

On the Path of the Beloved ﷺ

The first four years following the Revelation

In the name of Allah, the All Merciful, the Ever Merciful

Peace be upon you all. Today is the seventh of Ramadan, how are you doing with the prayers, supplications, reciting, etc.?

Is this the best Ramadan you had so far? These are words of encouragement and support for us all. May this month be the best month of our life. May this night be a night of salvation from hell-fire!

Today, we are going to talk about the first four years that followed revelation. After receiving the Holy revelation from Jibril عليه السلام and talking to Warqa Ibn-Nawfal, the Prophet ﷺ was ready to start his journey and spread his message. This message is not only about worshiping Allah and abandoning idols but also about reforming earth.

What resources did the Prophet have? None!

He was on his own, no supporters, no money, no followers; however, he had a profound faith in his message, high principles, and forty years of preparation.

Moreover, he had four Surahs of the Qur'an; he had Surat Al-Alaq that emphasized the value of knowledge; in which Allah says, "**Read: In the Name of your Lord Who created,**" (96:1). He also had Surat Al-Muzzammil urging him to perform night prayer; in which Allah says, "**O you enwrapped (in your raiment), Rise up (to pray during) the night, except a little,**" (73:1-2). He also had Surat Al-Muddaththir that ordered him to rise up; in which Allah says, "**O you shrouded (in your mantle), Rise up (and) so warn!**" (74:1-2). Finally, he had Al-Fatihah that asserted that he was the Prophet of mercy for all mankind, in which Allah says, "**Praise be to Allah, The Lord of the worlds.**" (1:2).

Our Prophet ﷺ is a Prophet of mercy, not violence. His message is based on reform not destruction.

Many people think that spreading Islam was a straightforward process; people embraced Islam as soon as they were invited to join. Not at all, it was a process based on an intelligent and timed plan. The Prophet's plan consisted of timed phases; he moved from one phase to the next only after securing the success of the previous phase. This methodology is the most suitable approach for anyone who wants to achieve a revival. We are now in desperate need of people who can follow this approach and who can learn from the Prophet and his companions.

The first phase was not to break an idol or use violence; it was to delve into society and build the foundation of the message by finding exceptional men and women

capable of serving it. They had to have high morals, great resilience and had to be successful. The Prophet's choice was not random but rather selective, because getting the most outstanding young people in Quraysh to support the cause would strengthen the message and make it impossible to uproot. This first phase lasted three years, in which the Prophet ﷺ gathered two hundred followers.

In some of the Seerah books, the first three years are wrongly described as the secret phase, which is far from the truth. It is best described as cleverly spreading the message by special invitation only.

The first follower was a woman. The first one to fulfill all the criteria for a follower regarding morals, strength and success, was Khadijah (RA). All the scholars assert that the first one to prostrate to Allah after the Prophet ﷺ was Khadijah (RA). Women should take pride in this fact. If nowadays, women feel abused, taken for granted or if they find some one misinterpreting the Hadith that says, "Women are deficient in intelligence and religion"¹ remember the impact of Khadijah (RA) whom we can call the first believer after the Prophet ﷺ. I urge men to encourage women and recognize their significant role in Islam. Islam needs every single one of us: men and women.

Abu-Bakr ؓ was the second person to join Islam. He did not hesitate or ask for time to think like others; on the contrary, as soon as the Prophet spoke with him about Islam, he accepted it at once. Ali ؓ embraced Islam when he was ten years old, followed by Zayd Ibn-Haritha. The Prophet ﷺ at this stage had four followers. Abu-Bakr ؓ realized that the Prophet was seeking extraordinary people. Therefore, in his first week of Islam, he gathered six other followers who were among the ten followers promised to enter Jannah². They were, **Othman Ibn-Affan** (the last Caliph), **Talha Ibn-Obaidullah**, **Al-Zubair Ibnul-Awwam**, **Abdul-Rahman Ibn-Awf** (who was a successful merchant), **Saad Ibn-Aby-Wakkas** (who conquered Iraq), and **Abu-Ubaydah Ibnul-Jarrah** (who conquered the Levant -Sham countries). All the good deeds of these great men will rest in Abu-Bakr's scale on the Day of Judgment. Abu Bakr's loyalty and commitment to the message was a key to his success in converting such great men in his first week as a Muslim. He might have been thin and weak, but if his faith was to be weighed against the faith of the entire Ummah, his faith would be heavier.

Over the next six months, the number of followers became 45; most of them were young men whose age did not exceed 30. They were 27 men, and 18 women. They consisted of 34 well off companions and 11 poor ones; unlike what is usually said about the first followers being rich not poor. These companions were from 16 different tribes. This was part of the Prophet's ﷺ plan; to have representatives from all tribes. At that time, there was at least a Muslim in every household. These companions were of different social backgrounds: Ammar Ibn-Yasser and Belal Ibn-Rabah, the slaves, Othman Ibn-Ma'zoum, the great wealthy lord.

¹Authentic hadith in Sahih Bukhari, Volume 1, Book 6, Number 301. Narrated by Abu-Said Al-Khudri.

²المبشرين بالجنة

Every good thing we are now experiencing started with these 45 great companions. Let this be a lesson to us all. If we want to change the wrong image in the minds of people about Islam and show the whole world its beauty, we must be part of society and strive to do good deeds to set a good example to others. We will never achieve our revival unless we reach every alley and lane, every intellectual and illiterate. We must stop this state of deterioration! We must rise up and wake up from our long slumber!

Everyone in the Prophet's household embraced Islam. The household consisted of ten members: the Prophet ﷺ, Khadijah (RA), the four daughters: Zainab, Ruqaya, Um-Kolthoum, and Fatima, in addition to two maids, and two young men: Ali Ibn-Abi-Talib and Zaid Ibn-Haritha. We envy those first followers!

I remember a saying by Saad Ibn-Aby-Wakkas, **"There was a day when I represented a quarter of Islam!"**; he was the fourth one to embrace Islam. One of the companions, Al-Ash'ath Ibn-Kays narrated that one day he came as a merchant during the season of Pilgrimage to Makkah to finish a business deal with Al-Abbas ؓ (the Prophet's uncle). While they were conversing, he saw a man, the Prophet ﷺ, coming out of a tent. The Prophet ﷺ looked at the sun, and then started to pray. Then another young man came and stood beside him to pray. Finally a woman came out from the tent and joined them in prayer. Al-Ash'ath was astonished and asked Al-Abbas about what they were doing. He told him they were praying. He then asked who they were. Al-Abbas replied "he is Muhammad my nephew, the young man is Ali my other nephew, and the woman is Khadijah, Muhammad's wife. He claims to be the Prophet and they are his only followers." Then Al-Abbas asked Al-Ash'ath whether he wanted to be introduced to Muhammad, but Al-Ash'ath refused and preferred to finish the business deal. Al-Ash'ath, who entered Islam twenty years later, regretted the fact that he had the chance to be the third person to Ali to join Islam but chose not to. Do not let the chance pass you by; contribute to the revival. Answer the call as soon as the opportunity knocks on your door, or else you might regret it later.

Three years later, the number of Muslims increased to become more than a hundred. Quraysh was unaware of this rise in number, which meant that the Prophet's plan had succeeded. Three years had passed without confrontation or conflict. Few of the elite were already on the side of the Prophet ﷺ. There was a Muslim in every house in Makkah. This marked the end of the first phase.

Now the Prophet ﷺ had to take the next step; he had to boldly take Islam to the open. It was time for the idea to reach everyone, everywhere. Although the Muslims were still small in number, their goal was big. The Prophet's attitude reflected great flexibility and wise planning. He was the one to take the initiative; Quraysh merely reacted to his actions. They were never able to force him to follow a certain course of action despite their power.

Let us learn from our Prophet never to be intimidated when it comes to matters of righteousness. Two ayahs descend on the Prophet ﷺ, first, **"So profess openly what you have been commanded and veer away from the associators (Those who associate others with Allah)" (15:94)**, warning him that he will be opposed and harmed. The second ayah states that the first phase is over and that it was time to take Islam to the open: **"And warn your kinsmen, the nearest kin," (26:214)**. However, the Ayah did not tell the Prophet where to start and how. The planning was left to the Prophet ﷺ.

The Prophet ﷺ chose to start with his own family before proceeding to Quraysh. He began by inviting all members of his family, men and women, to a feast. After they finished eating he started to speak, only to be interrupted by Abu-Lahab who spoke ill of Muhammad's message and warned every one of the grave consequences that would befall them if Muhammad were not stopped. The Prophet ﷺ did not lose his calm; instead he chose to stop and not put his case forward on that occasion.

I advise people who are edgy and irritable; to learn from the Prophet ﷺ who did not want to start his call for Islam with an argument with his uncle, and decided to wait for another opportunity. Abu-Jahl's response was not out of hatred for the Prophet ﷺ; on the contrary, the Prophet ﷺ was so dear to him. In fact Abu Jahl's two sons (Otba and Otayba) were engaged to the Prophet's ﷺ two daughters (Ruqaya and Um-Kolthoum). However, Abu-Jahl was worried about his business; he knew that this message will turn Quraysh against them. The new religion called for removing the idols from the Ka'ba, which meant that the other tribes would seek revenge by attacking Quraysh's commercial caravans if their idols were removed. Therefore, he chose to show everyone that he was against Muhammad to avoid any problems. One should never choose one's interest over what is right.

Once again, the Prophet ﷺ invited his family for a second feast, but this time he decided to talk to them while they were still eating. He did not exclude Abu-Lahab from the invitation, in an attempt to win him over. The Prophet ﷺ started to talk confidently telling them about Islam and that he was the Last Prophet ﷺ, **"O sons of Hashem, rescue yourselves from the Fire; O sons of Abd al-Muttalib, rescue yourselves from the Fire; O Fatima, rescue thyself from the Fire, for I have no power (to protect you) from Allah in anything except this that I would sustain relationship with you."**³ Abu-Lahab, did not change his attitude; he continued his opposition to the Prophet. Nevertheless, Abu-Taleb, his other uncle who had promised Prophet Mohammad's father to take care of him, pledged to help and protect him as long as he lived.

The feast served its purpose. It won Mohammad ﷺ what he wanted: the support and protection of his family. This does not undermine his trust in Allah. Islam teaches us to rely on Allah's protection at all times, but also to take all the necessary measures and precautions. However, the Prophet ﷺ also wanted them to believe in his message. Hamza and Al-Abbas turned their faces away; Abu-Taleb was reluctant

³ An authentic hadith in Sahih Muslim, Book 001, Number 0399. Narrated by Abu Huraira.

to leave his father's beliefs although deep inside he felt that Muhammad ﷺ was telling the truth. The rest of the family sat in silence. No one supported him, except for one young kid, Ali ؑ who was also invited, and answered the Prophet's call. He gave the Prophet ﷺ his hand and pledged loyalty. Why do we not follow the example of the Prophet ﷺ; why do we not gather our families and plan to do some rightful deeds together? Let us learn from our Prophet ﷺ.

The time had come to announce Islam to everyone. The Prophet ﷺ chose a famous spot in Makkah (the mountain of Safa) climbed on top of it, and started, boldly, to call people asking them to gather. I urge you to let the Prophet's strength and zeal be an inspiration to you. Never be ashamed of your religion, always be strong and daring. Remember the ayah that can be translated as: **"A Book sent down to you, (i.e., The Prophet) so let there be no restriction in your breast on account of it, that you may warn thereby; and (it is) a Reminding for the believers." (7:2).** The Prophet started calling, **"O Bani Fihri! O Bani 'Adi!"** addressing various tribes of Quraysh. Everyone gathered around the mountain; those who could not come sent their messengers to see what was happening. Abu Lahab was also present. The Prophet then said, **"Suppose I told you that there was an (enemy) cavalry in the valley intending to attack you, would you believe me?" They said, "Yes, for we have never known you to tell anything other than the truth." He then said, "I am Allah's Prophet to you; I am a warner to you in face of a terrific punishment."**

Abu Lahab said to the Prophet ﷺ **"May your hands perish all this day. Is it for this purpose that you have gathered us?"** ⁴ Then the Qur'an was revealed: **"Would the hands of Abu Lahab be cut up, (i.e., perish) and would he be cut up (too)! In no way did his wealth avail him, neither whatever he earned" (111: 1-2).**

Betrayal is most painful when it comes from someone dear. Abu-Lahab was the only one whose name was mentioned in such a manner in Qur'an because he was the first one to provoke others to defy the Prophet. The Prophet ﷺ, a virtuous man, did not even answer him. Do not ever set a bad example, do not be the first to introduce a sin, for the Prophet ﷺ said, **"He who sets in Islam an evil precedent, there is upon him the burden of that, and the burden of him also who acted upon it subsequently, without any deduction from their burden."** ⁵

Then the Prophet ﷺ descended from the mountain and started preaching Islam. He spoke of salvation to draw people to Islam. He did not start with words of warning against hellfire, but with promises of Jannah. He wanted religion to appeal to them, therefore, he did not push them away with words about torment and pain. He ﷺ said, **"oh people, say there is no deity but Allah and you will prosper."** ⁶

After this incident Quraysh stopped being neutral towards Muhammad ﷺ.

⁴ An authentic hadith in Sahih Bukhari, *Volume 6, Book 60, Number 293*. Narrated by Ibn-Abbas.

⁵ An authentic hadith in Shaiih Muslim, *Book 005, Number 2219*. Narrated by Jarir Ibn-Abdullah

⁶ An authentic hadith in Sahih Bukhari. 3/465. Narrated by Monieb Abu-Ayub Al-Azdy Al-Ghamdy.

Despite the fact that Quraysh started using violence against him and his followers, the Prophet ﷺ, unlike them, never resorted to violence. He was not the kind of person who would fight or kill his own people.

Makkah's population was around 25.000 to 30.000, Mohammad's followers were only about 200; still they were able to shake Quraysh's firm position because they were deeply rooted in society. Let those who choose to isolate themselves from society contemplate on this plan. Muslims must be flexible; they must learn to address people in their own language without losing their sense of religion.

Quraysh tried to stop Mohammad ﷺ in many ways. They started spreading rumors about the Prophet ﷺ. They mocked and ridiculed him. They tried to inflict psychological and physical pain on him. There were even attempts to kill him. They started calling him names from poet and sorcerer to insane, and finally decided after discussing the matter with Al-Walid Ibnul-Moghira to call him the sorcerer; one that can separate a man from his wife, a man from his father, and a man from his son. Although Al-Walid knew that Muhammad was truthful, he was too arrogant to admit it. Allah sent some ayahs that describe how Al-Walid was scheming. Allah says, **"Leave Me with him whom I created alone, And set up (Literally: made) for him extensive wealth, And sons always in presence, And made (life) smooth for him in an accessible (way). Thereafter he expects that I increase (My favors). Not at all! Surely he has been stubborn to Our signs. I will soon oppress him to a (hard) mounting (in calamities). Surely he did think and he determined! So, may he be slain, how he determined! Again, (Literally: Thereafter) may he be slain, how he determined! Thereafter he looked (round); Thereafter he frowned, and he scowled; Thereafter he withdrew, and he waxed proud. So he said, "Decidedly this is nothing except sorcery, transmitted relics. Decidedly this is nothing except the speech of mortals. I shall soon roast him in Saqar." (74:11-26).**

The Prophet would be speaking to people about Islam and Abu-Lahab would be following him telling people that his nephew Muhammad was insane and not to be believed. Quraysh even sent one of them, Al-Nadr Ibnul-Harith, to Persia for a year to learn tales and fables like the ones they said Muhammad ﷺ narrated in an attempt to compete against him. They also claimed that the Prophet ﷺ was a secret agent! In another attempt to discredit him, they said that he had someone dictating to him these myths, **"And the ones who have disbelieved have said, "Decidedly this is nothing except a falsehood he has fabricated, and other people have helped him to it." So they have already come with injustice and forgery (i.e., they have committed injustice and forgery) And they have said, "Myths of the earliest (people) that he has had written down so that they are dictated to him before sunrise and at nightfall" (, 25:4-5).**

However, nothing could stop the Prophet ﷺ who dedicated all his time and efforts to his message, to the extent that Allah pitied his Prophet. He says **"Yet, it may be that you will consume yourself of sorrow over their tracks (i.e., their tracks or footprints when they turn away) in case they do not believe in this discourse." (18:6).**

In spite of Quraysh attempts to discredit him, the number of believers was increasing, because truth always prevails. Let me give you an example, imagine if all the people in the world used broomsticks to try and stir enough dust to block the sky and stain it, will they ever succeed? The dust will only fall back on them, while the sky will remain clear and magnificent.

Today, we learn this lesson: we must dedicate our lives to truth, follow in the Prophet's footsteps, and reform earth like he did. Never feel embarrassed by the truth, Let it guide your objectives in life.

Tomorrow insh'Allah, we will talk about a painful topic. We will talk about the harm Quraysh inflicted on the Prophet ﷺ, yet we will rejoice when Omar and Hamza embrace Islam. It is as if Allah sent them as the light coming out from the heart of darkness.

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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.