

On the Path of the Beloved ﷺ

The Year Of Sorrow And The Journey To At-Taif

Time flies, and we are about to start the last ten days of the month of Ramadan. Now Today's lecture is about a recommendation, a spurt of hope, and then the following three main issues:

- ◆ The death of Abu-Taleb.
- ◆ The death of Khadijah (RA).
- ◆ The Prophet's ﷺ journey to At-Taif.

We are now at the beginning of year 10 of the Prophet's propagation of Islam, when the siege Quraysh imposed on Banu-Hashem was over leaving the elderly in a very poor health condition. By that time, the Prophet ﷺ was certain that Quraysh's aggressive attitude towards Islam will not change. That is why he started to think about leaving Makkah since he was an innovative person, always looking for alternatives and taking initiatives as we have seen in previous lectures.

That year was one of great grief for the Prophet ﷺ as it witnessed the death of his uncle Abu-Taleb. Let us recapitulate what Abu-Taleb did for the Prophet ﷺ so far:

- ◆ He welcomed him in his house at the death of his father, and brought him up, fulfilling his father's will, with great affection preferring him to all of his children.
- ◆ He used to protect him from Quraysh.
- ◆ He once ordered the youth of Banu-Hashim to hold each an iron bar and rebuff any attack on him.
- ◆ He said to him, "Go and say what you have to say, I am by your side".
- ◆ He recommended him to sleep in a different bed each night in case he was attacked, when they were under siege.

Abu-Taleb's health declined during the siege and he eventually died. Thus, the harassment that the Prophet ﷺ and his companions were subject to before, according to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, was nothing to what took place after Abu-Taleb's death. It increased to the point that Quraysh was actually considering killing Muhammad ﷺ!

Three days later, and in other versions seven days or a month later, Khadijah (RA), the sole refuge and safe haven for the Prophet ﷺ, died! Can you imagine how hard that was for him? She died in his arms and that is how the warmth of marriage is significant in our religion.

At Khadijah's death bed, a very amazing thing took place. Jibril ﷺ descended with Allah's greetings to Khadijah and that was the first time Jibril descended with a message other than that of the Qur'an, saying, **"Greet her on behalf of her Lord (i.e. Allah) and on my behalf, and give her the glad tidings of having a Qasab (mother of pearl) palace in Paradise wherein there will be neither any noise nor any fatigue (trouble)"¹** Can you see how dear she was? When the Prophet ﷺ reported this to her she answered, **"He is The Source of**

¹ Authentic hadith, Al-Bukhari.

Peace, from Him comes peace, and peace on Jibril” How peaceful was her death! How lucky was she! How will our death be like? Can it be that peaceful?

Many people die in a state of complete restlessness and trouble! Haven't you heard of people who died of an overdose of drugs, or immediately after committing a sin? Have you ever wondered how will your death hour be? Reflect on how you spend your days and what you do before you go to sleep? Does your sleep follow filial ingratitude, immoral deeds, complete sense of failure, or does it abound in peacefulness and serenity? Allah ﷻ says, **“Allah takes up the selves at the time of their death and the ones which have not died, in their sleeping. Then He holds back the ones against which He has decreed death, and sends (forth) the others till a stated term. Surely in that are indeed signs for a people who meditate” (39: 42).**

Khadijah died, and the Prophet ﷺ mourned her death with great affection and cried to the point that the companions begged him to take it easy. She was the love of his life marking the noblest and purest love story in history, and he remained faithful to her friends after her death just for her sake that “whenever he slaughtered a sheep, he would send her women-friends a good share of it” as Aisha (AS) reported in an authentic Hadith by Al-Bukhari.

We have to point out, here that some of the Orientalists claimed that the Prophet ﷺ used to crave for marrying women and lust for them! This is not true if we consider that he actually remained single and chaste until the age of 25 when he married Khadijah (RA). Is this the state of someone who lusts for women? Moreover, he refused to get married after Khadijah's death and took care of his two unmarried daughters, especially Fatima who was still 14. He got married two years later but to an old widow, called Sawda (RA) because she had no one to take care of her after the death of her husband during their immigration to Abyssinia. Later on, he married Aisha (RA), at the battle of Badr in Madinah. Then, he married the rest of his other wives during the eight remaining years; with each marriage serving the Da'wa. Hence, Muhammad, the man married once; and Muhammad the Prophet ﷺ married nine times for the sake of the divine message.

As a result, the Prophet ﷺ, then, lost the two dearest people to him one after the other! Khadijah (RA) who protected and took care of him inside, and Abu-Taleb who protected and defended him outside. If you were to choose the moment of their death, when would that be? May be after Hijra to Madinah, or when Islam is finally established and victorious. Nevertheless, they died at this very critical moment immediately after the siege and while Quraysh was considering assassinating him. Why this exact timing? It was as if Allah ﷻ was telling him that he has no one else now but Him, and that he should learn to entrust and to commit his soul to Allah ﷻ alone. Allah ﷻ says, **“And put your trust in the Living Allah) Who does not die, and extol with His praise” (25: 58), and “So put your trust in Allah; surely you are upon the evident Truth.” (27: 79).** That way no one can claim that Islam succeeded due to the help of any particular person, but rather to the protection of Allah ﷻ and to the strength of the message.

Just remember, if you have lost a loved one, failed to get a job, or encountered hardships and suffered ordeals, that you should not say, “Why me?” Always keep in mind those ayahs and try to understand that Allah ﷻ wants you to turn to Him and to depend on Him. .

Now, will you put your trust in Allah ﷻ? If your answer is yes, then say “Allah suffices me, for He is the best disposer of affairs” and never doubt in Him afterwards. Just do your best and rely on Him.

Allah ﷻ says to the Prophet ﷺ, **“And (endure) patiently under the Judgment of your Lord, (for) then surely you are under Our Eyes” (52: 48)**. This is how much Allah loves His messenger? Allah also says, **“The Lord of the east and the west; there is no god except He; so take Him to yourself for an Ever-Trusted Trustee” (73: 9)**.

Those ayahs gave a push to the Prophet ﷺ, and in spite of his grief, he never gave up. He then thought about moving to the tribe of Thaqiif in At-Taif, the second major power in the Arabian Peninsula after Quraysh, for shelter and support.

At-Taif was 100 kilometers away from Makkah and on a mountain that is 5000 meters high and the Prophet ﷺ walked the whole distance on foot. He was not sure whether the attempt will succeed or not. Moreover, he knew that Quraysh would not like the fact that he asked protection from their rivals. This move, from a worldly perspective was bound to fail, and it actually did, yet the Prophet ﷺ had to try. It is quite possible that a Prophet sometimes fails, yet failures sometimes do lead to success.

This teaches us that we have to keep trying again and again no matter how challenging the attempt can be. To those young people who shy away from making any effort fearing failure I say, failure per se is no reason to feel shame. Fail so that you can succeed. Do not stand still. You have to get moving if you want to achieve anything.

The Prophet ﷺ was moving and exerting a lot of effort and chose to walk all that distance. That was indeed a brilliant move since had he gone on a camel instead of walking, Quraysh could have guessed that he was going to a distant place, and in that case they would have watched him. Instead they thought that he was going to a nearby destination and would be returning soon. He also chose to take Zayd Ibn-Haretha instead of Abu-Bakr or Omar, his advisors, because Quraysh would then think that the Prophet ﷺ was going on a private errand accompanied with his son.

Can you picture how bleak the situation was at the time? Nevertheless, the Prophet ﷺ never despaired. In spite of Abu-Taleb’s and Khadijah’s death, the Prophet ﷺ exerted even more effort. I want you to picture the Prophet throughout the journey. His lover had just died, his uncle who always stood by his side died, everything looked bleak, almost no one was converting to Islam, Muslims were being harmed, Muslims in Abyssinia were not able to return, yet he was walking up the mountain to At-Taif to talk to its people about his message and convey it to them. Look how determined he was. He walked a distance of 100 kilometers. Have you ever walked that kind of distance before? What about 50 then? How many days would it take you? What would happen to you? And how long would it take you to change your mind to do it?

How old was the Prophet ﷺ at the time? Fifty years old. One feels like hugging the Prophet ﷺ and kissing his hands and feet when one hears all this. The Prophet ﷺ went through all of this for your sake. Do not fail him. Failing him would not be a loyal act.

How long did the journey take the Prophet ﷺ? It took him four days. All of this was because he refused to go on a camel. He wanted to succeed and convey his message. He went directly to the three leaders of At-Taif because he wanted their protection. Observe the outcome of the journey. It is not shameful to try and fail, but at least make an attempt. The three leaders all answered very cruelly. The first said, "Didn't Allah find anyone better than you to send?" The second leader said, "Either you are a real Prophet so great that I can not talk to you, or a mere liar so mean that I would not talk to you either". The third said, "I swear to God, if I saw you hanging on Ka'ba's veils swearing that you are a messenger from Allah, I will never believe you". Faced with such fierce reaction and objection to Islam, The Prophet ﷺ asked them not to inform Quraysh of his trip to them. However, they refused to do oblige and swore to tell Quraysh. At that moment, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ asked them to let him leave in peace. Nevertheless, they refused and gathered all the kids and fools to pelt him with stones.

Try to imagine the scene. The Prophet ﷺ was being stoned and was running, and Zayd Ibn-Haretha was covering up the former, especially his head. Zayd Ibn-Haretha's head was bleeding, yet he never let go of the Prophet ﷺ. The Prophet's feet were also bleeding as a result of running on the stones the people of At-Taif were throwing at him. This all happened to the Prophet ﷺ and Allah allowed it, so that we would learn that the message and this religion are very precious.

The Prophet ﷺ then was looking for a place to hide from the stones. He kept running with bleeding feet along with Zayd, until they found a small garden to hide. Ask yourself right now about what have you done? Who are you? Why are you alive? What is your message in this life? Do something. Though I am not asking you to suffer the way the Prophet ﷺ did, I am just asking you to be proactive and to help this nation.

Instead of attending to his wounds the moment he was safe from the stoning, he raised his hands and started to perform dua'a (supplication). It was not a dua'a in the regular sense, but rather confiding in Allah ﷻ saying, **"To you Allah only, I complain my weak power, my lack of authority, and my disgrace among people. You are the Lord of the universe, You are the Aid to the miserable, and You are my Lord. To whom do You leave me, to a remote one who would scorn me, or to a relative that would control me? If You are not angry at me, then I would not mind whatever happens to me. However, Your forgiveness is nearer to me. I seek refuge by the light of Your Ever-Magnificent Face to which the deep darkness shined and by which both world and hereafter are upright, from Your anger or wrath to befall me. You have the right to blame me until you are pleased with me; and there is no might or power except with You"**.

The Prophet ﷺ was not blaming Allah ﷻ for what happened to him, but he was rather complaining that he was not doing his job well enough. Who would be able to say this but a Prophet!

The answer to his dua'a arrived after a short while. A child came along. He worked as a servant for the owners of the garden the Prophet was hiding in. The owners of the garden were Ottba and Shaybe Ibn-Rabi'a. Although they were disbelievers, they felt sorry for the Prophets ﷺ. They ordered Addas to give the Prophet some grapes. Addas then went to the Prophets ﷺ and gave him the grapes, and all the Prophet was thinking of was how to bring Addas into Islam. Learn how to influence people from the Prophet ﷺ. **He wanted to attract Addas' attention, so instead of uttering the basmallah before eating the grapes in a low voice, the Prophet ﷺ uttered it out loud. Addas noticed the basmallah and said, "These words are not of the people of this land" Thus, the Prophet ﷺ succeeded in attracting the little boy's attention and asked him about his name. The little boy said, "Addas", then he used the boy's name asking him where he is from to which he replied, "from Nineveh in Iraq" The Prophet ﷺ acknowledged that that was the land of the pious man Yunus Ibn-Mattah ؑ "Jonah". The little boy said, "Do you know him?" The Prophet ﷺ said, "Of course, he is my brother. He was a messenger of Allah and I am a messenger of Allah too" At that point, Addas kissed the bleeding feet of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.**

There is a very important notion presented in the fact that Addas kissed the Prophet's feet. Those were the feet that were bleeding, and so Allah ﷻ had answered the Prophet's dua'a, where he was wondering whether Allah was pleased with him or not, by sending to him that who would kiss those feet. Allah ﷻ was pleased with the Prophet ﷺ and wanted to show him that his status is a very high one. Allah ﷻ was never angry with the Prophet ﷺ but all these difficulties had to be present because of the nature of that phase and for the future generations.

Can you feel the greatness of this Prophet ﷺ? He changed the world, and reformed it. He gave women their rights, and taught people the importance of education. He did so much, and that was all to fulfill and convey the message of Islam. Aisha (RA) once asked the Prophet ﷺ, **"which was the hardest day you've encountered?" He said, "The day I was returning from al-At-Taif. I departed, overwhelmed with excessive sorrow, and proceeded on, and could not relax till I found myself at Qarnath-Tha-alib"**² You know how one feels when one's really hurt and goes for a purposeless walk? That is how the Prophet felt returning to Makkah.

However, on the way back to Makkah, the angel Jibril ؑ met the Prophet ﷺ and was accompanied by the angel of the mountains. This was the first time for the Prophet ﷺ to see an angel other than Jibril (ؑ). Jibril ؑ said, "Allah has heard your people's saying to you, and what they have replied back to you. Allah has sent the angel of the mountains to you so that you may order him to do whatever you wish to these people. The Prophet ﷺ described this later saying, "The angel of the mountains called and greeted me, and then said, O Muhammad! Order what you wish. If you like, I will let Al-Akh-Shabain (i.e. two mountains) fall on them" But the Prophet ﷺ replied saying, "No but I hope that Allah will let them beget children who will worship Allah Alone, and will worship None besides Him."

Do you see how patient the Prophet ﷺ was, for the sake of the future generations? Listen to the following ayah, where Allah ﷻ says, **"Indeed there has already come to you a Messenger from (among) yourselves. Mighty (i.e., burdensome) to him is whatever**

² Authentic Hadith, Al-Bukhari.

distresses you. Most eager is he for your (welfare), to the believers (he is) constantly compassionate, constantly merciful" (9:128).

Do you understand now why the companions loved the Prophet ﷺ so much? The Prophet once returned to his house and found his servant weeping and asked him what that was about, to which Thawban said, "O' Prophet Muhammad, life is short and I remembered that in the hereafter I may be in the bottom of the paradise and you will be in the highest point of it and so I may not see you there. That is what made me cry, because I felt that I was going to miss you" And then came the ayah where Allah ﷻ says , **"And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger, then those are with the ones whom Allah has favored of the Prophets, and the ones constantly sincere and the martyr-witnesses, and the righteous; and the fairest escorts those are!" (4:69).** Thawban then rejoiced.

As the Prophet ﷺ was returning from At-Taif, and after his conversation with Jibril ﷺ, he prayed the qiyam prayers (night prayers). Even though the Prophet was exhausted and bleeding he got up and prayed the qiyam prayer. See how valuable the qiyam prayer is! As he was praying, a group of jinn heard the Qur'an. Even though the Prophet was attempting to call to Islam humans, and even though he was targeting At-Taif, Allah ﷻ chose to guide a group of jinn to Islam instead. The jinn heard the Qur'an and were moved by it, and so converted to Islam. The Qur'an then revealed this incident in Surat Al-Ahqaf, where Allah ﷻ says, , **"And (remember) as We turned about to you a batch of the jinn listening to the Qur'an; so, as soon as they were in its presence they said, "Hearken!" Then, as soon as it was accomplished, they turned back to their people, constantly warning. They said" 'O our people, surely we have heard a Book that was sent down even after Mûsa, (Moses) sincerely (verifying) what was before it, (Literally: between its two hands) guiding to the Truth and to a straight road. O our people, answer the Caller of Allah" (46:29-31).** Even the jinn want to carry out reformations!

What were the means? The Prophet ﷺ targeted humans, but Allah ﷻ wanted the jinn. The Prophet ﷺ targeted the noblemen of At-Taif, and Allah ﷻ wanted the young Addas. The Prophet ﷺ targeted the people of At-Taif, and Allah ﷻ wanted the people of Madinah. The lesson to be learnt here is that you have to put in the required effort and plan, and Allah ﷻ will unlock the doors He wants.

I will tell you a very important thing that will help you on your road to revival: Allah ﷻ likes victory to come from an unexpected path. If victory comes from the path you chose then you would have taken credit for it, but when it comes from an unexpected path, then it is Allah's Will. You have to plan, but victory comes from where Allah wills. Why is that the case? How would you trust in Allah had everything gone as planned? How would He be the Ultimate Trustee? You have to plan, and even if Allah blocks the path you were working on, He will open up another one. You have to trust in Allah ﷻ. Do not humiliate yourself while asking humans for help.

The Prophet ﷺ met strange beings for the first time during this journey. He first met Addas, who was foreign to the Arab peninsula. He then met the angel of the mountains, and this was their first meeting. He met the jinn, and it was the first time for him to realize that his message was directed to the jinn as well as humans. It is as if Allah ﷻ was saying to Prophet

Muhammad , even if the people of At-Taif denied you, my universe is vast. It is as if Allah was saying that the universe is full of great creatures that appreciate the Prophet . This is a wonderful notion. Observe the value of children in Islam! It is as if Allah was telling the Prophet that he will be victorious because Allah is the Eternal Owner of Sovereignty.

Ever since we started "On the Path of the Beloved", we have been talking about the warm embrace that accompanied any harsh situation. The situation in At-Taif was a very harsh one as well, so Allah sent him a child, an angel, and the jinn, all of whom loved the Prophet. The Prophet ﷺ was returning to Makkah and he had to have this kind of boost of his morale.

They reached the boundaries of Makkah, and Zayd Ibn-Haretha asked the Prophet ﷺ how they would enter now that the people of At-Taif told them about the trip. The Prophet ﷺ answered him with great trust in Allah ﷻ that He will take care of this and of Islam

The Prophet ﷺ started looking for a tribe other than Quraysh that would take over the task of protecting him as he entered Makkah. He was looking for a tribe that would like to rise to the level of Quraysh's honor. Therefore the Prophet ﷺ manipulated the political situation to his favor and sent Zayd to the different tribes. They tried three different tribes, but all three attempts failed. Nevertheless, the Prophet ﷺ never gave up. Do you recall when he invited his relatives over for dinner twice; the first failed and the second was successful?

They then tried Mosa'b Ibn-Adey, who declared that he would protect Muhammad ﷺ. He prepared his sons and gave them his orders. Mosa'b Ibn-Adey was gallant, and at the same time wanted to be of equal status to Abu-Sufyan and Abu-Jahl. Abu-Jahl then went to Mosa'b and asked whether he became a follower of Muhammad ﷺ or was only protecting him, and so Mosa'b told him that he was only protecting him. Abu-Jahl then said that they accepted that situation. Abu-Jahl had reached at that point a desperate condition.

Instead of going home directly the Prophet ﷺ decided to perform tawaf first. He had no intention of provoking them, yet he was resolved to convey the message of Islam. He could have gone home, but had he done that it would have implied that he was embarrassed of the outcome of his actions. There is nothing wrong with the fact that the Prophet ﷺ performed tawaf under the protection of Mosa'b, a disbeliever. The Prophet ﷺ was not giving up any of his principles in return, and that is what matters. It was as if the Prophet ﷺ was sending Mosa'b a message that even though he was being protected by the latter, he was still holding on strongly to his message. After the Prophet ﷺ performed tawaf he went home, and by that the journey to At-Taif was over.

The three important lessons to be learnt from this journey are:

- Determination,
- Trusting in Allah ,
- The importance of performing the qiyam prayers.

Lecture Notes Provided By: Imam Ghulam Moyhuddin

Seerah: Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hisam, Ibn Kathir and Diya al-Nabi were used in the compilation of these lecture notes as well as various books of Hadith.

The selective topics and format is from Amr Khaled's Arabic lecture on Seerah of the Prophet ﷺ with renditions from the "dar al tarjma" convoy.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3oDLD8B-has>

I have included modifications for the sake of readability and clarity.