

Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hāshim (Arabic: محمد بن عبد الله بن عبد المطلب بن هاشم) (b. ‘Am al-Fil/570 Mecca – d. 11/632 Medina) is the prophet of Islam. He was the last prophet and one of the Ulu l-‘Azm prophets. The most extraordinary miracle that the Prophet (s) delivered, is the Qur’an. He was a messenger of monotheism and morality. Further, he was a religious leader, a social reformist, and also a political leader. Although the Prophet (s) was born in the polytheistic society of Arabia, he never worshiped any idols, and avoided the inappropriate manners that were rampant in pre-Islamic Arabia. He (s) was chosen by God as His messenger at the age of forty. His most important message was the invitation to monotheism and the goal of his mission (as he himself has stated) was the perfection of humanity’s moral virtues. Although the polytheists of Mecca persecuted him and his followers for many years, neither he, nor his followers gave up following Islam. After thirteen years of preaching in Mecca, he immigrated to Medina. This immigration (Hijra) marked what became the beginning of the Islamic calendar. In Medina, he dealt with many wars imposed by the polytheists, however, in all of them, the eventual victory belonged to Muslims.

Because of the efforts of the Prophet (s), the pre-Islamic age of ignorance in Arabia transformed into a monotheistic society in a short time. Towards the end of the Prophet’s (s) life, almost everyone in the Arabian Peninsula had become Muslim. The number of Muslims continued to grow throughout the centuries, and Islam is now the fastest growing religion in the world. The Prophet (s) advised Muslims to adhere to the teachings of the Qur’an and the Ahl al-Bayt (a) and not to abandon them. He made note of Imam ‘Ali (a) as his successor in various events throughout his life, including the event of Ghadir.

Lineage, Kunya, and Epithets

The Prophet’s lineage was as follows: Muhammad b. ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Abd al-Muttalib b. Hashim b. ‘Abd Manaf b. Qusay b. Kilab b. Murra b. Ka’b b. Lu’ayy b. Ghalib b. Fihr (Quraysh) b. Malik b. Nadr b. Kinana b. Khuzayma b. Mudrika b. Ilyas b. Mudar b. Nizar b. Ma’add b. ‘Adnan.

His kunya were Abu l-Qasim and Abu Ibrahim. Some epithets of his were: al-Mustafa (the chosen), Habib Allah (beloved one of Allah), Safi Allah (chosen one of Allah), Ni’mat Allah (gift of Allah), Khiyarat Khalq Allah (the chosen one from the creatures of Allah), Sayyid al-Mursalin (master of the prophets), Khatam al-Nabiyyin (the last of the prophets), Rahmat li-l-‘Alamin (a blessing for the two worlds), al-Nabi al-Ummi (the unschooled prophet).

His mother was Amina bt. Wahb b. ‘Abd Manaf b. Zuhra b. Kilab. Al-‘Allama al-Majlisi has said, “All Twelver Shi’as agree that Abu Talib, Amina bt. Wahb and ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Abd al-Muttalib and all of the forefathers of the Prophet (s), dating back to the time of Adam (a), were believers [in God].”^[1]

Before Mission

There are many clear reports in historical references about the life of the Prophet (s), to a degree that it can be claimed that the events of his life have been recorded more vividly and more accurately than that of other Prophets. However, like any other historical figure, not all aspects of his life are clear, and there is some vagueness and disagreement with regards to different parts of his life. Therefore, by relying on dependable references like the Qur’an and accurate Hadiths, the historical facts should be extracted from these stories. However, despite this difference in opinion, a somewhat clear picture of his life can still be drawn.

Birth

The exact year of the Prophet’s (s) birth is not known. Ibn Hisham and some others have written that it was in ‘Am al-fil (literally, “the year of the elephant”), the year in which Abraha al-Ashram and his elephants attempted to destroy the Ka’ba. But this does not help much, since it cannot be said for certain what year *the year of the elephant* was. However, taking into consideration that the Prophet’s (s) demise was in 632 CE, and that he was 63 years old at the time of his death, the year of his birth must have been either 569 or 570 CE.^[2]

The date of his birth is Rabi’ l 17th according to the majority of Shi’a scholars, and Rabi’ l 12th according to Sunnis.^[3]

Childhood

Muhammad (s) spent his childhood as an orphan. A few months after ‘Abd Allah (his father) married Amina, the daughter of Wahb (the chief of the Banu Zuhra family), ‘Abd Allah went on a business trip to Damascus, and passed away on his return trip in Yathrib (now Medina). Some historians say that his death was before Muhammad’s birth and some have written that he passed away a few months after Muhammad (s) was born. Muhammad (s) spent his early childhood with a woman from the Banu Sa’d tribe, named Halima, who breastfed him. Muhammad lived his first years with his foster-mother and her husband in the desert.

When Muhammad (s) was 6 years and 3 months old (or 4 years old according to some reports), he traveled to Yathrib with his mother, Amina, to see his relatives on the side of ‘Abd al-Muttalib’s mother (i.e. Banu ‘Adi b. Najjar). However, on the return journey to Mecca, she passed away in Abwa’ and was buried there. Amina was 30 years old at the time of death.

After the loss of his mother, ‘Abd al-Muttalib, undertook the guardian of Muhammad (s). When Muhammad (s) was eight years old, ‘Abd al-Muttalib also passed away. Since then, Muhammad’s (s) uncle, Abu Talib, took care of him.^[4]

In the house of Abu Talib, his wife, Fatima bt. Asad, was so kind to Muhammad (s) that when she passed away, the Prophet (s) said, "Today, my mother has died!" He shrouded her in his own cloak, went into her grave and laid there [for a few minutes]. When he was asked as to why he was so upset about her death, he responded by saying: "[because] she was indeed my mother. She would leave her own children hungry, first giving me food, and would leave them dusty, first cleaning and dressing me. She was indeed my mother."

Placing al-Hajar al-Aswad

Placing al-Hajar al-Aswad (black stone) on the Ka'ba happened before the Prophet's (s) mission began and confirmed his social status amongst people of Mecca. History has it that the Ka'ba was respected even amongst the polytheistic Arabs of the pre-Islam, the age of ignorance. Once a flood damaged the Ka'ba and ruined its walls, the Quraysh reconstructed the walls. When they wanted to place the *al-Hajar al-Aswad* (black stone) onto the Ka'ba, an argument broke out between the chiefs of the Quraysh's families as to which of them should do it. Each of them wanted to have the honor of placing the stone back onto the Ka'ba. The argument was heated and they even brought a tub full of blood and put their hands in it, which was a type of pledge that they had to fight until one of them won. Finally, they agreed to accept the judgment of the first person who would enter al-Masjid al-Haram through the gate of Banu Shayba, and to do whatever that person said. The first person who entered was Muhammad (s). The nobles of the Quraysh said that Muhammad (s) was trustworthy and that they would accept his judgment. Then, they told him what had happened. Muhammad (s) said, "Let us spread a piece of cloth." They did so, and he then placed the black stone on it. Then, he said that "The chief of every family should come and hold a corner of this cloth." They lifted up the cloth and brought the stone to the place it should be installed, then he lifted the stone and placed it back onto the Ka'ba. By such a judgment, he prevented an imminent war.^[12]

Battles before the Conquest of Mecca

Battle of Badr

Since the Prophet (s) had made the second allegiance with people of Medina at 'Aqaba, a battle with the Quraysh seemed inevitable. The first encounter with the Quraysh took place in the month of Safar in the second year after Hijra/August 623. This encounter was called Ghazwa Abwa' or Wuddan in which there was no violent clash, only a minor fight. Another encounter, Ghazwa Buwat, occurred in Rabi' I/September of the same year which just like the first one there was no violent clash. Then, in Jumada I/November, there was news that a caravan of the Quraysh led by Abu Sufyan had begun traveling from Mecca to Damascus. The Prophet (s) went to an area called Dhat al-Ashira to confront with them, but the caravan had already passed it before the Muslims arrived. Their attempt was unsuccessful because a few spies in Medina, who had become aware of the Muslims' plans, were able to reach and inform the caravans from Mecca that there was a threat ahead of them and that the caravans should change route or speed up to avoid them.^[46]

Eventually in the same year (2/623), there was an important battle between the Muslims and polytheists of Mecca. This battle, called the Battle of Badr, was won by the Muslims even though they were less in number. Many polytheists were either killed or captured and many more escaped.^[47] In this battle, Abu Jahland around 70 other chiefs of the Quraysh were killed and roughly the same number captured. Only 14 Muslims were martyred in Badr. In this battle, Ali (a) made great sacrifices and helped the Prophet (s) enormously. He also killed some bold warriors from the army of Mecca and his valor assured the victory of Islam (36 or 37 of polytheists were killed by him).^[48]

Battle of Uhud

In 3/625, the Quraysh asked help from their allied tribes, and sent an army led by Abu Sufyan towards Medina. Initially, the Prophet (s) wanted to stay inside the parameters of Medina, but then decided to meet the army outside the city. The two armies met somewhere near the Uhud Mount. Although the Muslims were initially close to victory, they ended up losing the war. This was because of a trick played by Khalid b. Walid and the ignorance of a group of Muslims which let the Meccans attack them from behind, killing many Muslims in the process. It was in this battle that Hamza, the uncle of the Prophet (s), was martyred. The Prophet (s) took serious injuries during the war, causing a rumor of his death among both sides. This was another reason that the Muslims became disheartened at the battle. They returned to Medina dejected and sad at their loss. A few verses were then revealed to console them.

Battle of Khaybar

The last war occurred before the Conquest of Mecca and after the Treaty of Hudaibiyya was the Battle of Khaybar. In 7/629, the Prophet (s) conquered the Jews of Khaybar who had allied with his enemies several times before. Khaybar which was a castle near Medina was seized by the Muslims. After the victory, the Prophet (s) agreed that the Jews could continue farming in the region, however, they were to give a part of their crop to the Muslims every year.^[57] In the battle of Khaybar, capturing one of the castles was very difficult. The Prophet (s) first sent Abu Bakr and then 'Umar to attempt to seize the castle, but they failed. Then the Prophet (s) said that,

"Indeed, tomorrow I will give this flag to a man, in his hands is the victory, who loves God and his Prophet (s) and God and His Prophet (s) love him."

The next day, he called Ali (a) and cured Ali's (a) eyes (which were infected at the time) with saliva from his mouth and told him, "Take this flag and proceed, may God give you victory." Ibn Ishaq narrates from Abu Rafi' that, "Ali went near

the castle and fought with the Jews. When his shield fell after one of the Jews had hit it, he took a door of the castle and used it as his shield until victory was achieved and he dropped it [the door] when war was finished.” Abu Rafi’ says, “Seven people and I tried hard to lift the door, but we could not!”^[58]

Conquest of Mecca

According to the Hudaibiyya peace treaty, all tribes were permitted to ally either with the Muslims or the Quraysh, as they wished. The tribe of Khuza’a allied with the Prophet (s) and Banu Bakr allied with the Quraysh. In 8 AH, Banu Bakr fought the tribe of Khuza’ah, and the Quraysh supported Banu Bakr in this battle. In this way, the Quraysh had broken the Hudaibiyya peace treaty since they had fought against one of the Prophet’s (s) allies. Abu Sufyan then realized that such a violation would have consequences, and rushed to Medina to attempt to renew the treaty, but he could not. In the month of Ramadan in 8/629, the Prophet (s) went to Mecca with 10,000 Muslims. He began his trip while nobody knew of it. When they arrived, they stayed in a place called Marr al-Zahran. Abbas, the Prophet’s uncle went out of his tent at night, and searched for some Meccans in order to tell them to inform the Quraysh about the Prophet’s (s) trip to Mecca. This was so that they could come to the Prophet (s) before he arrived in Mecca and a battle occurred. However, he suddenly saw Abu Sufyan, sheltered him, and took him to the Prophet (s). Abu Sufyan then became a Muslim. The following day, the Prophet (s) ordered Abbas to make Abu Sufyan stand in a place where he could see the Muslims accompanying the Prophet (s) passing by. When Abu Sufyan saw their glory and the massive number of Muslims, he told Abbas, “the kingdom of your nephew has grown!” Abbas said, “This is the prophethood, not the kingdom!” Abu Sufyan replied, “Yes, Indeed!” Then Abbas went to the Prophet (s) and told him that “Abu Sufyan is the type of person that wants to have privilege.” The Prophet (s) said that “Everyone [in Mecca] who goes to his house and shuts their door will be safe. Also, anyone who is sheltered in Abu Sufyan’s house will be safe as well. Anyone who enters Masjid al-Haram will also be safe.” The great crowds of Muslims entered Mecca. Ibn Hisham narrates from Ibn Ishaq that Sa’d b. ‘Ubada, the chief of the tribe of Khazraj had come to Mecca that day and said, “Today is the day of massacre! Today is the day of disrespect and the violation of sanctity.” He wanted to take revenge on the Quraysh and the ‘Adnani families and sought revenge for the people of Medina. To avoid the misconception that the Islamic victory would be a form of tribal revenge, the Prophet (s) sent Ali (a) and told him, “Take the flag from Sa’d for today is the day of mercy.” There was no fight between the Meccans and Muslims, save for a few arguments. The Prophet (s) went to Masjid al-Haram and circumambulated the Ka’ba seven times and then stood at the front of its door and said,

“There is no god except Allah alone, He has no partner. True is His promise and He helps His servant and defeats the factions alone.”

People abandoned every tribal claim except for the positions of serving the Ka’ba and giving water to the pilgrims. The Prophet (s) stayed in Mecca for two weeks and arranged for different jobs to be done. Among these, was sending some people around Mecca to destroy any idols or idol houses, and further, to destroy the idols that were in the Ka’ba. The noble way that the Prophet (s) treated the Meccans showed the glory of Islam and the nobility of the Prophet in front of the former opposition to Islam. The Quraysh, who did not hesitate to harass the Prophet (s) and his followers in every possible way for twenty years, feared the punishment that they would face. When they heard the Prophet (s) say, “I free all of you!” they became determined to fight against the infidels instead of fighting against Islam.^[63]

Last Hajj of the Prophet (s) and Event of Ghadir Khum

The Prophet (s) went for his last pilgrimage in Dhu l-Qa’da, 10/February 632. He taught the rulings of the Hajj in this Hajj journey.

The Quraysh had saved some privileges for themselves, the same privileges that they had before the advent of Islam. In addition to key-holding, managing, and giving water to the Hajj pilgrims, they regarded themselves as separate from and superior to the other tribes in doing rituals. In this last Hajj journey, the Prophet (s) negated the privileges that the Quraysh had held for themselves, and deprived others from.

Among the things abolished was the purchase of clean clothing for the pilgrimage permitted only through the Quraysh. There was a custom that the clean clothes required for the pilgrimage could only be bought from the Quraysh, and if they were not, they had to circumambulate the Ka’banaked. Another practice abolished was that the Quraysh moved out from Muzdalifa, as opposed to ‘Arafat as all other Hajj pilgrims did. They believed this to be an honor for themselves, but the Qur’an nullified this privilege:

“ Then stream out from where the people stream out...

— Quran, 2:199

The Muslims saw that Muhammad (s) was from Quraysh, but that he was moving out from ‘Arafat like all of the others. It was in this journey that the Prophet (s) told the people,

“O people! I don’t know if I will see the next year. I ignored all of the blood that was spilt before the advent of Islam. [From now on], your blood and your other possessions are forbidden for each other until you meet God.”

In a region called Juhfa where the peoples of Egypt, Hijaz and Iraq split up to travel to their own regions, is a place called Ghadir Khum. Here, on the Prophet’s (s) return to Medina, before everyone split in different directions, he

received an order from God to appoint Ali (a) as his successor and who would direct the Muslim community towards a specific goal. In the massive crowd of Muslims, approximated at 90-100,000, the Prophet (s) said,

“Ali (a) is the guardian of anyone that I am the guardian of. O Allah! Befriend anyone who befriends him and be enemies with whoever is his enemy. Abominate whoever abominates him, help whoever helps him, defame whoever disrespects him, and support him with the truth wherever he goes. Deliver these words to those who are absent.”

After returning from the Hajj, when the glory and power of Islam had grown, the Prophet (s) became sick. Nevertheless, he had prepared an army under the leadership of Osama b. Zayd in order to respond to the Muslims' defeat in the Battle of Muta. However, before this army left for the battle, the Prophet (s) passed away and left this world to meet his Lord. He passed away at a time when he had established unity throughout the entire Arabian Peninsula and had brought Islam to the gates of the two great empires of Rome and Iran.

Demise

In the beginning of 11/632, the Prophet (s) became sick and passed away. Before he passed away, when he was very ill, he gave a farewell speech to the Muslims and advised them to be kind to one other. He also said “If I owe anything to anyone, they should come to me to ask for it or else, they should disregard it. If I have annoyed anyone, I am ready to be punished in retaliation for it”^[70].

The Prophet (s) passed away on the Safar 28/May 28 or on Rabi' I 12/June 10 of 11/632 at the age of 63. It is mentioned in *Nahj al-balagha* that at the time of his death, the Prophet's (s) head lay on the chest of Ali (a).^[71]

At the time of his death, none of his children were alive except for Fatima (a). All of his other children had passed away, including Ibrahim, who was born one or two years before the Prophet's (s) death. Ali (a), with the help of some others, as per the Islamic tradition, washed the Prophet's (s) body, and shrouded and buried him in his house, where it is now located in Masjid al-Nabi.