THE PROPHET'S SIRAH

SERIES 3

WHEN REVELATION CAME

The Beginning of Revelation and the Secret Call in Makkah According to the Qur'an and Authentic Hadith



HJ CHE ALIM HJ CHE HARON

AK (KELANTAN)

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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ٱقْرَأْ بِٱسْمِ رَبِّكَ ٱلَّذِي خَلَقَ

"Recite in the name of your Lord who created."

SURAH AL-'ALAQ 96:1

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah, who sent down the Qur'an to His servant as guidance for all people. 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 third book of The Prophet's Sirah follows the most momentous moment in the life of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ — the first revelation in the Cave of Hira' — and the three years of secret da'wah that built the first generation of Muslims. 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 **Jabal an-Nur at night**: the dark rocky peak beneath **a star-filled sky**, with **a soft light** glowing from a cleft in the rocks on the mountainside — where the Cave of Hira' lies — and **the quiet valley of Makkah** below, with **the Ka'bah** in the middle of the valley and **a camel caravan** moving slowly along a sandy track.

The light in the mountain cleft symbolises the first revelation that came in the Cave of Hira', looking down towards the Ka'bah — where the message began and to which it returns. The silent night recalls the three years of secret da'wah 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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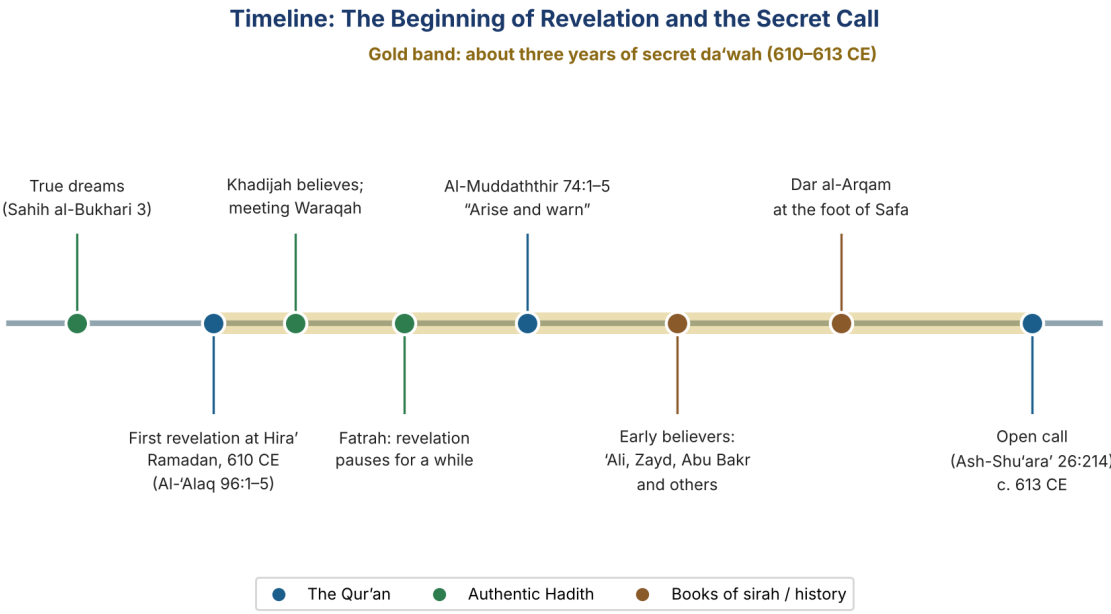
Colour guide: green box = verses of the Qur'an; gold box = Hadith; brown box = sirah note (report from the books of sirah); blue table = comparison. Underlined blue narrator names can be clicked to open the narrator's page on sunnah.com.

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WHEN REVELATION CAME

The second book of The Prophet's Sirah ended with a man of forty in seclusion in the Cave of Hira' — a man his people called ***al-Amin***. This third eBook tells of the moment that changed human history: ***the first revelation***, the fear and the comfort that followed, the pause in revelation, the command to ***arise and warn***, and ***three years of secret da'wah*** that produced the first generation of Muslims.

These events are narrated in detail in ***authentic Hadith***, especially in the first book of Sahih al-Bukhari, "The Beginning of Revelation". The Qur'anic verses and 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.



Positions show approximate order, not an exact time scale. The length of the pause and exact dates are disputed.

Figure 1: Timeline of the beginning of revelation and the secret call.

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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APPROACHING THE AGE OF FORTY

According to the books of sirah, the first revelation came when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was ***forty years old***, around ***610 CE***. Forty is the age of full maturity. The Qur'an itself mentions this age as a mark of a person's full strength and understanding (Al-Ahqaf 46:15).

Those forty years had proved something important: his people knew him as ***honest, trustworthy and of noble character*** (Book 2). When he later conveyed the revelation, they could not accuse him of lying on the basis of their own experience.

THE WORLD IN 610 CE

The revelation came in a barren valley far from the world's centres of civilisation. To grasp how great this event was, consider the state of the world at the time:

POWER / REGION	SITUATION AROUND 610 CE
Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium)	Heraclius became emperor in 610; the empire was torn by civil war and the Persian threat.
Persian (Sasanian) Empire	Under Khosrow II; attacking Roman territories in Syria and Egypt.
The Arabian Peninsula	No united state; rival tribes, and idols filling the area around the Ka'bah.
Makkah	A centre of trade and pilgrimage; Quraysh ruled as guardians of the Ka'bah.

Source: Wikipedia, "Heraclius"; Wikipedia, "Khosrow II".

In less than thirty years after the first revelation, the message that began in the Cave of Hira' would reach the palaces of both these empires. It all began with one word: ***"Read!"***

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TRUE DREAMS

'A'ishah رضى الله عنها related that the revelation to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ began with ***true dreams*** (ar-ru'ya as-salihah) in sleep. He never saw a dream but that it came true ***like the bright light of daybreak*** — clear and exact (Sahih al-Bukhari 3).

These dreams were ***preparation***. His soul was accustomed little by little to matters of the unseen before the angel came openly. Allah did not surprise His Messenger with revelation without preparation.

> **SIRAH NOTE: SIX MONTHS OF TRUE DREAMS**
> Some scholars, based on a report cited by al-Bayhaqi, say that this period of true dreams lasted ***six months*** before the first revelation in the Cave of Hira'. This report is ***not found in the two Sahihs***, so it is mentioned as a scholarly view, not a certainty.

THE DREAM OF A BELIEVER

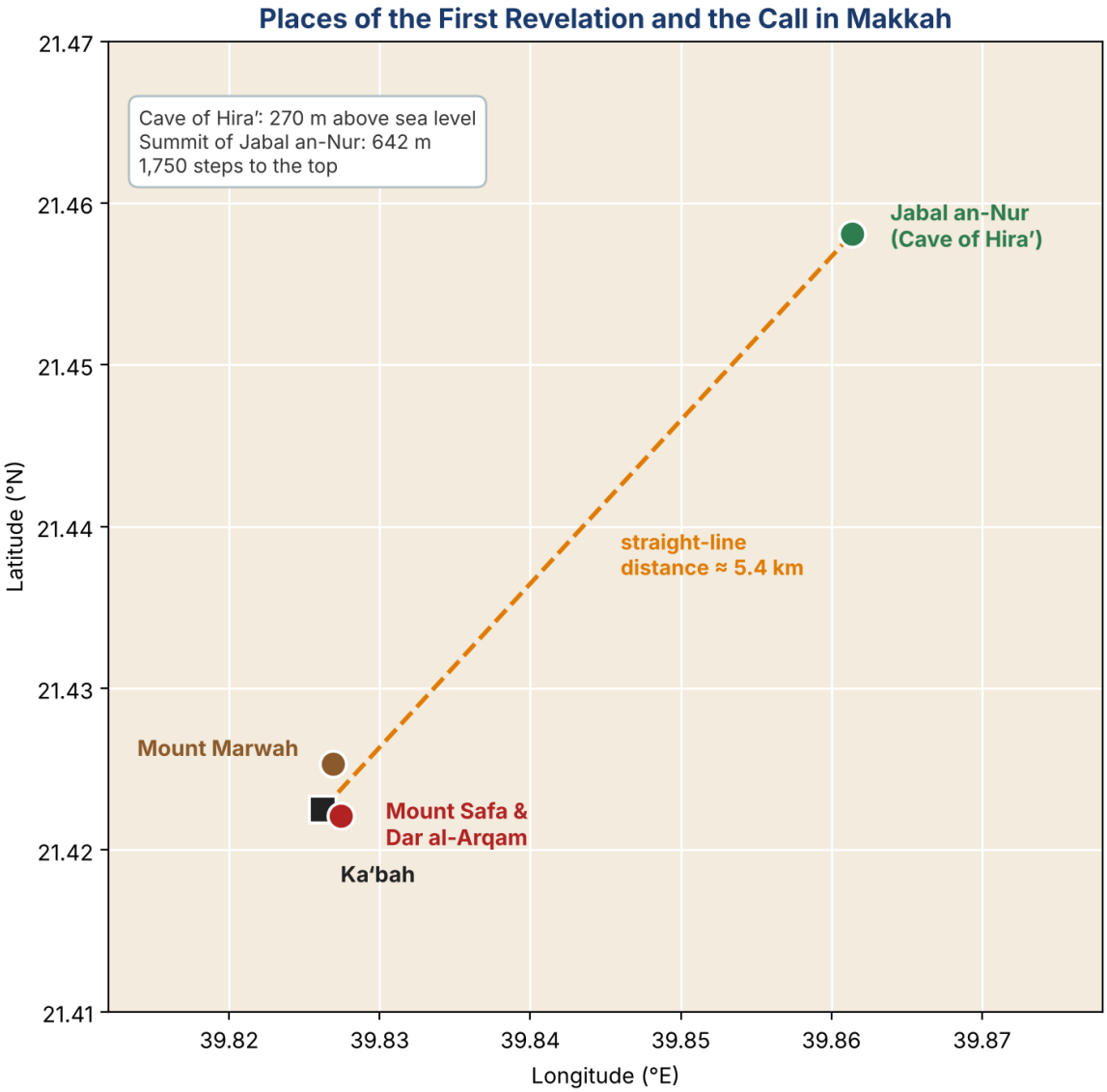
The dreams of prophets are revelation. As for believers, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ taught that a good dream comes from Allah while a bad dream comes from Satan, and he told us to seek refuge from it and not to tell others of it (Sahih al-Bukhari 6985).

The lesson: an ordinary person's dream is ***not a source of law*** and cannot override the Qur'an and Sunnah. True dreams are revelation only for prophets.

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NIGHTS IN THE CAVE OF HIRA'

The same hadith says: then ***seclusion was made dear to him***. He would go into seclusion in the Cave of Hira' and ***worship*** there (at-tahannuth) for a number of nights, taking provisions, then return to Khadijah to take provisions again (Sahih al-Bukhari 3).



Schematic map; approximate coordinates. Sources: Wikipedia, "Jabal al-Nour", "Al-Arqam ibn Abi al-Arqam".

Figure 2: The Cave of Hira', the Ka'bah and Mount Safa (schematic map).

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JABAL AN-NUR IN NUMBERS

FACT	DETAILS
Summit height	642 metres above sea level
Position of the cave	About 270 metres above sea level, on the mountainside
Size of the cave	About 3.7 m long and 1.6 m wide
Distance from the Ka'bah	About 5.4 km (straight line)
The climb	About 1,750 steps; one to two hours

Source: Wikipedia, "Jabal al-Nour". Distance calculated from coordinates.

Imagine that climb in a time without steps, carrying water and food for several nights. Imagine too ***Khadijah*** رضى الله عنها, who supported her husband and prepared those provisions. The solitude of Hira' was time to ***think, reflect and worship***, far from the idols and the noise of Makkah.

The lesson: everyone needs ***time alone with Allah*** — for self-reflection and worship. In the age of smartphones, our "cave of Hira'" may be just a few quiet minutes after prayer or in the last third of the night.

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IQRA': THE FIRST REVELATION

One night in ***the month of Ramadan***, while he was in the Cave of Hira', ***the truth*** came: the angel Jibril عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ appeared and said: "Read!" These are the first verses of the Qur'an ever revealed:

SURAH AL-'ALAQ 96:1–5

ٱقْرَأْ بِٱسْمِ رَبِّكَ ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَ ﴿١﴾

Recite in the name of your Lord who created.

خَلَقَ ٱلْإِنسَـٰنَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ﴿٢﴾

Created man from a clinging substance.

ٱقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ ٱلْأَكْرَمُ ﴿٣﴾

Recite, and your Lord is the most Generous.

ٱلَّذِى عَلَّمَ بِٱلْقَلَمِ ﴿٤﴾

Who taught by the pen?

عَلَّمَ ٱلْإِنسَـٰنَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ ﴿٥﴾

Taught man that which he knew not.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/96:1-5

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'A'ishah رضى الله عنها narrated the whole event — from the true dreams to the meeting with Waraqah — in the hadith that forms the basis of this chapter:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 3

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ بُكَيْرٍ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا اللَّيْثُ، عَنْ عُقَيْلٍ، عَنِ ابْنِ شِهَابٍ، عَنْ عُرْوَةَ بْنِ الزُّبَيْرِ، عَنْ عَائِشَةَ أُمِّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ، أَنَّهَا قَالَتْ أَوَّلُ مَا بُدِئَ بِهِ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم مِنَ الْوَحْيِ الرُّؤْيَا الصَّالِحَةُ فِي النَّوْمِ، فَكَانَ لاَ يَرَى رُؤْيَا إِلاَّ جَاءَتْ مِثْلَ فَلَقِ الصُّبْحِ، ثُمَّ حُبِّبَ إِلَيْهِ الْخَلاَءُ، وَكَانَ يَخْلُو بِغَارِ حِرَاءٍ فَيَتَحَنَّثُ فِيهِ ـ وَهُوَ التَّعَبُّدُ ـ اللَّيَالِيَ ذَوَاتِ الْعَدَدِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَنْزِعَ إِلَى أَهْلِهِ، وَيَتَزَوَّدُ لِذَلِكَ، ثُمَّ يَرْجِعُ إِلَى خَدِيجَةَ، فَيَتَزَوَّدُ لِمِثْلِهَا، حَتَّى جَاءَهُ الْحَقُّ وَهُوَ فِي غَارِ حِرَاءٍ، فَجَاءَهُ الْمَلَكُ فَقَالَ اقْرَأْ. قَالَ «مَا أَنَا بِقَارِئٍ». قَالَ «فَأَخَذَنِي فَغَطَّنِي حَتَّى بَلَغَ مِنِّي الْجَهْدَ، ثُمَّ أَرْسَلَنِي فَقَالَ اقْرَأْ. قُلْتُ مَا أَنَا بِقَارِئٍ. فَأَخَذَنِي فَغَطَّنِي الثَّانِيَةَ حَتَّى بَلَغَ مِنِّي الْجَهْدَ، ثُمَّ أَرْسَلَنِي فَقَالَ اقْرَأْ. فَقُلْتُ مَا أَنَا بِقَارِئٍ. فَأَخَذَنِي فَغَطَّنِي الثَّالِثَةَ، ثُمَّ أَرْسَلَنِي فَقَالَ {اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ ، خَلَقَ الإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ، اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الأَكْرَمُ}». فَرَجَعَ بِهَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَرْجُفُ فُؤَادُهُ، فَدَخَلَ عَلَى خَدِيجَةَ بِنْتِ خُوَيْلِدٍ رضى الله عنها فَقَالَ «زَمِّلُونِي زَمِّلُونِي». فَزَمَّلُوهُ حَتَّى ذَهَبَ عَنْهُ الرَّوْعُ، فَقَالَ لِخَدِيجَةَ وَأَخْبَرَهَا الْخَبَرَ «لَقَدْ خَشِيتُ عَلَى نَفْسِي». فَقَالَتْ خَدِيجَةُ كَلاَّ وَاللَّهِ مَا يُخْزِيكَ اللَّهُ أَبَدًا، إِنَّكَ لَتَصِلُ الرَّحِمَ، وَتَحْمِلُ الْكَلَّ، وَتَكْسِبُ الْمَعْدُومَ، وَتَقْرِي الضَّيْفَ، وَتُعِينُ عَلَى نَوَائِبِ الْحَقِّ. فَانْطَلَقَتْ بِهِ خَدِيجَةُ حَتَّى أَتَتْ بِهِ وَرَقَةَ بْنَ نَوْفَلِ بْنِ أَسَدِ بْنِ عَبْدِ الْعُزَّى ابْنَ عَمِّ خَدِيجَةَ ـ وَكَانَ امْرَأً تَنَصَّرَ فِي الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ، وَكَانَ يَكْتُبُ الْكِتَابَ الْعِبْرَانِيَّ، فَيَكْتُبُ مِنَ الإِنْجِيلِ بِالْعِبْرَانِيَّةِ مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَكْتُبَ، وَكَانَ شَيْخًا كَبِيرًا قَدْ عَمِيَ ـ فَقَالَتْ لَهُ خَدِيجَةُ يَا ابْنَ عَمِّ اسْمَعْ مِنَ ابْنِ أَخِيكَ. فَقَالَ لَهُ وَرَقَةُ يَا ابْنَ أَخِي مَاذَا تَرَى فَأَخْبَرَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم خَبَرَ مَا رَأَى. فَقَالَ لَهُ وَرَقَةُ هَذَا النَّامُوسُ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ عَلَى مُوسَى صلى الله عليه وسلم يَا لَيْتَنِي فِيهَا جَذَعًا، لَيْتَنِي أَكُونُ حَيًّا إِذْ يُخْرِجُكَ قَوْمُكَ. فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم «أَوَمُخْرِجِيَّ هُمْ». قَالَ نَعَمْ، لَمْ

يَأْتِ رَجُلٌ قَطُّ بِمِثْلِ مَا جِئْتَ بِهِ إِلاَّ عُودِيَ، وَإِنْ يُدْرِكْنِي يَوْمُكَ أَنْصُرْكَ نَصْرًا مُؤَزَّرًا. ثُمَّ لَمْ يَنْشَبْ وَرَقَةُ أَنْ تُوُفِّيَ وَفَتَرَ الْوَحْيُ.

TRANSLATION:

'A'ishah, Mother of the Believers رضى الله عنها, said: The revelation to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ began with true dreams in sleep. He never saw a dream but that it came true like the bright light of daybreak. Then seclusion was made dear to him. He used to go into seclusion in the Cave of Hira', worshipping there for a number of nights before returning to his family, taking provisions for that; then he would return to Khadijah and take provisions for the like of it — until the truth came to him while he was in the Cave of Hira'. The angel came and said: "Read!" He said: **"I am not a reader."** He said: **"He seized me and squeezed me until I could bear it no more, then released me and said: 'Read!' I said: 'I am not a reader.'** (This happened three times.) **Then he said: {Recite in the name of your Lord who created; created man from a clinging substance; recite, and your Lord is the most Generous}."** The Messenger of Allah ﷺ returned with these verses, his heart trembling, and went in to Khadijah bint Khuwaylid رضى الله عنها and said: **"Cover me! Cover me!"** They covered him until his fear left him. He told Khadijah what had happened and said: **"I feared for myself."** Khadijah said: **"Never! By Allah, Allah will never disgrace you. You keep ties of kinship, bear the burdens of the weak, give to the destitute, honour the guest and help those struck by misfortune."** Then Khadijah took him to Waraqah ibn Nawfal, her cousin, who had become a Christian in the Jahiliyyah, wrote the Hebrew script, and was old and blind. Having heard his account, Waraqah said: **"This is the Namus (Jibril) whom Allah sent down to Musa. If only I were young, and alive when your people drive you out."** He asked: **"Will they drive me out?"** Waraqah said: **"Yes. No one has ever come with the like of what you have brought without being met with hostility. If I live to see your day, I will support you with all my strength."** Before long Waraqah died, and the revelation paused for a while.

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Yahya ibn Bukayr, from al-Layth ibn Sa'd, from 'Uqayl ibn Khalid, from Ibn Shihab az-Zuhri, from 'Urwah ibn az-Zubayr, from 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Beginning of Revelation, Hadith No. 3. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 160).

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:3

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

This hadith is ***the main source*** for the story of the first revelation. It shows that revelation was not something he sought or expected. He was ***startled and trembling***, and went home seeking refuge and comfort beside his wife.

The hadith also refutes the claim that he composed the Qur'an. An author would not be frightened of his own work, nor ask others about what he had experienced.

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EXPLAINING THE FIRST FIVE VERSES

The first revelation begins with the command: ***"Recite in the name of your Lord who created"***. Ibn Kathir explains that these are ***the first verses of the Qur'an revealed***, and they are ***the first mercy*** of Allah to His servants and the first blessing granted to them. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 96:1.

Reading in this verse is not just any reading. It is ***"in the name of your Lord"*** — knowledge that begins with knowing the Creator and stays connected to Him.

The fourth verse describes Allah as the One ***"Who taught by the pen"***. According to Ibn Kathir, this verse declares ***the honour of knowledge***: by knowledge Allah honoured Adam عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ above the angels, and by the pen knowledge is preserved and passed on. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 96:4.

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FIVE VERSES, FIVE THEMES

VERSE	THEME
96:1 — Recite in the name of your Lord	Knowledge begins with knowing Allah
96:2 — Man from a clinging substance	Humble human origins call for humility
96:3 — Your Lord, the most Generous	Knowledge is a gift, not a human possession
96:4 — Taught by the pen	The importance of writing and preserving knowledge
96:5 — What he knew not	Human knowledge keeps growing by Allah's leave

The second verse on ***'alaq*** — "a clinging substance", the early embryo that clings — has been explained from a scientific angle in the quranscience.my I'jaz 'Ilmi series. In the context of the sirah, it reminds man of his origins at the first moment Allah addressed this Ummah.

The lesson: this religion began with ***knowledge***. An Ummah whose first revelation was "Read!" ought to be the Ummah that most loves knowledge, reading and writing.

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"I AM NOT A READER"

When Jibril said "Read!", he replied: ***"I am not a reader"*** (ma ana bi-qari'). This answer was true: the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was ***ummi***, unlettered, neither reading nor writing. The Qur'an calls him ***"the unlettered Prophet"*** (Al-A'raf 7:157).

Jibril squeezed him hard ***three times*** before reciting the verses. Scholars explain that this embrace made him aware that the event was ***real***, not a dream, and prepared him to receive something very weighty.

THE WISDOM OF AN UNLETTERED PROPHET

The Qur'an explains the wisdom: before the Qur'an, he ***never read any scripture nor wrote*** with his hand; otherwise those who wished to reject the truth would have had cause to doubt (Al-'Ankabut 29:48). One who does not read could not have copied the stories of earlier prophets from the books of the Jews and Christians.

ASPECT	EXPLANATION
Proof of prophethood	A matchless Qur'an came from one who did not read.
Refuting accusations	He could not have copied earlier scriptures (29:48).
Not a call to illiteracy	Being unlettered was his special trait; his Ummah is commanded to read.
Scribes of revelation	He later appointed Companions to write down the revelation.

The lesson: the greatness of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ ***did not depend on titles or certificates***. His knowledge came directly from Allah. Yet for us, the command "Read!" still rests on every Muslim's shoulders.

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KHADIJAH: THE FIRST TO COMFORT HIM

He returned ***with a trembling heart***, and said to Khadijah رضى الله عنها: "Cover me! Cover me!" When the fear left him, he told her what had happened and said: ***"I feared for myself."***

Khadijah's answer is among the most beautiful words in history: ***"Never! By Allah, Allah will never disgrace you."*** Then she named ***five qualities*** of her husband as proof (Sahih al-Bukhari 3).

THE FIVE QUALITIES KHADIJAH NAMED

QUALITY	MEANING AND PRACTICE TODAY
Keeping ties of kinship	Maintaining relations with relatives, even when they cut them off.
Bearing the burdens of the weak	Carrying the burdens of orphans, the elderly and the helpless.
Giving to the destitute	Helping the poor obtain their needs and work.
Honouring the guest	Receiving guests with good hospitality.
Helping in misfortune	Helping victims of disasters and genuine hardship.

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KHADIJAH'S REASONING

Khadijah did not argue from emotion alone. She argued from ***Allah's way with His creation***: one who does good to people will not be disgraced by Allah. Fifteen years of life with him gave her ample proof.

Then she did not stop at comforting him. She ***took action***: she brought her husband to a man learned in the earlier scriptures, Waraqah ibn Nawfal.

The lesson: a good spouse is ***a shelter*** in a storm. Words that calm, reminders of a person's good deeds and efforts to find a solution are the way of Khadijah, which every husband and wife should follow.

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WARAQAH IBN NAWFAL

SIRAH NOTE: WHO WAS WARAQAH?

According to Wikipedia, ***Waraqah ibn Nawfal ibn Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzza*** was ***Khadijah's paternal cousin***, of the clan of ***Banu Asad***. He was among the few Makkans who abandoned idol worship and ***became a Christian*** in the Jahiliyyah.

The authentic hadith says he ***wrote the Hebrew script*** and copied from the Gospel, and that he was by then ***old and blind***. He died ***soon*** after the meeting.

REFERENCES:

Wikipedia, "Waraqah ibn Nawfal". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waraqah_ibn_Nawfal

THREE THINGS WARAQAH SAID

WARAQAH'S WORDS	MEANING
"This is the Namus that Allah sent down to Musa."	The angel who came was Jibril, bearer of revelation to the prophets.
"If only I were alive when your people drive you out."	A prediction that this call would be opposed and he would be driven out.
"No one has ever come with the like of what you have brought without being met with hostility."	Allah's way: every messenger is tested with opposition.

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He was astonished and asked: ***"Will they drive me out?"*** He could not imagine that the people who called him al-Amin would turn against him. Yet Waraqah's prediction came true: thirteen years later he emigrated to Madinah.

Scholars differ on whether Waraqah counts as a believing Companion. What is certain is that he ***affirmed*** him and resolved to help him. His testimony — from one who knew the earlier scriptures — was a great support to Khadijah and the Prophet at that critical moment.

The lesson: when facing something momentous, ***consult the knowledgeable***. Khadijah did not draw conclusions alone; she brought her husband to a man of knowledge.

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HOW REVELATION CAME

After the first revelation, the Companions later wished to know: how exactly did revelation come? One Companion, al-Harith ibn Hisham رضى الله عنه, asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ directly, and his answer was narrated by 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 2

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ يُوسُفَ، قَالَ أَخْبَرَنَا مَالِكٌ، عَنْ هِشَامِ بْنِ عُرْوَةَ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ عَائِشَةَ أُمِّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ـ رضى الله عنها ـ أَنَّ الْحَارِثَ بْنَ هِشَامٍ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ سَأَلَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم فَقَالَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ كَيْفَ يَأْتِيكَ الْوَحْىُ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم «أَحْيَانًا يَأْتِينِي مِثْلَ صَلْصَلَةِ الْجَرَسِ ـ وَهُوَ أَشَدُّهُ عَلَىَّ ـ فَيُفْصَمُ عَنِّي وَقَدْ وَعَيْتُ عَنْهُ مَا قَالَ، وَأَحْيَانًا يَتَمَثَّلُ لِيَ الْمَلَكُ رَجُلاً فَيُكَلِّمُنِي فَأَعِي مَا يَقُولُ». قَالَتْ عَائِشَةُ رضى الله عنها وَلَقَدْ رَأَيْتُهُ يَنْزِلُ عَلَيْهِ الْوَحْىُ فِي الْيَوْمِ الشَّدِيدِ الْبَرْدِ، فَيَفْصِمُ عَنْهُ وَإِنَّ جَبِينَهُ لَيَتَفَصَّدُ عَرَقًا.

TRANSLATION:

'A'ishah, Mother of the Believers رضى الله عنها, narrated that al-Harith ibn Hisham رضى الله عنه asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: "O Messenger of Allah, how does the revelation come to you?" The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **"Sometimes it comes to me like the ringing of a bell — and that is the hardest on me — then it leaves me, and I have grasped what was said. And sometimes the angel takes the form of a man and speaks to me, and I grasp what he says."** 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها said: "I saw the revelation come down on him on an extremely cold day; then it left him, and his forehead was streaming with sweat."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from 'Abdullah ibn Yusuf, from Malik ibn Anas, 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 Beginning of Revelation, Hadith No. 2. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 2333).

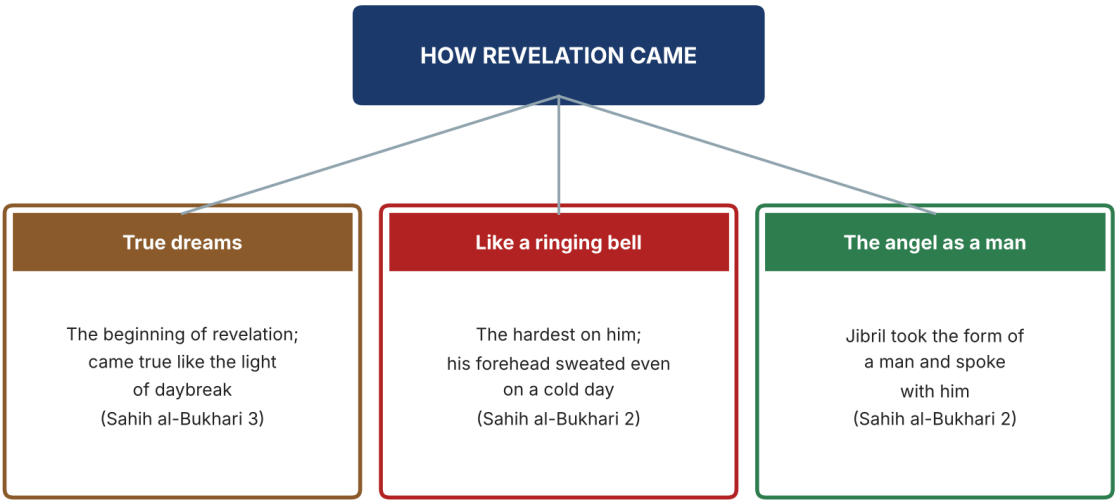
GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:2

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LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

This hadith shows that revelation was ***a heavy experience***, not light inspiration or imagination. Sweat ran from his forehead even on a very cold day. Allah Himself said He would send down to him ***"a heavy word"*** (Al-Muzzammil 73:5).



Scholars also mention other modes, such as inspiration into the heart and Allah speaking directly on the night of al-Isra' wal-Mi'raj.

Figure 3: The ways revelation came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ according to authentic Hadith.

The second form — the angel appearing as a man — was witnessed by the Companions themselves, as in the famous ***Hadith of Jibril***, when a man in very white clothes came asking about Islam, iman and ihsan (Sahih Muslim 8).

The lesson: the Qur'an we recite with ease today was received by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ with ***great hardship***. Valuing it means reciting it, understanding it and acting on it.

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THE QUR'AN REVEALED IN STAGES

The Qur'an was not sent down all at once. It came ***little by little*** over about ***twenty-three years***, according to events and needs. Allah explains the wisdom:

Allah says of the Qur'an: ***"We have sent it down progressively"*** — so that he might recite it to people at a measured pace. Ibn Kathir explains that the Qur'an was revealed in stages ***according to events*** over about twenty-three years. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 17:106.

THE WISDOM OF GRADUAL REVELATION

WISDOM	EXPLANATION
Strengthening his heart	Each trial brought new verses to strengthen him (Al-Furqan 25:32).
Easy to memorise and understand	The Companions memorised and practised it little by little.
Gradual change	Rulings such as the ban on wine came in stages.
Responding to events	Verses came to answer questions and resolve current issues.

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Gradual revelation is also ***a miracle***. Verses revealed in all kinds of situations over twenty-three years — in peace and war, joy and sorrow — form a single book with ***no contradiction*** (An-Nisa' 4:82).

SIRAH NOTE: THE NIGHT OF AL-QADR AND THE FIRST REVELATION

The Qur'an states it was revealed in ***the month of Ramadan*** (Al-Baqarah 2:185) and on ***the Night of al-Qadr*** (Al-Qadr 97:1). Ibn Kathir quotes Ibn 'Abbas's view that the Qur'an was sent down all at once to the lowest heaven on the Night of al-Qadr, then revealed to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in stages.

For this reason, many scholars hold that the first revelation in the Cave of Hira' came in Ramadan. ***The exact date is disputed***: some say 17 Ramadan, others 21 or 24 Ramadan.

REFERENCES:

Tafsir Ibn Kathir 97:1 https://tafsir.app/ibn-katheer/97/1

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FATRAH: WHEN REVELATION PAUSED

'A'ishah's hadith ends with a short sentence: ***"Before long Waraqah died, and the revelation paused for a while"*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 3). This period is known as ***fatrah al-wahy***.

SIRAH NOTE: HOW LONG WAS THE PAUSE?

The authentic hadith ***does not state the length*** of the pause. Scholars differ: some say a few days, some a few months, and some sirah reports say up to ***two or three years***. Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani in Fath al-Bari inclines to a ***shorter*** period.

The three-year view is often confused with the period of ***secret da'wah***. According to Ibn Ishaq, three years passed before he was commanded to call openly — but during that time revelation was already coming continuously.

REFERENCES:

Wikipedia, "Muhammad's first revelation". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad%27s_first_revelation

THE WISDOM OF THE PAUSE

Scholars explain that the pause gave him time to ***recover from the awe*** of the first experience, and grew in him ***a longing*** for revelation. When revelation returned, he received it with a soul more prepared.

Many link ***Surah Ad-Duha*** ("Your Lord has not taken leave of you, nor has He detested you") with this pause. However, an authentic report shows that Surah Ad-Duha came after ***a different gap***: he was ill and did not rise for night prayer for two or three nights, and a pagan woman mocked him (Sahih al-Bukhari 4950).

The lesson: in a believer's life there are times when ***Allah seems silent***. Such times are not a sign of abandonment, but preparation for a greater task.

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AL-MUDDATHTHIR: THE COMMAND TO ARISE

The pause ended with an event the Messenger of Allah ﷺ described himself. He saw again the angel who had come at Hira', this time ***sitting on a chair between the sky and the earth***:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 4

قَالَ ابْنُ شِهَابٍ وَأَخْبَرَنِي أَبُو سَلَمَةَ بْنُ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ، أَنَّ جَابِرَ بْنَ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ الأَنْصَارِيَّ، قَالَ - وَهُوَ يُحَدِّثُ عَنْ فَتْرَةِ الْوَحْيِ، فَقَالَ - فِي حَدِيثِهِ «بَيْنَا أَنَا أَمْشِي، إِذْ سَمِعْتُ صَوْتًا، مِنَ السَّمَاءِ، فَرَفَعْتُ بَصَرِي فَإِذَا الْمَلَكُ الَّذِي جَاءَنِي بِحِرَاءٍ جَالِسٌ عَلَى كُرْسِيٍّ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالأَرْضِ، فَرُعِبْتُ مِنْهُ، فَرَجَعْتُ فَقُلْتُ زَمِّلُونِي. فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى {يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُدَّثِّرُ ، قُمْ فَأَنْذِرْ} إِلَى قَوْلِهِ {وَالرُّجْزَ فَاهْجُرْ} فَحَمِيَ الْوَحْيُ وَتَتَابَعَ». تَابَعَهُ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ يُوسُفَ وَأَبُو صَالِحٍ. وَتَابَعَهُ هِلاَلُ بْنُ رَدَّادٍ عَنِ الزُّهْرِيِّ. وَقَالَ يُونُسُ وَمَعْمَرٌ «بَوَادِرُهُ».

TRANSLATION:

Jabir ibn 'Abdullah al-Ansari رضى الله عنهما, speaking about the pause in revelation, reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **"While I was walking, I suddenly heard a voice from the sky. I raised my eyes, and there was the angel who had come to me at Hira', sitting on a chair between the sky and the earth. I was struck with awe of him, so I returned and said: 'Cover me!' Then Allah the Exalted revealed {O you who covers himself; arise and warn} up to His words {and uncleanliness avoid}. After that the revelation became frequent and continuous."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari with the chain of the previous hadith (No. 3) up to Ibn Shihab az-Zuhri, from Abu Salamah ibn 'Abd ar-Rahman, from Jabir ibn 'Abdullah al-Ansari رضى الله عنهما. Corroborated (mutaba'ah) by the narrations of 'Abdullah ibn Yusuf, Abu Salih and Hilal ibn Raddad.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Beginning of Revelation, Hadith No. 4. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 161).

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:4

The verses revealed at that time were the opening of Surah Al-Muddaththir:

SURAH AL-MUDDATHTHIR 74:1–5

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلۡمُدَّثِّرُ ١

O you who covers himself [with a garment].

قُمۡ فَأَنذِرۡ ٢

Arise and warn.

وَرَبَّكَ فَكَبِّرۡ ٣

And your Lord glorify.

وَثِيَابَكَ فَطَهِّرۡ ٤

And your clothing purify.

وَٱلرُّجۡزَ فَٱهۡجُرۡ ٥

And uncleanliness avoid.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/74:1-5

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

If ***Iqra'*** made Muhammad ﷺ ***a prophet***, then ***"Arise and warn"*** made him ***a messenger*** charged with conveying. Scholars say: he became a prophet with "Iqra'", and a messenger with "al-Muddaththir".

The words ***"O you who covers himself"*** are a call full of tenderness: Allah addressed him by his state at that moment. And after these verses, revelation ***came frequently and continuously*** — no more long pauses.

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FIVE FIRST COMMANDS TO THE CALLER

The first command given to him as a messenger was: ***"Arise and warn"***. Ibn Kathir explains its meaning: prepare yourself with determination and warn the people. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 74:2.

The first five verses of Al-Muddaththir are ***a short curriculum for a caller to Allah***. Each verse holds one command, and each command is still relevant today:

VERSE AND COMMAND	MEANING FOR US
74:2 — Arise and warn	Da'wah is a duty; leave your comfort zone.
74:3 — Glorify your Lord	Allah is greater than every challenge and threat.
74:4 — Purify your clothing	Outer and inner purity; scholars also read it as purifying one's deeds.
74:5 — Avoid uncleanliness (ar-rujz)	Ibn Kathir: abandon idols and sin.
74:6–7 — Seek no gain; be patient	Sincerity in giving, and patience in the face of opposition.

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A MEANINGFUL ORDER

Notice the order: ***arise*** (action), ***glorify Allah*** (belief), ***purify yourself*** (personal life), ***avoid sin*** (conduct), and ***be patient*** (endurance). Da'wah begins with a caller who builds himself before inviting others.

The last verse — ***"for your Lord be patient"*** — was an early warning. Waraqah had predicted opposition; now Allah Himself was preparing him to face it with patience.

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KHADIJAH: THE FIRST TO BELIEVE

SIRAH NOTE: THE FIRST WOMAN, THE FIRST PERSON

The books of sirah agree that ***Khadijah bint Khuwaylid*** was ***the first person to believe*** in the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, before any man or woman. She affirmed him from the first night of Hira'.

She spent her wealth for the da'wah and was his strongest support at home for about ***ten years*** after the first revelation, until she died around 619 CE.

REFERENCES:

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

Khadijah's status was recognised by heaven. Jibril عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ once came and asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to convey ***greetings of peace from Allah*** to her, and to give her glad tidings of ***a house in Paradise*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 3820).

WHY DID KHADIJAH BELIEVE AT ONCE?

REASON	EXPLANATION
She knew her husband	Fifteen years together without seeing a single lie.
Wisdom	She judged by reason and experience, not emotion.
A pure nature	She was known as "at-Tahirah" (the pure one) in the Jahiliyyah.
Waraqah's testimony	Confirmation from one who knew the earlier scriptures.

The lesson: ***the first woman in Islam was the first person in Islam***. Islam began with the faith of a wise wife — an honour to women that must never be forgotten.

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'ALI AND ZAYD: FROM HIS OWN HOUSE

SIRAH NOTE: TWO FROM HIS OWN HOUSE

According to the books of sirah, after Khadijah, those who believed were ***'Ali ibn Abi Talib***, his cousin raised in his house (Book 2). 'Ali's age at the time is given as ***about ten*** — sources differ.

Then ***Zayd ibn Harithah***, the freed slave he had adopted as a son, who had once chosen to stay with him rather than return to his family (Book 2).

REFERENCES:

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

THE CLOSEST WITNESSES

Notice who believed first: ***his wife, his cousin and his adopted son*** — people who lived under the same roof. They saw him by day and by night, in joy and in anger, in public and in private.

A deceiver might fool the public, but ***it is hard to fool one's own household***. The faith of those closest to him is among the strongest proofs of his truthfulness.

The lesson: the most effective da'wah begins ***at home***. Before inviting society, make sure our conduct at home is a witness that confirms what we say.

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ABU BAKR AS-SIDDIQ

SIRAH NOTE: A FRIEND SINCE YOUTH

According to the books of sirah, ***Abu Bakr 'Abdullah ibn 'Uthman*** of the clan of ***Banu Taym*** was a close friend of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ from before prophethood. He was ***a respected merchant***, gentle in character and an expert in Arab genealogy.

He was ***the first free adult man*** to believe. The books of sirah say he accepted Islam ***without hesitation*** as soon as he was invited.

REFERENCES:

Wikipedia, "Abu Bakr". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abu_Bakr

Authentic hadith confirms this standing. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"Allah sent me to you, and you said, 'You lie,' but Abu Bakr said, 'He has spoken the truth,' and he supported me with himself and his wealth"*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 3661).

FAITH THAT MOVES

Abu Bakr's faith did not stop with himself. He at once ***invited his friends***, drawing on the trust and good relations built over years of trade. As a result, several great figures of Islam embraced it through him — as we shall see in the next chapter.

He also used his wealth ***to free slaves*** tortured for their faith, including Bilal ibn Rabah. The title ***as-Siddiq*** (the great affirmer of truth) later became famous because he at once affirmed the Night Journey.

The lesson: ***a good friend is an asset to da'wah***. Relationships, trust and wealth can become bridges that bring others to good.

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THOSE WHO CAME THROUGH ABU BAKR

According to Ibn Ishaq, several young men of Quraysh embraced Islam through Abu Bakr's رضى الله عنه invitation. They would become among ***the greatest figures*** in Islamic history:

NAME	DETAILS
'Uthman ibn 'Affan	Of Banu Umayyah; later the third Caliph.
az-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwam	Cousin of the Messenger ﷺ (son of his aunt Safiyyah).
'Abd ar-Rahman ibn 'Awf	Of Banu Zuhrah; later a famously generous merchant.
Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas	Of Banu Zuhrah; later commander of the conquest of Iraq.
Talhah ibn 'Ubaydillah	Of Banu Taym, Abu Bakr's clan.



Grouping follows the books of sirah (Ibn Ishaq); the exact order is disputed. See also Sahih al-Bukhari 3857 (the hadith of 'Ammar).

Figure 4: The first believers during the secret call.

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All five of these, together with Abu Bakr and ‘Ali, are among ***the ten Companions promised Paradise***. Seven of those ten embraced Islam during the secret call.

Sa‘d ibn Abi Waqqas رضى الله عنه himself described how few the Muslims were then: ***“No one embraced Islam except on the day I embraced Islam, and I remained for seven days as one third of Islam”*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 3727).

Scholars explain that Sa‘d spoke ***according to his knowledge*** at the time, since the call was still secret and many hid their Islam.

The lesson: they were ***young***. Most of the early believers were in their teens to thirties. The young are the main force of every great change.

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"FIVE SLAVES, TWO WOMEN AND ABU BAKR"

What did the Muslim community look like in its first days? 'Ammar ibn Yasir رضى الله عنهما, himself one of the earliest, gave a short but very clear picture:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 3857

حَدَّثَنِي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ حَمَّادٍ الآمُلِيُّ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي يَحْيَى بْنُ مَعِينٍ، حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ بْنُ مُجَالِدٍ، عَنْ بَيَانٍ، عَنْ وَبَرَةَ، عَنْ هَمَّامِ بْنِ الْحَارِثِ، قَالَ قَالَ عَمَّارُ بْنُ يَاسِرٍ رَأَيْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم وَمَا مَعَهُ إِلاَّ خَمْسَةُ أَعْبُدٍ وَامْرَأَتَانِ، وَأَبُو بَكْرٍ.

TRANSLATION:

Hammam ibn al-Harith said: 'Ammar ibn Yasir رضى الله عنهما said: **"I saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ when there was no one with him but five slaves, two women and Abu Bakr."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from 'Abdullah ibn Hammad al-Amuli, from Yahya ibn Ma'in, from Isma'il ibn Mujalid, from Bayan ibn Bishr, from Wabarah ibn 'Abd ar-Rahman, from Hammam ibn al-Harith, from 'Ammar ibn Yasir رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Merits of the Ansar, chapter on the Islam of Abu Bakr as-Siddiq رضى الله عنه, Hadith No. 3857. Also narrated by al-Bukhari (No. 3660).

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:3857

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani in Fath al-Bari mentions their possible names: the five slaves were ***Bilal, Zayd ibn Harithah, 'Amir ibn Fuhayrah, Abu Fukayhah*** and one other; the two women were ***Khadijah*** and ***Umm Ayman*** or ***Sumayyah***. 'Ali is not mentioned because he was still a child.

This hadith shows the true face of Islam at its start: ***not a religion of the nobility***. It was embraced by slaves, women and a handful of free men — a mix unheard of in Makkah's tribal society, so obsessed with lineage.

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A NEW MEASURE OF HONOUR

In that small circle, an Abyssinian slave sat as an equal beside a Quraysh merchant. This was the seed of the teaching the Qur'an later declared: ***the most noble in Allah's sight is the most God-conscious*** (Al-Hujurat 49:13).

The lesson: do not judge a truth by ***the number or status of its followers***. Islam began with seven or eight weak people, yet its truth was not diminished in the least.

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THE WEAK WHO WERE STRONG IN FAITH

Slaves and those without tribal protection bore the heaviest trials once their Islam became known. Their stories will be told more fully in Book 4; here we meet them briefly.

SIRAH NOTE: BILAL IBN RABAH

According to the books of sirah, Bilal was ***a slave of Abyssinian descent*** owned by ***Umayyah ibn Khalaf***. When his Islam became known, he was tortured under the Makkan sun with a great rock on his chest, yet he kept repeating: ***"Ahad, Ahad"*** (Allah is One). Abu Bakr later bought him and set him free.

REFERENCES:

Wikipedia, "Bilal ibn Rabah". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bilal_ibn_Rabah

SIRAH NOTE: THE FAMILY OF YASIR

According to Wikipedia, ***Sumayyah*** was the wife of ***Yasir ibn 'Amir*** and mother of ***'Ammar***. Her family came from the Madhhij tribe of Yemen. Around ***615 CE***, at about sixty years of age, she was killed by ***Abu Jahl*** with a spear — making her ***the first martyr in Islam***. Her husband Yasir was also killed for his faith.

REFERENCES:

Wikipedia, "Sumayya". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sumayya
Wikipedia, "Yasir ibn Amir". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yasir_ibn_Amir

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KHABBAB AND THE LESSON OF PATIENCE

Khabbab ibn al-Aratt رضى الله عنه, a blacksmith, once came to complain to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ as he lay with his cloak as a pillow in the shade of the Ka'bah: "Will you not pray for help for us?" He reminded him that believers before them had been tortured even more terribly yet stood firm, and that Allah would surely complete this religion — ***"but you are hasty"*** (Sahih al-Bukhari 3612).

The lesson: faith does not belong only to the strong and rich. Those whom society considered the weakest proved ***the strongest in faith***, and their names are honoured until the Day of Judgement.

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DAR AL-ARQAM: THE FIRST SCHOOL

SIRAH NOTE: THE HOUSE AT THE FOOT OF SAFA

According to Wikipedia, ***al-Arqam ibn Abi al-Arqam*** of the clan of ***Banu Makhzum*** (c. 597–675 CE) was among the earliest to embrace Islam, while still ***a youth***. His house stood ***on the east side of Mount Safa***, near the Ka'bah.

The house became ***the meeting place*** of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and his Companions for learning and worship in secret. It was in this house that ***Hamzah*** and ***'Umar*** later announced their Islam. The house was later known as ***Dar al-Khayzuran***.

REFERENCES:

Wikipedia, "Al-Arqam". https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Arqam

WHY THIS HOUSE?

FACTOR	EXPLANATION
A young owner	Al-Arqam was a youth; Quraysh did not suspect his house was a centre of da'wah.
The Makhzum clan	Makhzum was the clan of Abu Jahl, the chief opponent — the least suspected place.
Strategic location	Near the Ka'bah and the Safa route; easy to visit without drawing attention.
Safety	Meeting in a house was safer than in the lanes of Makkah.

Some of these reasons are ***the analysis of modern sirah scholars***, not reports. Yet they help us understand the wisdom of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in planning.

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THE FIRST SCHOOL OF ISLAM

At Dar al-Arqam, the Companions ***learned the newly revealed Qur'an***, listened to his guidance and built ***brotherhood*** with one another. It was the ***first school and training centre*** in Islamic history.

The lesson: every movement for good needs ***a place to gather, learn and grow***. Mosques, prayer rooms and study circles today carry on the spirit of Dar al-Arqam.

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WHY IN SECRET?

According to Ibn Ishaq, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ called people in secret for about ***three years*** before being commanded to call openly. This secret call was ***not out of fear***, but a wise strategy at the initial stage.

WISDOM	EXPLANATION
Building a core	Forming a small group strong in faith before facing society.
Protecting the weak	Slaves and those without protectors were exposed to torture.
Makkah, a centre of idolatry	The Ka'bah was ringed with idols and Quraysh lived off them.
In stages	Just as the Qur'an was revealed in stages.
Awaiting the command	The open call began when Allah commanded it (26:214).

Scholars explain that "secret" means ***the meetings and teaching*** were hidden; yet news of the new religion had spread in Makkah, and Quraysh did not yet see it as a serious threat.

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THE END OF THE SECRET STAGE

This stage ended when the command came: ***"And warn your closest kindred"*** (Ash-Shu'ara' 26:214). The Messenger of Allah ﷺ climbed Mount Safa and called the clans of Quraysh — the event we read in Book 2 (Sahih al-Bukhari 4770).

The lesson: da'wah requires ***wisdom and planning***. The right approach varies with time, place and circumstance, but the goal stays the same: inviting people to Allah.

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BETWEEN AUTHENTIC REPORTS AND POPULAR STORIES

Many stories about the beginning of revelation 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
The first revelation was Al-'Alaq 96:1–5 in the Cave of Hira'.	Authentic (Sahih al-Bukhari 3).
Jibril squeezed him three times.	Authentic (Sahih al-Bukhari 3).
The first revelation came on 17 Ramadan.	Disputed; other views say 21 or 24 Ramadan.
The true dreams lasted six months.	A view of some scholars; not from the two Sahihs.
The pause lasted three years.	Disputed; the authentic hadith gives no length.
He nearly threw himself from a mountain during the pause.	An unconnected addition ("balaghat") by az-Zuhri in Sahih al-Bukhari 6982; not relied on.
Surah Ad-Duha came because of the pause.	An authentic report links it to a different gap (Sahih al-Bukhari 4950).
Khadijah was the first to believe.	Agreed upon by the books of sirah.
Five slaves, two women and Abu Bakr were with him.	Authentic (Sahih al-Bukhari 3857).
There is special merit in praying or supplicating in the Cave of Hira'.	No evidence; it is not part of Hajj or 'Umrah.

REFLECTION

The authentic story of the first revelation is moving enough. We need no weak additions to ***love the Messenger of Allah*** ﷺ.

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IMPORTANT PLACES IN THIS SERIES

The story of the beginning of revelation took place in a small area: a cave near the top of a hill, his house with Khadijah, the Ka'bah, and a house at the foot of Mount Safa. This chapter brings these places together so that readers can picture the events more clearly.

TABLE OF PLACES

The distances in the table are approximate distances from Masjid al-Haram according to modern sources; the actual roads are longer. Where the original site now lies inside the area of Masjid al-Haram, this is stated.

PLACE	CONNECTION TO THIS SERIES	DISTANCE / CONDITION TODAY
The Ka'bah	He continued to pray and circle it; the place where some early Companions were later tortured.	At the centre of Masjid al-Haram.
Mount Safa	Dar al-Arqam stood at its foot; here he would later call his people openly (Part 4).	Now inside the Masjid al-Haram building (the Mas'a).
Dar al-Arqam	The centre for secret meetings and teaching.	Now inside the expansion area of Masjid al-Haram.
Khadijah's house	His home; where he returned in fear after the first revelation (Sahih al-Bukhari 3).	Its location now lies within the area around Masjid al-Haram.
Jabal al-Nur	The hill of the Cave of Hira'.	About 4 km north-east of Masjid al-Haram.
The Cave of Hira'	Where he worshipped in seclusion (tahannuth) and received the first revelation.	Near the top of Jabal al-Nur.

Sources: Discover Makkah, "Jabal al-Nour & Ghar Hira'"; WikiShia, "House of al-Arqam".

THE CAVE OF HIRA' BY MODERN MEASUREMENT

According to Wikipedia, the summit of ***Jabal al-Nur*** is about ***642 metres*** above sea level. The Cave of Hira' itself is very small — about ***3.7 metres*** long and about ***1.6 metres*** wide — and to reach it, visitors climb roughly ***1,750 steps***. The official Discover Makkah site notes that the mouth of the cave faces north, and that through a small gap inside it the direction of the Ka'bah can be seen.

Imagine: a man of forty climbing this steep hill again and again, carrying provisions for several nights, simply to be alone and to worship far from the idolatry of his people. It was in a space this small that the first revelation came down.

Sources: Wikipedia, "Jabal al-Nour"; Discover Makkah.

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HISTORICAL NOTE: WHAT BECAME OF DAR AL-ARQAM?

Al-Arqam رضى الله عنه made his house an endowment (waqf), and his children lived in it. In the 'Abbasid era, the Caliph al-Mansur forced al-Arqam's descendants to sell it and gave it to his son, al-Mahdi. Al-Mahdi later gave it to his wife, al-Khayzuran, who built a mosque inside it — which is why it was once known as ***Dar al-Khayzuran***.

In ***1375 AH*** (about 1955 CE), during the expansion of Masjid al-Haram under King Sa'ud ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, the site of the house was taken into the mosque. Today there is no specific building that can be visited as Dar al-Arqam.

Source: WikiShia, "House of al-Arqam".

LESSON

The greatest event in human history began in the simplest of places — a narrow cave and a house in a lane of Makkah. Allah does not need a palace to send down His guidance. Our own modest homes can become a "Dar al-Arqam" for our families when the Qur'an is read and knowledge is learned in them.

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THE QUR'AN WRITTEN AND PRESERVED

The first revelation commanded "Read", and spoke of Allah as the Lord "who taught by the pen" (Al-'Alaq 96:4). From the very beginning, the Qur'an was preserved in two ways that strengthened each other: memorised in the heart, and written on the materials available at the time.

MEMORISED IN THE HEART

He ﷺ recited every verse that came down to the Companions, and they memorised it and recited it in prayer. In a society with strong memories, used to memorising poetry, this was very effective. Allah also reassured him that He Himself would gather the Qur'an in his heart (Al-Qiyamah 75:16–19).

WRITTEN ON MANY MATERIALS

When revelation came down, he would call the scribes of revelation to record it. They used whatever was at hand: palm-leaf stalks, thin stone tablets, the shoulder-bones of camels and leather. Zayd ibn Thabit رضى الله عنه, one of the scribes of revelation, later described how he gathered the Qur'an "from palm stalks, thin stones and the hearts of men" (Sahih al-Bukhari 4986).

STAGES OF COMPILATION

STAGE	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE
The time of the Messenger ﷺ	Verses were memorised and written separately; the order of the surahs was taught by him.	Al-Qiyamah 75:16–19
The time of Abu Bakr رضى الله عنه	After many memorisers were martyred at the Battle of Yamamah, Zayd ibn Thabit was tasked with gathering the Qur'an into one compilation.	Sahih al-Bukhari 4986
The time of 'Uthman رضى الله عنه	Several copies of the mushaf were made from that compilation and sent to the Muslim provinces, so that the ummah would be united on one written reading.	Sahih al-Bukhari 4987

Allah says that it is He who sent down the Qur'an and He who preserves it (Al-Hijr 15:9). This preservation came about through the earnest efforts of people — memorisers, scribes and leaders — moved by Allah.

LESSON

The Qur'an we read today reached us through a chain of people who memorised, wrote and copied it faithfully for fourteen centuries. Every time we read, memorise or teach even one verse, we too continue that chain of preservation.

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TRACES OF HISTORY: THE EARLIEST QUR'AN MANUSCRIPTS

In recent years, several ancient Qur'an leaves kept in European libraries have been tested by ***radiocarbon dating***. The results drew worldwide attention. In this chapter we include only solid information, and explain honestly what can and cannot be concluded from it.

MANUSCRIPT	RADIOCARBON DATE	DESCRIPTION
Birmingham manuscript (Mingana 1572a), University of Birmingham	568–645 CE (95% probability)	Two leaves written on both sides: Surah Al-Kahf 18:17–31, Surah Maryam 19:91–98 and Surah Ta-Ha 20:1–40. Announced in July 2015. The leaves were found to belong to the same codex as leaves in the National Library of France (BnF Arabe 328c).
Tübingen fragment (Ma VI 165), Tübingen University Library	649–675 CE (95.4% probability)	Announced in November 2014 within the Coranica research project (German–French).

Sources: Wikipedia, "Birmingham Quran manuscript"; Al Jazeera, "One of the world's oldest Quran manuscripts found in UK" (2015); Medieval Histories, "Qur'an fragment Tübingen University Library Ma VI 165" (2014).

IMPORTANT NOTE: WHAT DOES RADIOCARBON MEASURE?

Radiocarbon dating measures when ***the animal whose skin was made into the leaf died***, not when the writing on it was written. Skins could be stored for some years before use. For this reason scholars differ: some think the leaves may have been written in the time of the Caliph 'Uthman رضى الله عنه or a little after, and some doubt the accuracy of the dates.

We therefore do not claim that the Birmingham leaves were written in the lifetime of the Messenger ﷺ. What can safely be concluded is that these leaves are among the earliest written witnesses of the Qur'an, and that their text is essentially the same as the text of the Qur'an that Muslims recite today.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

A Muslim's belief in the preservation of the Qur'an rests on Allah's promise and on mass-transmitted (mutawatir) reports, not on laboratory tests. Yet discoveries like these add historical evidence that the Qur'an was written in mushaf form from the first century of the Hijrah — in line with what is narrated in Sahih al-Bukhari about the compilation of the Qur'an in the time of Abu Bakr and 'Uthman.

LESSON

Being honest about evidence is part of the etiquette of knowledge. We do not need to exaggerate a discovery to strengthen faith, nor fear careful research. The truth does not need exaggerated claims.

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PEOPLE IN THIS SERIES: AS-SABIQUN AL-AWWALUN

Allah praises "the first forerunners" to embrace Islam (At-Tawbah 9:100). The following table gathers some of those who believed during the years of secret da'wah, together with other people in this series.

PERSON	POSITION	NOTE
Khadijah bint Khuwaylid	His wife	The first to believe; comforted him after the first revelation (Sahih al-Bukhari 3).
Waraqah ibn Nawfal	Khadijah's cousin	Confirmed that what had come was the Namus (Jibril); died soon after (Sahih al-Bukhari 3).
'Ali ibn Abi Talib	His cousin	The first child to embrace Islam; lived in his house.
Zayd ibn Harithah	His adopted son	A freed slave; among the first to believe.
Abu Bakr as-Siddiq	Close friend	The first free adult man to believe; many Companions embraced Islam through his invitation.
'Uthman ibn 'Affan	Banu Umayyah	Embraced Islam through Abu Bakr; later the third Caliph.
Az-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwam	His cousin	Embraced Islam while still young.
'Abd ar-Rahman ibn 'Awf	Banu Zuhrah	Embraced Islam through Abu Bakr; a generous merchant.
Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas	Banu Zuhrah	"I remained for seven days as a third of Islam" (Sahih al-Bukhari 3727).
Talhah ibn 'Ubaydillah	Banu Taym	Embraced Islam through Abu Bakr.
Abu 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah	Banu al-Harith ibn Fihr	According to Ibn Ishaq, embraced Islam through Abu Bakr; later called "the Trustworthy One of this ummah".
Sa'id ibn Zayd	Banu 'Adi	Son of Zayd ibn 'Amr (one of the hanifs); husband of Fatimah bint al-Khattab.
Al-Arqam ibn Abi al-Arqam	Banu Makhzum	His house became the centre of secret da'wah.
Bilal ibn Rabah	Abyssinian slave	Tortured for his faith; later the mu'adhdhin of the Messenger ﷺ.
'Ammar ibn Yasir	Family of Yasir	Narrated "five slaves, two women and Abu Bakr" (Sahih al-Bukhari 3857).
Khabbab ibn al-Aratt	Blacksmith	Tortured for his faith; reminded by him of the patience of earlier nations.
'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud	Shepherd	According to Ibn Ishaq, among the early believers; later a leading master of the Qur'an.

Sources: Ibn Hisham, al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah; Sahih al-Bukhari 3, 3727, 3857; earlier chapters of this eBook.

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LESSON

These first believers came from every walk of life: nobles, merchants, young men, slaves and women. What united them was not lineage or wealth, but the courage to accept the truth when it was not yet popular. We too are tested: do we choose the truth only when many others choose it?

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TIMELINE: SIRAH AND THE WORLD

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

YEAR (ESTIMATE)	EVENT
Before 610	True dreams; he secludes himself and worships in the Cave of Hira' (Sahih al-Bukhari 3).
610 (Ramadan)	The first revelation, Al-'Alaq 96:1–5, comes down in the Cave of Hira'; he is forty years old.
5 October 610	Heraclius is crowned Roman emperor.
After the first revelation	Fatrah — revelation pauses for a time; its length is disputed by scholars.
After the fatrah	Al-Muddaththir 74:1–5 comes down: the command to arise and warn (Sahih al-Bukhari 4).
About 610–613	Secret da'wah; Dar al-Arqam becomes the meeting centre.
613	Persia captures Damascus.
About 613	The command to call openly (Ash-Shu'ara' 26:214) — Part 4.
614	Persia captures Jerusalem; the background to the opening verses of Surah Ar-Rum.
About 615	Persecution of the weak reaches its height; the first migration to Abyssinia — later parts of this series.

Sources: Wikipedia, "Heraclius"; Sahih al-Bukhari 3 and 4; the years in this series follow historians' estimates.

LESSON

While the great cities of Rome fell one after another to Persia, a small group of believers in Makkah was quietly learning in a house. The world paid them no attention. Yet within less than twenty years, this small group changed the map of the world. Never underestimate a small, sincere effort.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Below are questions often asked about the beginning of revelation and the secret da'wah, with brief answers based on the sources discussed in this eBook.

1. WHEN DID THE FIRST REVELATION COME DOWN?

In the month of Ramadan, when he was forty years old. The Qur'an states that it was sent down in Ramadan, on the Night of al-Qadr (Al-Baqarah 2:185; Al-Qadr 97:1). The exact date is disputed by scholars.

2. WHAT WERE THE FIRST VERSES REVEALED?

The first five verses of Surah Al-'Alaq (96:1–5), as narrated by 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها in Sahih al-Bukhari 3. After the period of fatrah, the opening of Surah Al-Muddaththir came down (Sahih al-Bukhari 4).

3. WHO WAS THE FIRST TO BELIEVE?

Scholars reconcile the reports in this way: among women (and overall) it was Khadijah; among free adult men, Abu Bakr; among children, 'Ali; and among freed slaves, Zayd ibn Harithah.

4. HOW LONG WAS THE FATRAH?

Scholars differ. None of the reports about its length is certain in the two Sahihs. What is authentic is that revelation paused for a while, then resumed with Surah Al-Muddaththir.

5. HOW LONG WAS THE SECRET DA'WAH?

According to the sirah scholars, about three years, until the command came to warn his close relatives openly (Ash-Shu'ara' 26:214).

6. WAS WARAQAH IBN NAWFAL A MUSLIM?

He affirmed his prophethood and hoped to support him, but died soon afterwards (Sahih al-Bukhari 3). Many scholars hold that he was among the believers, although some differ about his status as a Companion.

7. WHY COULD THE PROPHET ﷺ NOT READ OR WRITE?

So that no one could claim he copied or composed the Qur'an from earlier scriptures (Al-'Ankabut 29:48). Being unlettered (ummi) was a proof of his prophethood, not a shortcoming.

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8. HOW WAS THE QUR'AN WRITTEN IN HIS TIME?

The scribes of revelation recorded it on palm stalks, thin stones, bones and leather, while the Companions memorised it. It was later compiled in the time of Abu Bakr and copied into several codices in the time of 'Uthman (Sahih al-Bukhari 4986, 4987).

9. WAS THE BIRMINGHAM MANUSCRIPT WRITTEN IN THE TIME OF THE PROPHET ﷺ?

This cannot be established. Radiocarbon testing shows the skin dates from between 568 and 645 CE, but it measures the age of the skin, not the time of writing. Many researchers think it was probably written in the time of 'Uthman or a little after.

10. WHERE IS DAR AL-ARQAM TODAY?

The house stood at the foot of Mount Safa. In 1375 AH its site was taken into the expansion of Masjid al-Haram, so there is no specific building to visit today.

11. WHY DID THE DA'WAH BEGIN IN SECRET?

It was part of the wisdom of the Messenger ﷺ in building a firm foundation before facing open opposition.

The chapter «Why in Secret?» in this eBook explains the reasons.

12. SHOULD ONE CLIMB TO THE CAVE OF HIRA' DURING UMRAH OR HAJJ?

No. Climbing to the Cave of Hira' is not part of the rites of hajj or umrah, and there is no text about any special merit in praying inside it. It may be visited to reflect and take lessons, while staying safe and not writing on its rocks.

LESSON

Every question answered from authentic sources adds to our certainty and keeps us away from baseless stories. Keep asking, keep reading — for this religion began with the command "Read".

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LESSONS AND CONCLUSION

LESSONS FROM THIS EBOOK

First: Islam began with knowledge. The first revelation was "Read!" and praise of the pen (96:1–5).

Second: Preparation before a great task. True dreams and solitude in Hira' prepared him (Sahih al-Bukhari 3).

Third: Revelation is weighty. His forehead sweated even on a cold day (Sahih al-Bukhari 2).

Fourth: The strength of a wife. Khadijah comforted with the proof of character and acted to find answers.

Fifth: Consult the knowledgeable. Waraqah confirmed the Namus and foretold the opposition.

Sixth: Arise and warn. The five verses of Al-Muddaththir are a caller's curriculum (74:1–5; Sahih al-Bukhari 4).

Seventh: Da'wah begins at home. His wife, cousin and adopted son were the first to believe.

Eighth: Truth is not measured by numbers. Five slaves, two women and Abu Bakr (Sahih al-Bukhari 3857).

Ninth: Wisdom in planning. Dar al-Arqam and three years of secret da'wah built the core generation.

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TIMELINE SUMMARY

TIME (APPROX.)	EVENT AND SOURCE
Before 610 CE	True dreams; seclusion in Hira' (Sahih al-Bukhari 3)
Ramadan 610 CE	First revelation, Al-'Alaq 96:1–5 (Sahih al-Bukhari 3)
After the first revelation	Khadijah believes; meeting Waraqah (Sahih al-Bukhari 3)
Soon after	Waraqah dies; the pause (Sahih al-Bukhari 3)
After the pause	Al-Muddaththir 74:1–5 (Sahih al-Bukhari 4)
610–613 CE	'Ali, Zayd, Abu Bakr and five through Abu Bakr (sirah)
610–613 CE	Meetings at Dar al-Arqam (sirah)
Around 613 CE	The open call at Mount Safa (26:214; Sahih al-Bukhari 4770)

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CONCLUSION

From the silent Cave of Hira', to the comforting home of Khadijah, to the house of old, blind Waraqah, to the house of al-Arqam at the foot of Mount Safa — the message that began with one word, "Read!", quietly built the first generation of Muslims. In sha Allah, the series **The Prophet's Sirah** will continue with ***the open call***, the opposition of Quraysh and the trials that befell the Companions. 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 رضي 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 رضي 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 رضي 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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