*** rebuilt it on the Quraysh foundations, and its basic shape has not changed since.



Measurements per Wikipedia, "Kaaba" (other sources give slightly different figures). Quraysh left out the Hijr area for lack of funds.

Figure 4: Plan of the Ka'bah and Hijr Isma'il (schematic).

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FEATURE	MEASUREMENT / DETAILS
Length	12.86 m
Width	11.03 m
Maximum height	13.1 m
Door	On the north-east wall, 2.13 m above ground
Hijr Isma'il	Semicircular marble wall, 1.31 m high, 1.5 m wide
Rebuildings	Quraysh (c. 600–605 CE), Ibn az-Zubayr (683 CE), 'Abd al-Malik (693 CE), Murad IV (1626–1627 CE)

Source: Wikipedia, "Kaaba". Wikipedia also gives other figures (about 15 m high, 12 m × 10.5 m); the difference depends on how it is measured.

When performing tawaf today, we walk outside Hijr Isma'il because it is ***part of the Ka'bah*** — a direct result of Quraysh's decision to use only lawful wealth, as in the hadith of 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها.

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THE TITLE AL-AMIN

The Black Stone episode shows that even before prophethood, Quraysh called him ***al-Amin***. The clearest testimony to his honesty came from his own people, when he began calling openly:

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HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 4770

حَدَّثَنَا عُمَرُ بْنُ حَفْصِ بْنِ غِيَاثٍ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبِي، حَدَّثَنَا الأَعْمَشُ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي عَمْرُو بْنُ مُرَّةَ، عَنْ سَعِيدِ بْنِ جُبَيْرٍ، عَنِ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ ـ رضى الله عنهما ـ قَالَ لَمَّا نَزَلَتْ {وَأَنْذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الأَقْرَبِينَ} صَعِدَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم عَلَى الصَّفَا فَجَعَلَ يُنَادِي «يَا بَنِي فِهْرٍ، يَا بَنِي عَدِيٍّ». لِبُطُونِ قُرَيْشٍ حَتَّى اجْتَمَعُوا، فَجَعَلَ الرَّجُلُ إِذَا لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ أَنْ يَخْرُجَ أَرْسَلَ رَسُولاً لِيَنْظُرَ مَا هُوَ، فَجَاءَ أَبُو لَهَبٍ وَقُرَيْشٌ فَقَالَ «أَرَأَيْتَكُمْ لَوْ أَخْبَرْتُكُمْ أَنَّ خَيْلاً بِالْوَادِي تُرِيدُ أَنْ تُغِيرَ عَلَيْكُمْ، أَكُنْتُمْ مُصَدِّقِيَّ». قَالُوا نَعَمْ، مَا جَرَّبْنَا عَلَيْكَ إِلاَّ صِدْقًا. قَالَ «فَإِنِّي نَذِيرٌ لَكُمْ بَيْنَ يَدَىْ عَذَابٍ شَدِيدٍ». فَقَالَ أَبُو لَهَبٍ تَبًّا لَكَ سَائِرَ الْيَوْمِ، أَلِهَذَا جَمَعْتَنَا فَنَزَلَتْ {تَبَّتْ يَدَا أَبِي لَهَبٍ وَتَبَّ ، مَا أَغْنَى عَنْهُ مَالُهُ وَمَا كَسَبَ}

TRANSLATION:

Ibn ‘Abbas رضى الله عنهما said: When the verse {And warn your closest kindred} was revealed, the Prophet ﷺ climbed Mount Safa and began calling: “O Banu Fihr! O Banu ‘Adi!” — the clans of Quraysh — until they gathered. Whoever could not come sent a messenger to see what was happening. Abu Lahab and Quraysh came. He said: **“What do you think — if I told you that there were horsemen in this valley about to attack you, would you believe me?”** They said: **“Yes; we have never found you to be anything but truthful.”** He said: **“Then I am a warner to you of a severe punishment ahead.”** Abu Lahab said: “May you perish for the rest of the day! Is this why you gathered us?” Then it was revealed: {Perish the hands of Abu Lahab, and perish he}.

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from ‘Umar ibn Hafs ibn Ghiyath, from his father, Hafs ibn Ghiyath, from al-A‘mash, from ‘Amr ibn Murrah, from Sa‘id ibn Jubayr, from Ibn ‘Abbas رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Tafsir, Surah ash-Shu‘ara’, Hadith No. 4770. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 208).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:4770

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

First: The testimony of opponents. Quraysh — including Abu Lahab — admitted: ***“We have never found you to be anything but truthful.”*** This came from people who later opposed him.

Second: Capital for da‘wah. Forty years of honesty became ***the basis of trust*** when he conveyed the message. Callers to Allah today must likewise be known for their character before their words.

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Third: Truth and rejection. They admitted his honesty, yet rejected his call. ***Guidance is not mere argument***; it is a gift from Allah.

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THE HANIFS

In the Jahiliyyah, not all Arabs worshipped idols. A few were known as ***hanifs*** — those who rejected idol worship and sought the religion of Ibrahim عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ.

SIRAH NOTE: ZAYD IBN 'AMR IBN NUFAYL

Among the best known was ***Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl***, father of Sa'id ibn Zayd رضى الله عنه. Sahih al-Bukhari relates that he ***did not eat what was slaughtered for idols*** and criticised Quraysh for slaughtering in the name of other than Allah, and travelled to Syria seeking the true religion. He died before prophethood.

REFERENCES:
Sahih al-Bukhari 3826–3827. https://sunnah.com/bukhari:3826

The existence of the hanifs shows that human ***fitrah*** — even in an idol-worshipping society — still sought the One God. Makkan society was ***waiting for light***.

THE MESSENGER ﷺ AND THE IDOLS

Before prophethood, he ***did not worship idols***. Allah protected him from his people's shirk, just as Allah protected his modesty during the rebuilding of the Ka'bah. His love of solitude and worship later led him to the Cave of Hira'.

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SIGNS BEFORE PROPHETHOOD

As prophethood drew near, certain signs appeared that were fully understood only later. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ himself told of one:

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HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2277

وَحَدَّثَنَا أَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ، حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَبِي بُكَيْرٍ، عَنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ بْنِ طَهْمَانَ، حَدَّثَنِي سِمَاكُ بْنُ حَرْبٍ، عَنْ جَابِرِ بْنِ سَمُرَةَ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم «إِنِّي لأَعْرِفُ حَجَرًا بِمَكَّةَ كَانَ يُسَلِّمُ عَلَىَّ قَبْلَ أَنْ أُبْعَثَ إِنِّي لأَعْرِفُهُ الآنَ».

TRANSLATION:

Jabir ibn Samurah رضى الله عنه said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **"I know a stone in Makkah that used to greet me with salam before I was sent. Indeed, I know it now."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Abu Bakr ibn Abi Shaybah, from Yahya ibn Abi Bukayr, from Ibrahim ibn Tahman, from Simak ibn Harb, from Jabir ibn Samurah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Virtues, chapter on the virtue of the Prophet's ﷺ lineage and the stone greeting him before prophethood, Hadith No. 2277.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim, the second most authentic book of Hadith after Sahih al-Bukhari.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2277

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

First: Creation recognised its Messenger. A stone in Makkah ***greeted*** him before he was sent — a sign of Allah's honour.

Second: A lasting memory. He said ***"I know it now"***, showing the event was real and remembered.

TRUE DREAMS

In Sahih al-Bukhari, 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها relates that revelation began with ***true dreams***: every dream he saw came true like ***the light of dawn***. Then ***solitude was made beloved*** to him in the Cave of Hira'. The full account will be given in Book 3. Sahih al-Bukhari 3

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SECLUSION IN THE CAVE OF HIRA'

As he neared forty, he increasingly loved ***solitude*** in a small cave at the top of ***Jabal an-Nur***, near Makkah. There he worshipped (tahannuth) for days, taking provisions, then returning to Khadijah for more.

THE CAVE OF HIRA' IN NUMBERS

FEATURE	DETAILS
Height of Jabal an-Nur	About 640 m
Position of the cave	About 270 m (according to Wikipedia)
Size of the cave	About 3.7 m long and 1.6 m wide
The climb today	About 1,750 steps; one to two hours
Length of seclusion	One month each year according to historical sources
First revelation	Around August 610 CE, in Ramadan

Source: Wikipedia, "Mount Hira".

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WHY SOLITUDE?

Makkah was full of idols, commerce and tribal quarrels. In the Cave of Hira', he was ***far from the noise***, reflecting on Allah's greatness and the state of his people. From this cave, Makkah — and the Ka'bah — could be seen in the distance.

The lesson: each of us needs ***time alone with Allah*** — in the last third of the night, in i'tikaf, or simply a few minutes without a phone. A heart that is always busy struggles to receive light.

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VISITING JABAL AN-NUR TODAY

Many Hajj and 'Umrah pilgrims climb Jabal an-Nur to see the Cave of Hira'. Scholars explain that climbing it is ***not part of the rites of Hajj or 'Umrah***, and no text mentions a special merit in praying or supplicating inside the cave. It may be visited to ***reflect*** on the beginning of revelation.

ADVICE FOR CLIMBERS	REASON
Climb in the morning or evening	Makkah is very hot at midday.
Carry enough water	The climb takes one to two hours.
Keep it clean and be courteous	This historic place is visited by many.
Avoid practices without evidence	Worship must be based on the sunnah.

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A SUBLIME CHARACTER

SURAH AL-QALAM 68:4

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٤﴾

And indeed, you are of a great moral character.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/68:4

EXPLANATION OF VERSE 68:4

Allah says: ***"And indeed, you are of a great moral character"***. Ibn Kathir quotes 'A'ishah's رضى الله عنها explanation that his character was ***the Qur'an***: he carried out its commands and avoided its prohibitions. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 68:4.

Forty years before prophethood had shown this character in many situations. When the first revelation came, Khadijah رضى الله عنها comforted him by naming those very qualities: keeping ties of kinship, bearing the burdens of the weak, helping the destitute, honouring guests and helping in times of hardship (Sahih al-Bukhari 3).

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CHARACTER IN THIS EBOOK

QUALITY	EVENT
Hard work	Herding sheep and trading
Defending the wronged	Hilf al-Fudul
Trustworthiness	Khadijah's goods; the title al-Amin
Loyalty	Remembering Khadijah (Sahih al-Bukhari 3818)
Love and kindness	Zayd choosing to stay with him
Repaying kindness	Taking in 'Ali to ease Abu Talib's burden
Wisdom and justice	Settling the Black Stone dispute
Modesty	The waist-wrapper episode (Sahih al-Bukhari 3829)

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LESSONS FOR THE YOUNG

The youth and adulthood of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ are ***the best guide for young people*** today. He inherited no wealth, but built a respected name through character and hard work.

FROM THE SIRAH	PRACTICE FOR THE YOUNG
Working from a young age	Do not be ashamed of lawful work, however small.
Learning from travel	Get to know the wider world with open eyes and a guarded heart.
Hilf al-Fudul	Join efforts to defend the weak and wronged.
Trust in business	Build a good name before chasing profit.
Choosing a spouse for character	Make faith and character the main measure.
Guarding modesty and dignity	Keep modest even when others neglect it.
Time alone with Allah	Make time for self-reflection and worship.

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A REFLECTION FOR PARENTS

Abu Talib's poor home produced a trustworthy young man; the home of the Prophet and Khadijah produced Zayd and 'Ali. ***A home full of love and good example*** matters more than luxury. Raise children by example, not just advice.

Finally, remember verse 10:16: his life before prophethood became ***proof of the truth***. Our lives today will also be witnesses — either confirming or contradicting what we call others to.

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BETWEEN AUTHENTIC REPORTS AND POPULAR STORIES

Many stories about the youth and adulthood of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ circulate among people. The table below distinguishes the authentic, those from the books of sirah, and the disputed.

STORIES AND THEIR STATUS

POPULAR STORY	STATUS
He went to Syria with Abu Talib as a youth.	A report in the books of sirah; generally accepted.
The monk Bahira recognised the signs of his prophethood.	Narrated by Ibn Ishaq and at-Tirmidhi; parts disputed by scholars such as al-Dhahabi.
He took part in Hilf al-Fudul.	Reported in sirah and history books; accepted.
Khadijah was 40 at marriage.	The well-known view; some sources say about 28.
He remembered Khadijah and honoured her friends.	Authentic (Sahih al-Bukhari 3818).
He carried stones when the Ka'bah was rebuilt.	Authentic (Sahih al-Bukhari 3829).
The Hijr was left out for lack of funds.	Authentic (Sahih al-Bukhari 1584).
He settled the Black Stone dispute with a cloak.	Reported in sirah with various chains; widely accepted.
A stone greeted him before he was sent.	Authentic (Sahih Muslim 2277).
Marvels during the journey with Maysarah.	Unauthentic additions; not included.

REFLECTION

His story needs no additions to be beautiful. The authentic reports are enough to ***increase love*** and serve as an example.

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THE WORLD ON THE EVE OF PROPHETHOOD

The first forty years of the life of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ passed while the world around the Arabian Peninsula was changing rapidly. The two great empires — Eastern Rome (Byzantium) and Persia (the Sasanians) — kept fighting each other, the Arab kingdoms allied to them collapsed, and the Arab tribes began to dare to stand up to the great powers. This chapter places the story of his youth and adulthood in the middle of these world events.

A PERSIAN KING HELPED BY ROME

In ***590 CE***, when he ﷺ was about twenty years old — around the time of Hilf al-Fudul — ***Khusrau II*** became king of Persia. At first he was overthrown by a rebel general and fled into Roman territory. The Roman emperor, Maurice, helped him with an army to recover his throne, in return for several frontier provinces and cities. Khusrau II ruled until 628 CE.

Source: World History Encyclopedia, "Khosrow II".

THE GREAT WAR BEGINS AGAIN (602 CE)

In ***602 CE***, when he ﷺ was about thirty-two years old, Maurice was overthrown and killed together with his family by Phocas. Khusrau II used this as a pretext to attack Rome, and a long war broke out between the two empires. The Persian armies captured many Roman cities. In ***610 CE*** — the year the first revelation came down in the Cave of Hira' — Heraclius became Roman emperor after Phocas was overthrown.

It is this war that the Qur'an later mentions at the beginning of Surah Ar-Rum: the Romans have been defeated, but they will be victorious again within a few years (Surah Ar-Rum 30:2–4). The full story will be told in later parts of this series, in sha' Allah.

Source: World History Encyclopedia, "Khosrow II".

THE FALL OF THE KINGDOM OF LAKHM AND THE BATTLE OF DHU QAR

On the Iraqi frontier, the Arab tribe of ***Lakhm*** at al-Hirah had long been an ally of Persia. In ***602 CE***, Persia abolished the kingdom of Lakhm; its king, al-Nu'man III, was arrested and imprisoned until his death. Without this Arab intermediary, relations between Persia and the Arab tribes grew tense.

A few years later came the ***Battle of Dhu Qar***. Modern researchers place it between ***604 and 611 CE***. A coalition of the Bakr ibn Wa'il tribes, especially Banu Shayban, defeated the Persian army and its Arab allies. Historians differ about how large this battle was — some regard it as only a minor clash — but the Arabs remembered it as their first victory over a Persian army.

Source: Wikipedia, "Battle of Dhu Qar".

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HISTORICAL NOTE: YEMEN UNDER PERSIA

After Abyssinian rule in Yemen ended in the early 570s (Part 1), Yemen was governed by governors appointed by Persia. This means that throughout his youth and adulthood, the Quraysh caravans traded south (Yemen) in the Persian sphere of influence, and north (Syria) in Roman territory. Makkah lay in between, ruled by neither empire.

LESSON

While the great empires were busy fighting and bringing each other down, Allah was preparing His Messenger in tranquillity in Makkah — a city ruled by neither Rome nor Persia. Worldly powers come and go; what remains is the truth. When today's world news makes us anxious, let us remember that Allah still governs history with His wisdom.

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TRADE ROUTES AND THE MARKETS OF ARABIA

His youth and adulthood were closely tied to trade: the caravan to Syria with Abu Talib, Khadijah's merchandise, the Fijar War that began on the way to the market of 'Ukaz, and Hilf al-Fudul, which was born of a business dispute. This chapter gathers those places together.

IMPORTANT PLACES

The distances in the table are ***straight-line distances*** from Makkah calculated from modern map coordinates; the actual caravan roads were longer. Where the exact location of a place is uncertain, the distance is marked as an estimate.

PLACE	CONNECTION TO THIS SERIES	DISTANCE FROM MAKKAH
Makkah	His city; the Ka'bah rebuilt by Quraysh.	—
Jabal al-Nur (Cave of Hira')	Where he secluded himself on the eve of prophethood.	About 5 km
The market of 'Ukaz	The greatest annual market of the Arabs, between Nakhlah and Ta'if; linked with the Fijar War.	About 70 km (estimate)
Ta'if	City of Thaqif, one of the sides in the Fijar War.	About 63 km
Al-Shu'aybah	The old port of Makkah on the Red Sea; where a Roman ship ran aground whose timber was used for the Ka'bah.	About 75 km (estimate)
The market of Hubashah	An ancient annual market in the Makkah region; its site was identified by researchers in 2023 (see below).	Estimate
Yathrib (Madinah)	A town on the caravan route to Syria.	About 340 km
Busra (Syria)	Destination of the Quraysh caravans; his first journey to Syria.	About 1,280 km
Damascus (Syria)	The great city of Syria under Rome.	About 1,390 km
San'a' (Yemen)	Destination of the winter caravan; then under Persian influence.	About 815 km

Distances are calculated from modern coordinates and rounded; they are only approximate, for illustration.

THE JOURNEYS OF WINTER AND SUMMER

Allah reminds Quraysh of the blessing of their "journey of winter and summer" (Surah Quraysh 106:1–4). In winter the caravans headed for Yemen, and in summer for Syria. A one-way journey to Busra took several weeks. He ﷺ travelled this road at least twice: as a youth with Abu Talib, and as an adult carrying Khadijah's merchandise.

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THE MARKET OF 'UKAZ: MARKET AND STAGE OF POETRY

According to Wikipedia, the ***market of 'Ukaz*** was the largest and most famous annual fair of the pre-Islamic era. It was held for twenty-one days in the month of Dhu al-Qa'dah, just before the season of Hajj. Besides buying and selling, the Arab tribes settled disputes, made agreements, raced and competed in poetry there. The market declined after the coming of Islam and was finally destroyed in 127 AH. Today a modern market has been rebuilt on its historic site near Ta'if and is held as an annual cultural festival.

Source: Wikipedia, "Souk Okaz".

HISTORICAL NOTE: THE SITE OF THE MARKET OF HUBASHAH

In 2023, a team of researchers working with the King Abdulaziz Foundation (Darah) and the Saudi Heritage Commission announced the discovery of the site of the ***market of Hubashah***, an ancient Arab market on the southern bank of Wadi Qanuna in the Makkah region. This market is said to have been held every year for eight days from the beginning of the month of Rajab.

Some sirah books mention that he ﷺ once took Khadijah's merchandise to this market. This report is not found in Sahih al-Bukhari or Sahih Muslim, and the report of the find itself does not mention any connection with him. For this reason it is mentioned here as historical information, not as established fact.

Source: The Media Line, "Ancient Souq Habasha Discovered in Mecca Region" (2023).

LESSON

The markets of Arabia were not merely places of buying and selling; they were also where news, language and culture changed hands. He ﷺ grew up in the middle of this world of trade, yet was not drawn into its deceit and injustice. So should we be: working and trading among people, while guarding honesty and trustworthiness.

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TRACES OF HISTORY: ARABIC WRITING BEFORE THE QUR'AN

The Qur'an was revealed "in a clear Arabic tongue". What was Arabic writing like before then? Several inscribed stones found in Syria show how Arabic script developed during the three centuries before the revelation came down. In this chapter we include only solid findings, with their sources.

INSCRIPTION	DATE	DESCRIPTION
Namara	328 CE	Tombstone of Imru' al-Qays ibn 'Amr, an Arab king of Lakhm, in southern Syria. Old Arabic in a Nabataean script changing towards the Arabic script. Now in the Louvre Museum, Paris.
Zabad	512 CE	On the doorway of a church in northern Syria; written in Greek, Syriac and Arabic. Now in the Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels.
Harran (Hauran)	567–568 CE	At a church near al-Suwayda', south of Damascus; in Greek and Arabic. The Arabic part dates its building to "one year after the event of Khaybar".

Sources: Wikipedia, "Namara inscription"; Wikipedia, "Zabad inscription"; Wikipedia, "Harran inscription".

The Harran inscription was written only a few years before his birth, in the Hauran region — the same area as Busra, the destination of the Quraysh caravans. It shows that Arabic writing was already in use along the trade routes in the days of his youth, even though most Arabs at that time could not read or write. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ himself was ***ummi*** (unlettered), as the Qur'an states (Surah Al-A'raf 7:157).

HIMA: A CARAVAN STOP IN NAJRAN

In Najran, in southern Saudi Arabia, lies the area of ***Hima***, inscribed as a ***UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2021***. It lies on one of the ancient caravan routes of the Arabian Peninsula, with thousands of rock drawings and carvings of hunting, animals and daily life, as well as writings left by travellers and soldiers. The wells of Bi'r Hima, estimated to be at least three thousand years old, still give water today.

Source: United Nations in Saudi Arabia, "Ḥimā Cultural Area in Najran added to UNESCO's World Heritage List" (2021).

LESSON

Allah prepared the Arabic language over centuries — from simple writing on tombstones — until it became the vessel for His final Book. Yet the Messenger who brought it was unlettered, so that it would be clear that the Qur'an is not the composition of a man. Learning Arabic, even a little, is a way to draw closer to the Qur'an.

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PEOPLE IN THIS SERIES

The table below gathers the people who appear in the story of the youth and adulthood of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, so that readers can easily remember the place of each one.

PERSON	RELATIONSHIP TO THE MESSENGER OF ALLAH ﷺ	NOTES
Abu Talib	Uncle	Cared for him from the age of eight; took him to Syria.
Al-'Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib	Uncle	Carried stones with him when the Ka'bah was rebuilt (Sahih al-Bukhari 3829); took in Ja'far to lighten Abu Talib's burden.
Khadijah bint Khuwaylid	First wife	Merchant of Banu Asad; mother of all his children except Ibrahim; the first to believe.
Maysarah	Khadijah's servant	Accompanied him on the trading journey to Syria (sirah books).
Nafisah	Khadijah's friend	According to the sirah books, the go-between in Khadijah's proposal.
Hakim ibn Hizam	Khadijah's nephew	Bought Zayd at the market of 'Ukaz for his aunt.
Zayd ibn Harithah	Adopted son	Chose to stay with him; the only Companion named in the Qur'an (33:37).
'Ali ibn Abi Talib	Cousin	Grew up in the house of the Prophet and Khadijah.
Ja'far ibn Abi Talib	Cousin	Cared for by al-'Abbas in the year of drought.
'Abdullah ibn Jud'an	Leader of Banu Taym	Hilf al-Fudul was sealed in his house.
Al-'As ibn Wa'il	Leader of Quraysh	Refused to pay the merchant from Zabid; the cause of Hilf al-Fudul.
Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl	One of the hanifs	Rejected idols; died before the prophethood (Sahih al-Bukhari 3826).
Baqum	Carpenter	A Coptic craftsman from the wrecked Roman ship; helped build the Ka'bah (history books).
Bahira	Monk in Busra	His story is in the sirah books; part of its content is disputed by scholars.

Sources: Ibn Hisham, al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah; Sahih al-Bukhari 3826, 3829; earlier chapters of this eBook.

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LESSON

The people in this part of the series came from many backgrounds: a poor uncle, a wealthy wife, a boy sold in the market, tribal leaders and a foreign carpenter. All of them witnessed his character. Every day, the people around us also witness our character — they are the most honest witnesses.

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TIMELINE: SIRAH AND THE WORLD

This timeline places the events of the sirah in this eBook alongside world events of the same period. The CE years for the sirah events are the estimates of modern historians.

YEAR (APPROX.)	EVENT
567–568	The Arabic–Greek inscription at Harran, Hauran.
About 578	'Abd al-Muttalib dies; he ﷺ is cared for by Abu Talib.
About 582	First journey to Syria with Abu Talib (sirah books).
Late 580s	The Fijar War around 'Ukaz and Ta'if.
590	Khusrau II becomes king of Persia; Hilf al-Fudul is sealed in Makkah.
About 595	Carries Khadijah's merchandise to Syria; marriage to Khadijah.
602	Maurice is killed by Phocas; the Roman–Persian war resumes. Persia abolishes the kingdom of Lakhm.
About 600–605	Quraysh rebuild the Ka'bah; he ﷺ places the Black Stone.
604–611	Battle of Dhu Qar: the Bakr tribes defeat a Persian army.
Before 610	True dreams; seclusion in the Cave of Hira' (Sahih al-Bukhari 3).
610	Heraclius becomes Roman emperor; the first revelation comes down in the Cave of Hira'.

Sources: World History Encyclopedia, "Khosrow II"; Wikipedia, "Battle of Dhu Qar"; Wikipedia, "Harran inscription"; tables of years in the earlier chapters of this eBook.

LESSON

In the same year that Heraclius ascended the Roman throne, a man without wealth received revelation in a small cave. The world recorded the emperor's name, but history later proved that the event in the Cave of Hira' had a far greater impact. The measure of success with Allah differs from the measure of men.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Here are questions often asked about the youth and adulthood of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, with short answers based on the sources discussed in this eBook.

1. HOW MANY TIMES DID HE GO TO SYRIA BEFORE THE PROPHETHOOD?

According to the sirah books, at least twice: as a youth with Abu Talib, and in his early twenties carrying Khadijah's merchandise together with Maysarah.

2. IS THE STORY OF THE MONK BAHIRA AUTHENTIC?

The story is narrated by Ibn Ishaq and al-Tirmidhi, but part of its content is disputed by scholars such as al-Dhahabi. What is certain is that he travelled to Syria with a caravan. See the chapter "The Story of the Monk Bahira: An Assessment".

3. DID HE FIGHT IN THE FIJAR WAR?

The sources say he was present with his uncles and shielded them from the enemy's arrows, but did not fight. His age at the time cannot be determined; the sources mention between 14 and 20 years.

4. WHY IS HILF AL-FUDUL PRAISED EVEN THOUGH IT WAS MADE BY IDOLATERS?

Because its purpose was to defend the wronged — a value in harmony with Islam. The sirah books narrate that he would answer a call to a pact like it in Islam; this report is not found in the two Sahihs.

5. HOW OLD WAS KHADIJAH WHEN SHE MARRIED HIM?

The well-known view is 40 years, while some sources mention about 28 years. What is certain is that the marriage was built on character and lasted about 25 years.

6. HOW MANY CHILDREN DID HE HAVE WITH KHADIJAH?

Six: al-Qasim and 'Abdullah (who died in infancy), and Zaynab, Ruqayyah, Umm Kulthum and Fatimah. Ibrahim was born later to Mariyah al-Qibtiyyah in Madinah.

7. WHY WAS ZAYD NO LONGER CALLED ZAYD IBN MUHAMMAD?

Because Allah revealed Surah Al-Ahzab 33:5, commanding that adopted children be named after their real fathers. From then on he was again known as Zayd ibn Harithah.

8. WHY IS THE HIJR OF ISMA'IL OUTSIDE THE BUILDING OF THE KA'BAH?

Because Quraysh lacked lawful funds when rebuilding the Ka'bah, as he ﷺ told 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها (Sahih al-Bukhari 1584). That is why, when performing tawaf, we walk outside the Hijr.

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9. DID HE WORSHIP IDOLS BEFORE THE PROPHETHOOD?

No. Allah protected him from the shirk of his people. The Qur'an makes his life of forty years before the revelation a proof of his truthfulness (Yunus 10:16).

10. WHO WERE THE HANIFS?

A small number of Arabs who rejected idol worship and sought the religion of Prophet Ibrahim عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ, such as Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl (Sahih al-Bukhari 3826). They show that human nature (fitrah) seeks the One God.

11. IS THERE A SPECIAL MERIT IN PRAYING IN THE CAVE OF HIRA'?

There is no text mentioning a special merit for praying or supplicating inside the Cave of Hira', and climbing it is not part of the rites of Hajj or Umrah. It may be visited to take a lesson about the beginning of the revelation.

12. WHAT DID HE DO IN THE CAVE OF HIRA'?

Sahih al-Bukhari 3 says that he would engage in tahannuth — worship — for a number of nights in the cave, taking provisions with him, then return to Khadijah to take more provisions. The details of that worship are not explained in authentic reports.

LESSON

Asking is the key to knowledge. When we hear a story about the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, let us make it a habit to ask: "What is its source, and is it authentic?" In this way our love for him is built on truth.

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LESSONS AND CONCLUSION

LESSONS FROM THIS EBOOK

First: His life before prophethood is a proof. He lived forty years among his people without lying (10:16).

Second: Hardship shapes character. A poor orphan grew into a trustworthy young man.

Third: Defend the wronged. He valued Hilf al-Fudul even after prophethood.

Fourth: Trust is capital. Honesty won Khadijah's trust and the title al-Amin (Sahih al-Bukhari 4770).

Fifth: Be loyal to your spouse. He remembered Khadijah all his life (Sahih al-Bukhari 3818).

Sixth: Allah protected His Messenger. His modesty was guarded while rebuilding the Ka'bah (Sahih al-Bukhari 3829).

Seventh: Only lawful wealth. Quraysh left out the Hijr for lack of lawful funds (Sahih al-Bukhari 1584).

Eighth: Leadership that unites. The Black Stone solution involved every clan.

Ninth: A sublime character. His character was the Qur'an (68:4).

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TIMELINE SUMMARY

AGE (APPROX.)	EVENT AND SOURCE
8	Raised by Abu Talib (Ibn Kathir 93:6)
About 12	To Syria with Abu Talib (sirah)
14–20	The Fijar Wars (history books)
About 20	Hilf al-Fudul, 590 CE (history books)
Early 20s	Carrying Khadijah's goods to Syria (sirah)
About 25	Marries Khadijah, c. 595 CE (sirah)
About 35	Rebuilding the Ka'bah (Sahih al-Bukhari 3829)
Before 40	True dreams and seclusion in Hira' (Sahih al-Bukhari 3)
40	First revelation, c. 610 CE

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CONCLUSION

From Abu Talib's small house, to the markets of Syria, to the house of 'Abdullah ibn Jud'an, to his home with Khadijah, to the summit of Jabal an-Nur — Allah prepared His Messenger for forty years. When he reached forty, in the quiet Cave of Hira', the first revelation came. In sha Allah, the series **The Prophet's Sirah** will continue with ***the beginning of revelation*** and the secret call in Makkah. And Allah knows best.

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SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:261

مَّثَلُ ٱلَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمۡوَٰلَهُمۡ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنۢبَتَتۡ سَبۡعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنۢبُلَةٖ مِّاْئَةُ حَبَّةٖۗ وَٱللَّهُ يُضَٰعِفُ لِمَن يَشَآءُۚ وَٱللَّهُ وَٰسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ٢٦١

The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:261

SURAH SABA' 34:39

قُلۡ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبۡسُطُ ٱلرِّزۡقَ لِمَن يَشَآءُ مِنۡ عِبَادِهِۦ وَيَقۡدِرُ لَهُۥۚ وَمَآ أَنفَقۡتُم مِّن شَيۡءٖ فَهُوَ يُخۡلِفُهُۥۖ وَهُوَ خَيۡرُ ٱلرَّٰزِقِينَ ٣٩

Say, "Indeed, my Lord extends provision for whom He wills of His servants and restricts [it] for him. But whatever thing you spend [in His cause] - He will compensate it; and He is the best of providers."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/34:39

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2588

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ، وَابْنُ، حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - وَهُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « مَا نَقَصَتْ صَدَقَةٌ مِنْ مَالٍ وَمَا زَادَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا بِعَفْوٍ إِلاَّ عِزًّا وَمَا تَوَاضَعَ أَحَدٌ لِلَّهِ إِلاَّ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Charity does not decrease wealth.

Allah does not increase a servant who forgives except in honour. And no one humbles himself for the sake of Allah except that Allah raises him in rank."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya bin Ayyub, Qutaibah bin Sa'id and 'Ali bin Hujr, from Isma'il bin Ja'far, from al-'Ala' bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه .

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Virtue, Good Manners and Joining the Ties of Kinship (Kitab al-Birr wa al-Silah wa al-Adab), chapter on the encouragement of forgiveness and humility, Hadith No. 2588.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2588

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 1631

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ، - يَعْنِي ابْنَ سَعِيدٍ - وَابْنُ حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - هُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « إِذَا مَاتَ الإِنْسَانُ انْقَطَعَ عَنْهُ عَمَلُهُ إِلاَّ مِنْ ثَلاَثَةٍ إِلاَّ مِنْ صَدَقَةٍ جَارِيَةٍ أَوْ عِلْمٍ يُنْتَفَعُ بِهِ أَوْ وَلَدٍ صَالِحٍ يَدْعُو لَهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "When a person dies, his deeds come to an end except for three: an ongoing charity, knowledge that is benefited from, or a righteous child who prays for him."

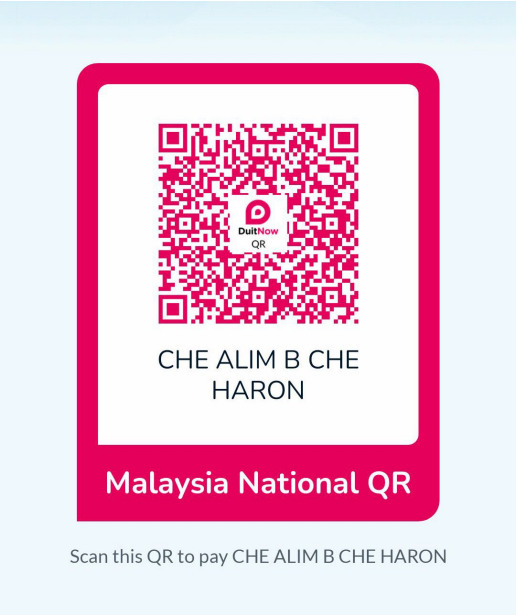
CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya bin Ayyub, Qutaibah bin Sa'id and 'Ali bin Hujr, from Isma'il bin Ja'far, from al-'Ala' bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه .

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Wills (Kitab al-Wasiyyah), chapter on the reward that reaches a person after his death, Hadith No. 1631.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:1631

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