

The Prophetic Biography:

The Meccan Period

Lesson 2



The Prophet's Ancestors

- In order to appreciate who the Prophet was, it's imperative to shed light on his ancestral tree.
- Indeed, the Prophet hailed from the most noble ancestors as Imam Ali states:

وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ، وَسَيِّدُ عِبَادِهِ، كُلَّمَا نَسَخَ اللَّهُ الْخَلْقَ فَرَقَّتَيْنِ جَعَلَهُ فِي خَيْرِهِمَا

“...and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant Messenger and the master of His servants. Whenever God divided the line of descent, He put him in the better one...”

The Prophet's Ancestors

- It is narrated that Imam al-Baqir and Imam al-Sadiq once said of the Prophet's noble ancestral line:

لم يزل ينقل من صلب نبي إلى نبي، ولا يجب أن يكونوا أنبياء مبعوثين فلعل أكثرهم كان نبياً
لنفسه أو لبيته.

“He (the Prophet) was continually transferred from the loins of one prophet to another. And it is not necessary for all prophets to be sent [to communities]. In fact, most of them (the prophet's ancestors) were prophets for themselves or for their households.”

The Prophet's Ancestors

- He is Muhammad, son of Abdullah, son of Abdul Muttalib, son of Hashim, son of Abd Manaf, son of Qusay, son of Kilab, son of Murrah, son of Ka'ab, son of Lu'ay, son of Ghalib, son of Fihhr, son of Malik, son of Nadhr (Quraysh), son of Kinanah, son of Adnan, son of Ismail.

The Prophet's Ancestors

- Qusay قُصَي was the great great grandfather of the Prophet.
- He rebuilt the Ka'ba and constructed a roof on it.
- He established دار الندوة which is basically an assembly room near mount Safa facing the Ka'ba. Think of this as an ancient parliament where people were given an opportunity to voice their opinions and present grievances.
- There was no Zamzam well at this time so he suggested to Quraysh that free food and water be given to religious pilgrims.

The Prophet's Ancestors

- Hashim هاشم was the Prophet's great grandfather.
- His real name was 'Amr and he was given the title "Hashim" which means "The Breaker of Bread". Historians write:

وإنما سمى هاشما لهشمة الثريد للحاج

“He was called Hashim because he used to break bread and pour stew over it for the pilgrims.

The Prophet's Ancestors

- After witnessing the mass poverty in Mecca, he decides to do something to strengthen the economy of Mecca.
- He figured that due to the pilgrimage, there is already a solid customer base. The only thing that remains is to sell goods to them.
- He establishes two annual trading expeditions.
- He builds the infrastructure for the trading expedition to Syria (procure Persian and Roman goods) in the summer and the trading expedition to Yemen (procure Indian spices etc) in the winter.
- It is no exaggeration to say that Hashim saved the Arabs from starvation.

The Prophet's Ancestors

- He became the wealthiest man in Arabia and used to single handedly feed all of the pilgrims with his personal income.
- Hashim had a brother named of Abd Shams.
- Abd Shams had a son, or an adopted son named Umayyah.
- Abd Shams became deeply jealous of the wealth and fame of Hashim.
- This is where the animosity between Bani Hashim and Bani Umayyah began.
- Hashim had multiple wives. One of them was from Yathrib.
- They have a child named “Shayba” which is the actual name of Abdul Muttalib.

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- All of the clans within the massive tribe of Quraysh recognized Hashim's extraordinary leadership in reviving the economic primacy of Mecca.
- By establishing the summer and winter trading routes to Syria and Yemen, Hashim transformed Mecca from a settled Bedouin community into a commercial business hub.
- Hashim travelled to the Byzantine Emperor and petitioned for a writ of safe-passage for the caravans of Quraysh. With this writ, he approached every tribal head on the route from Mecca to the Levant and procured their pledge to allow safe-passage.
- The importance of the seasonal routes is highlighted in Surat Quraysh.
- The summer caravan route passed through the oasis settlement of Yathrib, a predominately agricultural community comprised of Jewish and Arab villages.

The Prophet's Ancestors

- While Hashim was on a caravan trip to Syria, he stopped in Yathrib and proposed to Salma bint 'Amr, one of the most influential women from the Khazraj sub-clan of Najjar.
- Salma agreed to the marriage on the condition that any child of theirs would remain with her in Yathrib.
- The couple was soon blessed with a son they named Shaybah.
- Several years later, Hashim died in Gaza, while on a caravan expedition to Syria.
- He has three brothers- Abd Shams, Nawfal (a half-brother) and Muttalib- but since the first two were busy merchants, the leadership of Mecca fell to the third.

The Prophet's Ancestors

- Hashim's brother Muṭṭalib ruled Makkah after his brother.
- Later he went to Yathrib to fetch his nephew Shaybah.
- When he brought him to Mecca, he joked that Shaybah was a slave he had bought. From then on Shaybah came to be known as 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib "the Slave of Muṭṭalib."

The Prophet's Ancestors

- There are three important events in the life of Abdul Muttalib before the birth of the Prophet that warrant some discussion:
 - 1. The rediscovery of Zamzam
 - 2. The oath to sacrifice one of his sons
 - 3. The invasion of Mecca by the army of Abraha

The Prophet's Ancestors

- al-Ya'qubi reports:

لما تكامل لعبد المطلب مجده وأقرت له قريش بالفضل، رأى، وهو نائم في الحجر، آتيا أتاه، فقال له: قم يا أبا البطحاء، واحفر زمزم حفيرة الشيخ الأعظم.

“Abdul Mutallib saw in a dream as he slept in Hijr Ismail that a figure approached him and said, “Stand O Father of Mecca and excavate Zamzam, the well of your great elder (i.e., Ismail.”

Source: Tarikh al-Ya'qubu, v. 1, p. 246

The Prophet's Ancestors

- Abdul Muṭṭalib and his oldest son Harith followed the instructions from the dream and uncovered the well.
- They uncovered the treasures that had been buried (seven swords, seven shields, and two gold antelope sculptures)
- Abdul Muṭṭalib gave a fifth of the treasure as charity and used the metal to fashion doors to the Ka'bah and used the gold to gild the doors.

The Prophet's Ancestors

- Imam al-Sadiq reported that the Prophet said, “O Ali, Abdul Muṭṭalib founded five traditions during the Jāhiliyyah that God has carried over into Islam:
 - 1. He forbade sons from marrying their step-mothers after their fathers' deaths, after which God revealed ‘Do not marry the women whom your fathers had married...’
 - 2. He found a treasure and deducted a fifth of it as charity, after which God revealed, ‘Know that of whatever you gain, to God belongs a fifth...’
 - 3. “When he excavated Zamzam, he called it ‘Water for the Pilgrims,’ after which God revealed, ‘Do you consider those who provide water to the pilgrims and maintain the Sacred Mosque to be like those who believe in God and the Last Day?’”

The Prophet's Ancestors

- 4. Abdul Muṭṭalib established that the retribution for murder would be 100 camels, after which God carried over the same ruling in Islam.
- 5. The Quraysh had no prescribed number of circuits for tawaf, so Abdul Muṭṭalib decided that it would be seven circuits, after which God carried over the same ruling in Islam

The Prophet's Ancestors

يحشر عبد المطلب يوم القيامة أمة واحدة، عليه سيماء الأنبياء وهيبة الملوك.

“Abdul Muṭṭalib will be raised on the Day of Resurrection as a nation unto himself. He will have the mark of the prophets and the air of kings.” Imam al-Sadiq

Source: al-Kafi, v. 1, p. 447

The Prophet's Ancestors

- “Imam al-Ridha was asked about the Prophet’s statement, “I am the son of the two who were nearly slaughtered.” He replied, “He means Ismail son of Abraham...and Abdullah son of Abdul Muttalib. as for the second, Abdul Muttalib had once clung to the ring on the door to the Ka‘bah and begged God to grant him ten sons, and he vowed that he would sacrifice one of them whenever God answered his prayer. When their number reached ten, he said, ‘God has fulfilled his part, so by God, I shall fulfill mine.’ So he gathered his sons in the Ka‘bah and drew lots between them, and he drew the lot of Abdullah, the father of the Messenger of God, who was his favorite son...”

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“He drew a second and third time, but each time Abdullah’s lot was drawn. So he took him and bound him and prepared to slaughter him. But Quraysh came together to prevent him...His daughter ‘Ātikah said, ‘...Take those free-range camels of yours that roam the Sanctuary and draw lots between them and your son, and give your Lord until he is satisfied...”

Source: Uyun Akhbar al-Ridha, v. 2, p. 189-190

The Invasion of Mecca

- Abraha, the ruler of Yemen, erected a grand cathedral in Sana'a.
- His ambitious plan to lure pilgrims away from Mecca did not sit well with some Arabs, and a man from Bani Kinanah (just south of Mecca) traveled to Sana'a and defiled Abraha's cathedral.
- In response, the Abyssinian general swiftly assembled 60,000 soldiers and several elephants, and set out to destroy the Ka'ba in Mecca.
- Before invading the actual sanctuary of Mecca, Abraha asked to meet with the chief of Quraysh.

The Invasion of Mecca

- When Abraha meets Abdul Muttalib, he was so impressed that he said:

“You are more impressive than a king in your honor and comportment. You must be the leader of your people.” Then he asked, “Why have you come? I have heard of your magnanimity, honor, and virtue, and I have witnessed your comportment, your beauty, and your honor, so I am compelled to consider your request. So ask me what you will.”

Source: Amali Al-Tusi, p. 80

The Invasion of Mecca

- Abdul Muttalib said:

“Your army confiscated my camels. Order them to give them back to me.”

- When he realizes that ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib only wants his camels back he is disappointed. He says:

“You have fallen in my gaze! You came to me to ask about your camels when I have come to destroy the source of your honor and the honor of your people through which you are distinguished from all other people, this Ka‘bah to which people from all over the earth come for pilgrimage. But you have overlooked that and asked me about your camels?”

Source: Amali Al-Tusi, p. 81

The Invasion of Mecca

- Abdul Muttalib famously replies:

فقال له عبد المطلب: لست برب البيت الذي قصدت لهدمه، وأنا رب سرحي الذي أخذه أصحابك، فجننت أسألك فيما أنا ربه، وللبيت رب هو أمتع له من الخلق كلهم، وأولى به منهم.

“I am not the lord of that House, which you wish to destroy. I am only the lord of those camels that your soldiers have seized. I have come to ask after what is mine. The House has a lord who is more able to defend it than all of creation combined.”

The Marriage of Abdullah and Aminah

- Of the marriage of Abdullah and Aminah, Ya'qubi writes:

وكان تزويج عبد الله بن عبد المطلب لآمنة بنت وهب بعد حفر زمزم بعشر سنين... وبين
فداء عبد المطلب لابنه وبين تزويجه إياه سنة

”The marriage of Abdullah to Aminah took place about 10 years after the excavation of Zamzam and one year after Abdul Muttalib ransomed his son [for 100 camels].”

The Marriage of Abdullah and Aminah

- Having fulfilled his oath, Abdul Muttalib was determined to get his son married to Aminah bint Wahab from the Quraysh clan of Zuhrah.
- Amina's father had passed away and she was under the guardianship of her uncle Wuhayb.
- Abdul Muttalib approached Wuhayb and asked for the hand of his niece.
- Not only did Wuhayb agree to the union, he also consented to the marriage of his own daughter Halah to Abdul Muttalib on the same day.

The Marriage of Abdullah and Aminah

- Thus, Abdul Muttalib married his son to Aminah, and married Aminah's first cousin, Halah, the very same day.
- The Prophet (s) was born to Aminah, while Hamza and Safiyyah were born to Halah.
- Thus, Hamza was the Prophet's uncle through Abdul Muttalib and a second cousin through Halah.

The Marriage of Abdullah and Aminah

- Ibn Hisham writes:

خرج به عبد المطلب حتى أتى به وهب بن عبد مناف وهو يومئذ سيد بني زهرة نسبا
وشرفا ، فزوجه ابنته آمنة بنت وهب ، وهي يومئذ أفضل امرأة في قريش نسبا وموضعا

“Abdul Muttalib set out with his son [Abdullah] to meet Wahab b. Abd Manaf, who was the leader of the clan of Zuhrah in terms of lineage and nobility. He wedded Aminah bint Wahab [to Abdullah] and she was the best of all of the women of Quraysh in lineage and nobility.”

The Birth of the Prophet

ان آمنه بنت وهب رأت في المنام انه قيل لها: ان ما في بطنك سيد، فإذا ولدته فسميه
محمدا. ثم قال علي (عليه السلام): فاشتق الله له اسما من أسمائه، فإن الله المحمود وهذا
محمد

“Aminah bint Wahab saw a dream where she was told: ‘Verily, in your womb is a leader. When you give birth to him, named him ‘Muhammad’. Then Imam Ali said: ‘God derived a name for him from His names. For verily God is the Praiseworthy and he (Muhammad) is the praised.’” - Imam al-Kadhimi

The Birth of the Prophet

- Ibn Hisham reports the following narration in his seerah:

أن نفرأ من أصحاب رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قالوا له يا رسول الله أخبرنا عن نفسك قال نعم أنا دعوة أبي إبراهيم وبشرى أخى عيسى ورأت أمى حين حملت بي أنه خرج منها نور أضاء لها قصور الشام

“A group of the companions asked the Prophet: ‘O Messenger of God inform us about yourself.’ He replied: ‘I am the fulfillment of my forefather Abraham’s prayer. I am the glad-tiding of Jesus. When my mother was pregnant with me she saw light emanating from her that illuminated the palaces of Damascus.”

The Birth of the Prophet

- Of the death of Abdullah, Allamah Majlisi reports:

فلما حملت برسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله توفي، وذلك أن عبد الله بن عبد المطلب خرج إلى الشام في غير من غيرات قريش، يحملون تجارات، ففرغوا من تجاراتهم ثم انصرفوا، فمروا بالمدينة وعبد الله بن عبد المطلب يومئذ مريض فقال: أتخلف عند أخوالي بني عدي بن النجار، فأقام عندهم مريضا

- “Abdullah died during Aminah’s pregnancy. He he traveled to Syria with a trade expedition. When the expedition was complete, they headed back. He fell sick in Medina, so he stayed behind with his mother’s relatives, the Banu Najjar...”

The Birth of the Prophet

ومضى أصحابه فقدموا مكة فسألهم عبد المطلب عن عبد الله، فقالوا خلفناه عند أخواله بني عدي بن النجار وهو مريض، فبعث إليه عبد المطلب أعظم ولده الحارث فوجده قد توفي في دار النابغة

“The caravan of traders arrived in Mecca. Abdul Muttalib asked where his son was. He was informed that he was ill and remained behind with his mother’s relatives [in Yathrib]. Abdul Muttalib sent his eldest son, al-Ḥārith, to retrieve him only to find that he had died.”

Source: Bihar al-Anwar, v. 15, p. 124-125

The Birth of the Prophet

- Shaykh al-Kulayni reports the following narration about the Prophet's birth:

كان حيث طلقت آمنة بنت وهب وأخذها المخاض بالنبي (صلى الله عليه وآله) حضرتها فاطمة بنت أسد امرأة أبي طالب فلم تزل معها حتى وضعت فقالت، إحداهما للأخرى: هل ترين ما أرى؟ فقالت: وما ترين؟ قالت: هذا النور الذي قد سطع ما بين المشرق والمغرب

“When Aminah’s labor began, Fatima bint Asad, the wife of Abu Talib came to her aid and remained with her until she gave birth. One asked the other, ‘Do you see what I see?’ The other asked, ‘And what do you see?’ The first replied, ‘There is a light illuminating the east and the west.’”

The Birth of the Prophet

فبينما هما كذلك إذا دخل عليهما أبو طالب فقال لهما: ما لكما من أي شيء تعجبان؟ فأخبرته فاطمة بالنور الذي قد رأت فقال: لها أبو طالب: ألا أبشرك؟ فقالت: بلى، فقال: أما إنك ستلدن غلاما يكون وصي هذا المولود

When Abu Talib saw Fatima, she informed him about the light she had seen. Abu Talib told her, ‘You will eventually give birth to one who will be the successor to this newborn.’

The Birth of the Prophet

وَأَنَّا لَمَسْنَا السَّمَاءَ فَوَجَدْنَاهَا مُلْتَأَةً بِحَرَسٍ شَدِيدٍ وَشُهَبًا

“And we have sought [to reach] the heaven but found it filled with powerful guards and burning flames.”

The Birth of the Prophet

وَأَنَّا كُنَّا نَقْعُدُ مِنْهَا مَقَاعِدَ لِلسَّمْعِ فَمَنْ يَسْتَمِعِ الْآنَ يَجِدْ لَهُ شِهَابًا رَّصَدًا

“And we used to sit therein in positions for eavesdropping, but whoever listens now will find a burning flame lying in wait for him.”

The Birth of the Prophet

وَأَنَّا لَا نَدْرِي أَشَرٌّ أُرِيدَ بِمَن فِي الْأَرْضِ أَمْ أَرَادَ بِهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ رَشَدًا

“And that we know not whether evil is meant for those who are on earth or whether their Lord means to bring them guidance.”- Quran

72:8-10

The Birth of the Prophet

- Extraordinary signs when the Prophet was born:
- **1. A light that shone like never before:** Upon the Prophet's birth, a light shone intensely from his family's home that was visible across large areas of the Arabian Peninsula.
- **2. The Zoroastrian fire was extinguished:** The Zoroastrian fire, which was worshiped and was burning continuously for a thousand years, went out upon the Prophet's birth, as a sign of extinguishing falsehood.

The Birth of the Prophet

- **3. The Arc of Kisra in Ctesiphon shuddered:** The Arc of the Palace of Kisra, which is located in modern day Mada'in, Iraq and was the palace of the Sassanian emperor, trembled when the Prophet was born.
- **4. Fourteen royal balconies collapsed:** The Palace of Kisra has 14 balconies which all collapsed when the Prophet was born.
- **5. Lake Sa'wa ran dry:** The Lake of Sa'wah, which is located in modern day Iraq, dried up on the birth of the Prophet.