

On the Path of the Beloved ﷺ

“Did He not find you an orphan, so He gave (you) an abode?”

All praise be to Allah and peace and blessings be upon His Messenger.

In today's talk we will touch on the Prophet's childhood and the period of his youth until his marriage.

Introduction

Does any one know how the Prophet ﷺ looked like? He is described in some books as a man who was moderately tall among his peers, with a white/reddish complexion. His body was well proportioned and he had thick black hair and beard.

There are three narrations giving a very accurate description of the Prophet ﷺ. The first is that of Abdullah Ibn-Salamah, a rabbi who had a lot of information regarding the anticipated last Prophet. He decided to go to the Prophet ﷺ to test him with ten questions. On the way he saw the Prophet ﷺ and before asking a single question he said, **"This is the Prophet of Allah, this face is not the face of a liar."**

The second narration is that of Jabir Ibn-Abdullah. He was walking in Madinah looking at the moon when the Prophet ﷺ appeared from the same direction. While his eyes moved back and forth between the moon and the Prophet's face he finally said, **"By Allah, the Prophet is more beautiful than the moon in my eyes."**

The third is that of a man who came to Abdullah Ibn-Rawahah, an Arab poet, who was asked to describe the Prophet. He replied, **"If you see the Prophet ﷺ coming from a distance, you think the sun has just risen."** Think of the simile and imagine the Prophet ﷺ walking here among us. Imagine him hugging you on the Day of Judgment, holding your hand and saying, **"You are my neighbor in Jannah."**

Abdullah Ibn-Rawahah's description reflects the birth of the Prophet ﷺ. He was born at sunrise on the 12th of the month of Rabi' al-Awwal; Allah chose sunrise to indicate that his birth brought illumination to the whole earth.

Childhood of Prophet Muhammad

The people of Quraysh were used to handing their newborn babies to a Bedouin wet-nurse to be brought up for two years in the healthy atmosphere of the desert. I urge parents to take their children on open air picnics once a week to develop their physical and intellectual abilities. Quraysh made a deal with the clan of Banu-Sa'd that the women of the latter should breastfeed and raise the children of the former

for two years in exchange for a little sum of money. It was also customary for parents to give gifts to the family of the wet-nurse.

Wet-nurses, therefore, looked for children of rich background. Because Muhammad ﷺ was an orphan, the wet-nurses refused to take him. One wet-nurse, called Halimah, failed to find a baby, so instead of going home empty handed, she decided to accept Muhammad to be her foster child. This situation was similar to the story of Yusuf عليه السلام. Allah ﷻ says in his book what can be translated as, **"And they bartered him for a paltry price, (some) numbered dirhams; and they esteemed him lightly (Literally: were of the ascetics, i.e., refused to have anything to do him)" (12:20).** Hence, we learn that Allah is the Omnipotent and the Sovereign who humiliates or elevates whomever He chooses.

Halimah narrated, **"I came to Makkah with other wet-nurses seeking a baby to nurse. As Muhammad ﷺ was an orphan, all wet-nurses refused to take him, but I accepted him because I did not like to return home without a baby.** My husband described him as a calm and blessed boy. As soon as I held Muhammad ﷺ between my arms he suckled from me even though I had not been able to breastfeed. Shortly after doing this, my son suckled from my other breast.

"My tribe lived in a barren desert, and our herds used to graze in the desert but return with stomachs empty of milk. When Muhammad arrived, my herd went out to graze and was the only one among all other herds to come back full of milk from which Muhammad and my son were able to drink. When this happened the other herd keepers used to follow my herd to get their share of the blessings. Muhammad brought us prosperity."

The Prophet ﷺ lived with Halimah for two years during which she noticed that he grew at a very fast rate. After the two years, he returned to his mother. Faithfulness was one of his most obvious characteristics. Fifty five years later and after the conquest of Makkah, Halimah came and stood before the Prophet ﷺ smiling. He did not recognize her at first, but once he was told that she was his foster mother, he happily welcomed her calling her "my mother" and treated her kindly and modestly.

Another sign of his extreme faithfulness was manifested after the Battle of Honayn when the Muslims triumphed over the clan of Hawzan and took many booties. The Prophet ﷺ was informed that among the booties were his foster brother's belongings, so he asked his Companions to return them. However, some of his Companions did not agree. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ borrowed some money to buy the booties belonging to his brother. He then returned them to him in gratitude to his foster mother. The lesson to be learnt here is the extent of faithfulness we show in our lives. Students should be faithful to their teachers and one should be faithful and dutiful to his parents and relatives.

Orphanage

Two or three months after his marriage to Amenah Bint-Wahb, Abdullah, the Prophet's father, traveled to Al-Sham (Syria) on business without knowing of his wife's pregnancy. On his way home, he decided to pass by Madinah to visit his uncles. In Madinah, he suddenly became terribly ill, died and was buried there. Thus, it was predetermined for the Prophet ﷺ to have roots in Madinah and spread his message there.

Although the Prophet ﷺ was deprived of the affection of a father, he himself was filled with affection and mercy. He used to say to his Companions, **"I am like a father to you."**¹

Here's another example of his affection. One day, he was sitting at home wearing only his trousers, when someone knocked on the door. When he knew the knocker was Zaid Ibn-Harithah, he was so overwhelmed with joy that he forgot to put on his cloak. He hugged Zaid and kept kissing him on his forehead. This makes one wonder, what Zaid did to deserve such love. Nevertheless, Zaid was surely deserving of such affection.

Anas narrated that the Prophet ﷺ saw the women and children (of al-Ansar) coming forward returning from a wedding party. The Prophet stood up and said thrice, **"By Allah! You are from the most beloved people to me."**²

The Prophet ﷺ lived until he was six years old with his mother and a maid called Umm-Ayman. His mother decided to take him from Makkah to Madinah to visit his father's grave and get him acquainted with his father's relatives. Such was his mother's faithfulness to his father! After traveling a distance of 500 km, they finally reached his father's grave. That visit was engraved in the Prophet's memory forever.

When the Prophet ﷺ immigrated to Madinah, every tribe wanted him as their guest. To settle the dispute he told them that his camel will make the choice and that it will kneel down in front of the house he would stay in. The camel stood before the house of his father's uncles. This is another sign of faithfulness. Surely, the Prophet ﷺ seeing how his mother was faithful to his father he also became faithful to Halimah. Parents should set a good example to their children by being faithful to their own parents.

On their way from Madinah to Makkah, in an arid area called Al-Abw'a, the Prophet's mother Amenah fell sick and died in front of the Prophet. Umm-Ayman had to bury her alone. Imagine a boy of six seeing his beloved mother buried! Prophet Muhammad ﷺ loved his mother so much, years later when he passed by his mother's grave on his way to the Conquest of Makkah, he stood weeping and weeping, until all the Companions present started weeping too. When his mother

¹ Sahih Muslim book 31

² Sahih Al-Bukhari book 58

died he was only six years old but he recalled vividly everything that happened to him.

Why do you think this was happening to Muhammad? Allah was showing him the reality of death and life. Allah did not want him to be fooled by the very short life on this planet but rather prepare him to work for his mission. Allah was not harsh when He took his parents away from him. In fact, Allah loved Prophet Muhammad ﷺ so much and wanted to prepare him very well to be the leader of mankind. There are people who don't realize the value of life and death before the age of 30 and only come to realize it upon losing someone close. Indeed there are young people of 20 and 25 years who are not aware of death, however, this is the way Allah chose to prepare the Prophet ﷺ so that the world would not deceive him later on. Look at his status now. Allah ﷻ says what can be translated as, **"And did We not raise for you your remembrance?"(94:4)**. When he ﷺ received this ayah he said, **"What would I want from this life; I am on this life but a passer by, who sought shelter in the shade of a tree then left it behind and went his own way."**³

Never be infatuated with fame or money. Years later when the Prophet was considered among the richest people living, a man came to him and asked him for a herd of sheep that covered the space between two mountains, the Prophet granted him what he asked for. The man went back to his people and said, **"O people convert to Islam! I swear by Allah, Muhammad grants the gifts of someone who does not fear poverty.** Thus, Anas said, **"When a man converts to Islam not wanting other than what is in this life, as soon as he enters Islam, it becomes dearer to him than life and all its bounties."**⁴ The Prophet ﷺ saw that life was short and death was eminent. Although he was faced with the death of his parents; both died far away from their home land; yet such hardships gave him strength and enabled him to lead Muslims.

Is it possible for people in power today to realize this universal truth? Imagine a media guru, or a politician, or a business man, working for the purpose of doing what is good for humanity! I know a rich woman who lost her son at a young age. When I asked her what she learned from that experience, she replied, "I learned the reality of life," and she was a woman of fifty. I asked her then about her life's purpose now. She said, "I am living to do 'good' in this short life."

Another point to consider is that sometimes Allah ﷻ may do things that may appear to us harmful and painful when in essence there might be huge benefits behind them and vice versa. Allah ﷻ says what can be translated as, **".... and it may be that you hate a thing, while (Literally: and) it is most charitable for you; and it may be that you love a thing while (Literally: and) it is evil for you"(2:216)**.

When the Prophet reached Makkah Umm-Ayman took Muhammad ﷺ to Abdul-Mutalib, his grandfather, who was about 90 years old. The Prophet ﷺ did not feel

³ Narrator: Abdullah Ibn-Massud - Al Alabani collection of true Ahadith

⁴ Narrator: Anas Ibn-Malik, True Hadith, Source: Sahih Muslim, al-masnad as-Sahih

uncomfortable by staying with his grandfather, because his mother was loyal to her husband, and implanted this love in the Prophet's heart for his father's family. In contrast many parents today, keep their children away from their relatives, though they might need their relatives in the future. If you love your children strengthen their bonds with their relatives, for no one knows what the future holds.

Abdul-Mutalib was not an ordinary man; he was among the leaders of Quraysh. He used to hold a meeting daily at al-K'aba (the sanctified House of Allah), where he used to lay down his gown on the ground and sit over it. He never allowed any one else to share it with him, he saw himself as the leader of his people. The leaders of Quraysh used to attend that meeting to discuss politics, news and the economy of Makkah. Abdul Mutalib used to take the Prophet ﷺ to these meetings, and he was the only one allowed to sit over his gown too. He thought that the Prophet ﷺ, like the kids of his age would go and play, but he ﷺ never did. He preferred to attend those meetings and listen to their talks. When his grandfather noticed that, he commented to the gathering, "This son of mine will be a great man!"

I urge the Youth of today to sit with grown ups, listen to their talks. Their talks will add to their experiences as was the case with Prophet Muhammad ﷺ who was acquiring experience and knowledge at that early age. I urge the youth of today to communicate well with others and use the experience to better understand the world we live in.

The Prophet ﷺ stayed with his grandfather until the age of 8, when he witnessed the sudden death of Abdul Mutalib. This rendered him an orphan for the third time. Imagine someone going through all this! How would he turn out to be? He could become merciless, or psychologically disturbed. Amazingly, this was not the case with him ﷺ.

Mercy was demonstrated throughout the Prophet's life. When his face was severely injured in the battle of Uhud, he refused to ask Allah to punish his enemies in spite of his angry companions' request; he said that he was sent as a mercy to mankind. On an earlier occasion an angel was sent to the Prophet ﷺ asking him whether he wished that two mountains collapse around Makkah on Quraysh. The Prophet replied by saying that he was sent as a mercy to mankind, then raised his hands to ask Allah to forgive his people (who were opposing him) for they were unaware of the truth!

There was a man known for his ugliness in Madinah by the name of Zahir, who even the companions disliked dealing with. One day the Prophet ﷺ entered the market place and saw the companions standing together talking while Zahir was left alone. The Prophet ﷺ moved towards him and hugged him from the back. Zahir could not believe that there was some one who was actually joking with him so he yelled, "Let go of me" then turned around to find that it was the Prophet ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ took him by the hand and walked towards the companions joking, "Who would buy a servant." Zahir replied, "I am afraid no one would buy me." So the Prophet ﷺ replied, "But you are very precious to Allah." On another occasion his servant's (Anas Ibn

Malik) young brother Umair had a bird that died one day; the Prophet ﷺ went to his house to give his condolences for the dead bird and used to play with the boy in the street to make him forget the loss of his bird. He always tried to console people. The lack of affection in his childhood made him want to give more to people around him.

Before passing away his grandfather asked his son Abu-Taleb to take care of Muhammad ﷺ after his death. Abu-Taleb was chosen because he was the brother of Abdullah, Prophet Muhammad's father, from both the father and mother side. Abdul-Mutalib considered Muhammad to be his son, for he told Abu-Taleb, "I am leaving you the responsibility of my son."

Notice how Muhammad ﷺ moved places five times; first, he was in his mother's house and then for two years in Halimah's house. After that he returned back to his mother's house again until the age of six. The fourth house was his grandfather's house where he stayed until he was eight years old. Finally he ended up in his uncle's house. Five houses in eight years only! All the houses the Prophet ﷺ lived in were different, still he managed to cope and adapt. His uncle had ten children so not much time was given to Muhammad ﷺ; therefore he was illiterate. Who taught him morals and ethics? Allah did! Why was he transferred from house to house? That was to teach him to be self dependant, be responsible, be serious, be strong, and to have a strong will. These experiences helped him throughout his mission later on in life. That's how Allah prepared him. Allah sometimes keeps the good away from you to give you better later. What the Prophet ﷺ did not have earlier, he got later.

The strange thing is that throughout these hardships, there was always someone providing him ﷺ with affection and passion. Allah took from him one source of affection, in order that he learns from the experience, only to give him another. He took his mother and gave him his grandfather and his wife Hala, who was the cousin of Amenah, the Prophet's mother. Then He took from him his grandfather to give him his uncle Abu-Taleb, who took great care of him. Abu-Taleb did not join Islam, but always supported the Prophet ﷺ. In addition, Fatima-Bint-Asad, Abu-Taleb's wife was also very kind and caring to our Prophet ﷺ. Allah says, **"Did He not find you an orphan, so He gave (you) an abode," (93:6).**

If one faces hardships, Allah might have better things in store, especially if one is a youth. Allah loves all his Prophets but He had to prepare them. For instance,

- ▣ Nuh ﷺ who was scorn upon by his people
- ▣ Ibrahim ﷺ who was thrown in the fire
- ▣ Ya'qub ﷺ who went blind from sadness for his son, Yusuf ﷺ who lost his father and was thrown in a well
- ▣ Musa ﷺ who had to leave his country
- ▣ Isa ﷺ who was hurt by his people, and finally Muhammad ﷺ, all of who initially faced hardships and were then relieved.

The Prophet ﷺ stayed with Abu-Taleb for 25 yrs. He was brought up with ten other children out of whom Aquil became one of his greatest enemies, while Jaffar Ibn-Abu-Taleb became one of those closest to him . Abu-Taleb was poor, so he did not have much to eat or spend. Later on, when Abu Talib's son Ali became eight years old, the Prophet ﷺ raised him out of gratitude for his Uncle.

After 30 - 50 years, Fatima bint-Asad was buried in Al Biq'a. She was the mother of Ali, and later the mother in law of Fatima al- Zahraa. Consequently the Prophet ﷺ took off his gown which was the only one he had, though it was winter, and wrapped her with it. Before he placed her in the grave, he went down in it and lied down in it then he took her and placed her in the grave. Why? He wanted to bless her grave with Allah's mercy. Hence it's a story full of faithfulness and loyalty, beginning with Amenah bint-Wahb who was loyal to her husband, and Abu-Taleb who was loyal to his father, and the Prophet ﷺ who was loyal to the woman who took good care of him. A person should be loyal to the people who helped him.

The Prophet ﷺ decided to work to help his uncle Abu-Taleb who was poor, in an attempt to relieve his uncle's burden. Therefore Prophet Muhammad worked as a shepherd in exchange for a small amount of money. Why did he choose this particular work? Because from gathering sheep and goats he would learn how to be calm, patient and learn the skill of uniting people. Why sheep and goats, rather than cows and camels? Sheep and goats tend to part from each other, while cows and camels move together as a group. Hence gathering sheep requires special skills.

The Prophet ﷺ worked as a shepherd from the age of 8 to 15. Then he decided to change his line of work. He wanted to become a trader, so he asked his uncle if he could join him on his trade trip to Syria. Unemployed youth! Can you see how the Prophet was looking for jobs, here and there and can you see his desire to work and succeed?

He worked as a trader from the age of 15 to 35. From trading, he learned the art of communication, and understood more about peoples' different personalities. The traders are good at judging people by looking at their eyes. Can our youth follow the Prophet's ﷺ school? Do you remember the story of Yusuf (عليه السلام), when he learned from the king of Egypt wisdom and other skills that helped him later on in his life? This is the most important lesson today. The Prophet's ﷺ experience was acquired through hard work!

The Prophet ﷺ learned many skills from his jobs, yet there was something missing which he had to learn. Fighting skills! Well, Allah planned for that too. When he was 15 years old a war took place between Quraysh and another tribe during the Holy months so they called that war the Battle of Fojar (the unholy battle). He fought in that war and learned the skill of fighting too. Soon after the war, the two tribes signed a peace treaty called Hilf al-Fodool, and so he also learnt how to negotiate for peace.

A powerful generation can not be built on thinking that religion is merely going to the mosque neither will it be built on thinking life is for pure entertainment. The Prophet ﷺ was well prepared to rule and guide mankind. He was a trader who was well acquainted with all aspects of life. He also understood war and peace issues. I urge every youth who wants to develop his country, to prepare himself by learning, working hard, reading, meeting people and getting himself acquainted with all current issues.

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.