

Chapter 2: The Prophet's Birth and Childhood

Makkah was covered by a heavy blanket of darkness. No signs of life and activity could be observed in it. Only the moon slowly emerged from behind the darkened surrounding mountains and cast its pale, delicate rays upon the simple, austere houses and upon the sandy regions outside the city.

Little by little, midnight gave way to dawn. A gentle breeze rustled through the burning land of the Hijaz and prepared it for a short rest. Now the stars, too, added to the beauty of this pure banquet of nature and smiled at the residents of Makkah.

It was now early dawn and the early rising, vigilant night birds were singing beautifully in that heavenly weather. They seemed to be speaking in a romantic language to their Beloved! The horizon was on the verge of the brightness of dawn but still a mysterious silence prevailed over the city. All were asleep. Only Amina was awake, feeling the contractions she had been expecting.

Gradually the contractions became stronger. Suddenly Amina saw several unknown women in her room. The room was filled with light and there was fragrance in the air. She wondered who they were and how they had entered her room through the closed door. 1

Soon her baby was born, and thus, after several months of waiting, Amina had the pleasure of seeing her child in the early dawn of the 17th of Rabi ul-Awwal. 2

All were overjoyed with the child's birth. But when Muhammad (peace and the mercy of God be upon him and his descendants) illuminated Amina's dark and silent room of prayer, her young Abdullah, was not present. He had passed away in Medina while returning from Damascus and had been buried there, leaving Amina alone. 3

The Wonderful Baby

The Prophet was born and his blessed birth gave rise to numerous wonderful incidents in the sky and on the earth, especially in the East, the cradle of civilization.

News of these events spread quickly and informed the people of an imminent, very significant incident. Since this newborn child was predestined to destroy the people's old superstitious beliefs and customs and to lay new foundations for human progress and prosperity, from the very beginning he sounded the reveille.

On that blessed night, the Persian monarch Anushiravan's magnificent palace, which incarnated a false fantasy of power and eternal monarchy and upon which people looked with fear and awe, trembled. Fourteen of its turrets collapsed, and the fire in the fire-temple of Persia, which had been flaming for 1,000 years, was suddenly extinguished. 5

So the humiliated worshippers of that false, destructive object of worship, whose minds had been blocked by the obstacles of prejudice and false imitation and who thus could not reflect upon nature took notice of the truth and were attracted toward a totally different direction. The drying out of the Savah Lake awakened the people of another great region."6

Halima, The Prophet's Nurse

For many centuries it had been customary among the Arabs to give their newborn children to women from the tribes around the city to be wet-nursed. This was done so that their children would grow up in the fresh air and the natural environment of the desert and also learn the eloquent Arabic dialect whose purest form was to be found at that time in the desert. 7

For this reason and since Amina had no milk to feed her child, Abdul Muttalib, his grandfather and guardian, felt it necessary to employ an honorable, trustworthy lady to look after the child of his dear son, Abdullah. After making appropriate inquiries, he selected Halima, who was from the Bani Sa'd tribe (a tribe famous for bravery and eloquence) and who was rated among the most chaste, noble women.

Halima took the infant to her own tribe and looked after him as though he were her own child. The Bani Sa'd tribe had long been suffering from famine in the desert. The dry desert and lack of rains had added much to their poverty and misery.

But from the very day he entered Halima's house, good fortune and blessings entered with him. Her life, which had been filled with poverty and destitution, suddenly changed into a happy and prosperous one. The pale faces of Halima and her children became rosy and full of life. Her dry breasts swelled with milk, and the pasture of the sheep and camels of that region turned fresh and green, whereas before he came to their tribe, people lived in poverty and faced many difficulties.

He grew up more rapidly than other children, ran more nimbly, and did not stammer like them. Good fortune and auspiciousness so accompanied him that all the people around him easily realized this fact and admitted it. Halima's husband, Harith, told her, "Do you know what a blessed baby we have been given?"8

In The Storm Of Events

The Prophet was just six years old⁹ when his mother, Amina, left Makkah for Medina to visit her relatives and probably to pay a respectful visit to her husband's grave. He accompanied his mother on that trip. But after visiting her relatives and expressing love and loyalty to her husband at Abdullah's graveside, on her way back to Makkah, Amina passed away at a place named Abwa¹⁰. Thus, the Prophet had lost both his mother and father by that tender age when every child needs a father's affections and a mother's loving embrace.

A Glimpse Into The Prophet's Character

Just as the Prophet's birth and the events that followed his blessed birth were extraordinary and suggestive of his majesty and supreme character, so his behaviour and manner of speaking in childhood also made him different from other children. Abdul Muttalib realized this fact and respected his majesty greatly.¹¹

Abu Talib, the Prophet's uncle, used to say, 'We have never heard any lies from Muhammad, nor have we seen him misconduct himself or make mischief. He never laughs unduly nor speaks idly and he is mostly alone'.¹²

The Prophet was seven years old when the Jews remarked, 'In our Books we have read that the Prophet of Islam refrains from eating any food which is religiously prohibited or doubtful. Let's try him'.

So they stole a hen and sent it to Abu Talib. Not knowing that the hen had been stolen, all ate from the cooked hen but Muhammad, who avoided even tasting it. When they asked the reason for this avoidance of the food, he answered, 'This food is forbidden by God, and God protects me against anything that He has forbidden...'

Then the Jews took a hen from a neighbour, intending to pay for it later on, and sent it to Abu Talib's house. Again he avoided eating the hen, saying, 'This food is doubtful and...'

Then the Jews said, 'This child has an extraordinary character and a supreme position'.¹³

Abdul Muttalib, the chief of the Quraysh tribe, did not treat his grandson like other children, but held him in great respect and reverence.

When a special place was arranged for Abdul Muttalib at the Ka'aba, his offspring surrounded that special place, inhibited by Abdul Muttalib's dignity and glory from stepping into his abode. But the Prophet was by no means impressed by so much grandeur and honour and would always directly go to that particular seat. Abdul Muttalib's sons tried to hinder him, but he protested and said, 'Let my son go. I swear by God that he has a glorified, majestic position'.

Then Muhammad sat beside the chief of the Quraysh, Abdul Muttalib, and spoke with him. 14

1. Bihar ul-Anwar, Vol. 15, p.325.
2. Ibid., p.250.
3. Kamil ul-Tawarikh, second section, p. 10; Tabaqat, Vol. L, p.61; Bihar ul-Anwar, Vol. 15, p. 125.
4. Bihar ul-Anwar, Vol. 15, p.257.
5. Ibid., pp.258-263.
6. Ibid
7. Sirih Halabiyih, Vol. 1, p.99. 1
8. Bihar ul-Anwar, Vol. 15, pp.331-395; Sirih ibn Hisham, printed in 1375 A.H.L., Vol. 1. pp.159-60; Halabiyih, printed in 1382 A.H.L., Vol. 1, p.99.
9. Bihar ul-Anwar, Vol. 15, pp.402, 406.
10. Sirih ibn Hisham, Vol. 1, p. 168.
11. Bihar ul-Anwar, Vol. 15, pp.382, 402, 366.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., p.336.
14. Ibid., p. 142; Sirih ibn Hisham, Vol. 1, p.168.

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