

The Prophetic Biography:

The Meccan Period

Lesson 5



General Timeline

From 2-37 the Prophet was accompanied by God's greatest angel and would sometimes hear angels.

From 37-40 the Prophet begins receiving guidance through dreams.

From 40-43 the Prophet becomes a prophet (*mab'ath*), prays, and preaches only underground to close family and friends who he is sure will convert

At 43, the Quranic revelation begins, and the Prophet begins preaching in a semi-private way and gradually takes the message public.

Private Invitation

- The Quranic revelation begins when the Prophet is 43 and within the first 5 months, 46 surahs are revealed.
- During this time the Prophet is presumably preaching in a semi-private way: challenging the false beliefs and immoral practices of society, but in private gatherings.
- The order of the revelation of the surahs is as follows:

Order of Revelation

- 1. Surat al-Alaq:

أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يَنْهَى عَبْدًا إِذَا صَلَّى إِذَا صَلَّى أَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ كَانَ عَلَى الْهُدَىٰ أَوْ أَمَرَ بِالتَّقْوَىٰ أَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ أَلَمْ يَعْلَمْ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَرَىٰ كَلَّا لَئِنْ لَمْ يَنْتَهِ لَنَسْفَعًا بِالنَّاصِيَةِ نَاصِيَةٍ كَاذِبَةٍ خَاطِئَةٍ فَلْيَدْعُ نَادِيَهُ سَنَدْعُ الزَّبَانِيَةَ كَلَّا لَا تَطِعُهُ وَاسْجُدْ وَاقْتَرِبْ

“Have you seen the one who forbids. A servant when he prays? Have you considered that you [may] be upon guidance? Or enjoins righteousness? Have you seen if he denies and turns away - Does he not know that God sees? No! If he does not desist, We will surely drag him by the forelock -A lying, sinning forelock. Then let him call his associates; We will call the angels of Hell. No! Do not obey him. But prostrate and draw near [to God].” Quran

96:9-19

Order of Revelation

- Verses 9-19 refer to someone who forbade the Prophet from praying.
- Verse 10 tells us that there was some form of prayer practiced by the Prophet which included prostration as indicated by verse 19.
- Traditions name Abū Jahl and al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīrah as the culprit

Order of Revelation

- 2. Surat al-Qalam:
 - Verse 2 and 6 are rebuttals of taunts that he is mad
 - Verse 4 reminds the Prophet of his excellent character from which he must derive strength against his enemies
 - Verses 48-50 tell him not to lack patience as Jonah had.
- 3. Surat al-Muzammil
 - Verse 10 mentions “what they say” and “avoid them” in response to real taunts
 - Verse 11 God promises to take care of the repudiators
 - verse 20 mentions a group of believers with the Prophet; they are not able to keep the night vigil as long as God had advised them to.

Order of Revelation

- 4. Al-Mudathir:

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُدَّثِّرُ قُمْ فَأَنذِرْ وَرَبَّكَ فَكَبِّرْ

“O you who covers himself [with a garment], Arise and warn And your Lord glorify.” Quran 74:1-3

- it has been argued that this is the first surah revealed, or at least the first to order him to proclaim in public.

Order of Revelation

- 5. Surat al-Fatiha
 - some have suggested that it was revealed before *‘Alaq*.
 - It has no historical significance.
- 6. Surat Lahab
- 7. Surat al-Takwir:
 - Verses 8-9 evoke sympathy for the victims of a *jāhillī* custom.
- 8. Surat al-A’la
- 9. Surat al-Layl
- 10. Surat al-Fajr

Order of Revelation

- 11. Surat al-Dhuha
 - *Ibn Abbas said:* “For 15 days, revelation was withheld from him, so the pagans said, “Muhammad's god has grown angry with him and bid him farewell. If his charge had been from God, it would have come continuously.”
- 12. Surat al-Sharh
- 13. Surat al-Asr

Warn Your Closest Kin

- At the end of Surat al-Shu'ara, (47th in sequence), God reveals the Verse of Warning

وَأَنْذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ

“and warn your closest kin.” Quran 26:214

Warn Your Closest Kin

- The Prophet calls together 40 men from the clans of Hashim and Muttalib for a feast of mutton and milk. He asks Ali to make the necessary preparations.
- But before he can explain the reason for the gathering, his uncle Abu Lahab, disperses the crowd.
- The very next day, the Prophet renews his invitation and promptly addresses his family before his uncle can intervene:

Warn Your Closest Kin

يا بني عبد المطلب ، إني قد جئتكم بخيري الدنيا والآخرة ، وقد أمرني الله تعالى أن أدعوكم إليه ، فأياكم يوازرنني على أمري هذا ويكون أخي ووصيي وخليفتي فيكم ؟

“O sons of Abdul Muttalib! I have come to you with the best of this world and the hereafter. Indeed, God has commanded me to invite you to it. So who among you will support me in this matter and become my brother, my vicegerent , and my successor among you?”

Warn Your Closest Kin

- Everyone was quiet until Ali speaks in support of the Prophet:

فقلت وأنا أحدثهم سنّاً : يا نبيّ الله ، أكون وزيرك عليه . قال : فأخذ برقبتي وقال : إنّ هذا أخي ووصيّي وخليفتي فيكم ، فاسمعوا له وأطيعوا . فقام القوم يضحكون ويقولون لأبي طالب : قد أمرك أن تسمع لعلي وتطيع

So I said, while I was the youngest of them: O Prophet of God, I will be your vizier in this matter. The Prophet then placed his hand on my neck and said: ‘Verily, this is my brother, my vicegerent and my successor among you so listen to him and obey him.’ The elders stood up and laughed and said to Abu Talib: He has commanded you to listen to Ali and obey him.”

The Earliest Converts

- The first batch to officially join Islam were Ali, Khadijah, Zayd b. Haritha, Ja'far b. Abi Talib.
- We can also include Abu Talib who in fact believed in the Prophet when he was a newborn.
- Umm al-Fadhil, the wife of Abbas, is an early convert.
- Safiyyah, the Prophet's aunt is among the early converts as well as her son Zubayr ibn Al-Awwam.

The Earliest Converts

- Asma' bint Umays, the wife of Ja'far ibn Abi Talib joins Islam. (Umm al-Fadhl's half-sister)
- Umm Ayman is an early responder to the Prophetic message. She was a servant of the Prophet's father Abdullah. She was like a mother to the Prophet, especially after the death of Aminah. He freed her at his wedding to Khadijah. She then married a man from Yathrib and they had a son named Ayman. She later returned to the Prophet's household for unclear reasons and with the Prophet's encouragement married Zayd b. Haritha. Together they had a son named Usamah.

The Earliest Converts

- Other notable early converts include: Mus'ab ibn Umayr, Bilal ibn Rabah, Ammar ibn Yasir, Yasir, Sumayyah, Abu Dhar, and Abdullah b. Mas'ud.
- When did Abu Bakr join Islam?
 - The popularized narrative is that he was the first adult male to convert. However, this view is contradicted by some historical reports:

The Earliest Converts

عن محمد بن سعد بن أبي وقاص قال: "قلت لأبي: أكان أبو بكر أولكم إسلاماً؟ فقال: لا..
ولقد أسلم قبله أكثر من خمسين"

"Muhammad ibn Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas said: I asked my father, "Was Abu Bakr the first of you to convert to Islam?" He said: "No... in fact, there were fifty who converted before him..."

The Earliest Converts

منها ما رواه الطبراني من أن أبا بكر آمن بعد ظهور معجزة إسرائء ومعراج النبي
(صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) والتي وقعت أحداثها قبل الهجرة بسنة ونصف فقط على
قولهم، فسُمِّيَ يومئذ بالصديق

Tabarani reports that Abu Bakr became a believer after the night journey and ascension of [the Prophet] which took place almost a year and a half before the hijrah. It was then that he became called “al-sideeq”.

The Earliest Converts

ما رواه الذهبي عن الحسن بن زيد: "أن علياً أول ذكر أسلم، ثم أسلم زيد (بن حارثة)، ثم جعفر (بن أبي طالب)، وكان أبو بكر الرابع أو الخامس!"

“Ali was the first male to become Muslim, then Zayd, then Ja’far and Abu Bakr was the fourth or fifth.”

History Repeats Itself

إِن كُلٌّ إِلَّا كَذَّبَ الرُّسُلَ فَحَقَّ عِقَابِ

“Not one (of them) but rejected the messengers, but My punishment came justly and inevitably (on them).” Quran 38:14

فَإِن كَذَّبُوكَ فَقَدْ كُذِّبَ رُسُلٌ مِّن قَبْلِكَ جَاءُوا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُنِيرِ

“But if they reject you, so indeed were rejected before you messengers who came with clear arguments and scriptures and the illuminating book.” Quran 3:184

Resistance of Quraysh

- **The leaders of Quraysh fiercely opposed Islam for various reasons:**
- 1. They felt they could not accept one single God and abandon their many gods:

أَجَعَلَ الْآلِهَةَ إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عَجَابٌ

“Has he reduced our gods to one god? This is indeed an odd thing!”

Quran 38:5

- Despite their connection to Abraham’s religion, his monotheism had been adulterated by idol-worship to such an extent that they felt Muhammad was preaching a new and unprecedented message.

Resistance of Quraysh

- 2. They felt they could not accept a newly founded religion and abandon one that had endured so long.
- This is why the Quran emphasizes Islam's connection with past prophets and with Abraham in particular:

إِنَّ أَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِإِبْرَاهِيمَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ وَهَذَا النَّبِيُّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“Indeed, the most worthy of Abraham among the people are those who followed him and this prophet, and those who believe [in his message]. And God is the guardian of the believers.” Quran 3:68

Resistance of Quraysh

- 3. They did not want to abandon the culture of their forefathers:

بَلْ قَالُوا إِنَّا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا عَلَىٰ أُمَّةٍ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم مُّهُتَدُونَ وَكَذَلِكَ مَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فِي
قَرْيَةٍ مِّنْ نَّذِيرٍ إِلَّا قَالَ مُتْرَفُوهَا إِنَّا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا عَلَىٰ أُمَّةٍ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم مُّقْتَدُونَ

“They said, “We found our forefathers on a particular path, and we shall be guided by their footsteps. Likewise, we never sent a warner to any city but that the decadent among them said, “We found our forefathers on a particular path, and we shall follow in their footsteps.”

Quran 43:22-23

Resistance of Quraysh

- 4. They feared losing their position of power among the Arabs:
 - By challenging the status quo, he was undermining their superiority over other tribes

Resistance of Quraysh

- 5. Other clans felt jealous of the clan of Hashim:

والله إني لأعلم أن ما يقول حق ولكن يمنعني شيء أن بني قصي, قالوا فينا الحجابة فقلنا نعم
ثم قالوا فينا السقاية فقلنا نعم ثم قالوا فينا الندوة فقلنا نعم ثم قالوا فينا اللواء فقلنا نعم ثم أطعموا
وأطعمنا حتى إذا تحاكت الركب قالوا منا نبي والله لا أفعل

“I know what Muhammad says is true. However, the children of Quşayy said, “We want to be in charge of draping the Ka‘bah,” and we conceded. They said, “We want the governing council to be among us,” and we conceded. They said, “The banners should be in our hands,” and we conceded. Then they gave us the duty of feeding the pilgrims and we became equal. But now they say, “The Prophet is from us.” No, by God! We shall not accept this.”

Resistance of Quraysh

- 6. They felt the security of Mecca would be compromised:

وَقَالُوا إِن نَّتَّبِعِ الْهُدَىٰ مَعَكَ نَخْطِفُ مِنْ أَرْضِنَا أَوْ لَمْ نُمْكِنَ لَهُمْ حَرَمًا آمِنًا يُجْبَىٰ إِلَيْهِ ثَمَرَاتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ رِزْقًا مِنْ لَدُنَّا وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

“They said, “If we follow this guidance along with you, we shall be expelled from our land.” Did we not place them in a safe sanctuary to which all sorts of produce was brought as sustenance from us? But alas, most of them do not know.” Quran 28:57

Resistance of Quraysh

- 7. They didn't feel that Muhammad fit the mold of a prophet:

وَقَالُوا مَا لِهَذَا الرَّسُولِ يَأْكُلُ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشِي فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ لَوْلَا أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ فَيَكُونُ مَعَهُ نَذِيرًا

“They said, “What is with this messenger? He eats food and walks in the market. Why doesn't an angel come down to him to be a warner alongside him?” Quran 25:7

Resistance of Quraysh

- The Quran's response to the objection that the Prophet doesn't fit the mold of prophet:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا إِنَّهُمْ لِيَأْكُلُونَ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشُونَ فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ وَجَعَلْنَا بَعْضَكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ فِتْنَةً أَتَصْبِرُونَ وَكَانَ رَبُّكَ بَصِيرًا

“And We did not send before you, [O Muhammad], any of the messengers except that they ate food and walked in the markets. And We have made some of you [people] as trial for others - will you have patience? And ever is your Lord, Seeing.” Quran 25:20

Resistance of Quraysh

- 8. They wanted flashy miracles:

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ لَوْلَا يُكَلِّمُنَا اللَّهُ أَوْ تَأْتِينَا آيَةٌ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ
تَشَابَهَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ

“Those who do not know say, "Why does God not speak to us or there come to us a sign?" Thus spoke those before them like their words. Their hearts resemble each other. We have shown clearly the signs to a people who are certain [in faith].” Quran 2:118

Resistance of Quraysh

- 9. They felt their fate was sealed, and that they had no choice but to be pagan:

وَقَالُوا لَوْ شَاءَ الرَّحْمَنُ مَا عَبَدْنَاهُمْ مَّا لَهُمْ بِذَلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ

“They said, “If the All-Merciful had wished, we wouldn’t have worshipped these idols.” They cannot be certain of this. They only conjecture.” Quran 43:20

Resistance of Quraysh

- 10. They were arrogant:

إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ

“When they are told that there is no god but God, they are arrogant.”

Quran 37:35