

'Ā'ishah, the Mother of the Believers, narrated that

1

The first aspect of revelation to God's Messenger was that his dreams came true. Whatever vision he might have had in his sleep would come true as clearly as the break of dawn.

2

Then, he began to enjoy seclusion.

3

He used to retreat alone into the Cave of Ḥirā', where he would spend several days in devotion before going back to his family. He used to take some food with him, and when he came back he would take a fresh supply for another period.

4

He continued to do so until he suddenly received the truth while in the Cave of Ḥirā'. The angel came to him and said: "Read". He replied: "I am not a reader".

5

[The Prophet] says: "He held me and pressed hard until I was exhausted, then he released me and said: 'Read', and I replied: 'I am not a reader'. So he held me and pressed me hard a second time until I was exhausted, then he released me and said: 'Read'. I replied: 'I am not a reader'. He then held me and pressed hard for a third time until I was exhausted, then he released me. Then he said: 'Read, in the name of Your Lord Who created. It is He Who created man from a clinging cell mass. Read! Your Lord is the most bounteous'". (96: 1-3)

6

The Prophet returned home trembling right until he entered Khadijah bint Khuwaylid's place, and said: "Wrap me! Wrap me!" They wrapped him and his fear subsided.

7

He turned to Khadijah and related to her what happened and said: "I fear for myself",

8

Khadijah replied: "No, by God. God will never let you suffer humiliation,

#### From the Qur'an

- ﴿Read, in the name of Your Lord Who created. It is He Who created man from a clinging cell mass. Read! Your Lord is the most bounteous, who has taught the use of the pen. He has taught man what he did not know.﴾ (96: 1-5)
- ﴿You enfolded one! (1) Stand in prayer at night, all but a small part of it, (2) half of it, or a little less, (3) or add to it. Recite the Qur'an calmly and distinctly.﴾ (73: 1-4)
- ﴿By the bright morning hours, (1) and the night when it grows still and dark, (2) your Lord has neither forsaken you, nor does He hate you'﴾. (93: 1-3)

#### The Narrator

Mother of the Believers, 'Ā'ishah bint Abu Bakr 'Abdullāh ibn Abu Quḥāfah 'Uthmān ibn 'Āmir, belonged to the Taym branch of the tribe of Quraysh. She was pure and her innocence was revealed from on high. The Prophet (peace be upon him) married her after the death of his first wife, Khadijah. She was the only one of his wives who was a virgin at the time of her marriage.<sup>(1)</sup> He loved her more than any other woman. According to authentic reports, she died in Madinah in Year 57 AH, 677 CE, aged 66.

<sup>1</sup> Every one of the Prophet's wives was a woman of good moral conduct. However, 'Ā'ishah was the only one who was a virgin at the time of her marriage to the Prophet. All his other wives had been married before they joined the Prophet's household.





# Hadith

- 9 because you are kind to your relatives,
- 10 you assist anyone in need,
- 11 you are generous to the poor,
- 12 you are hospitable to your guest
- 13 and you help in every just cause”.
- 14 Then she took him to Waraqah ibn Nawfal ibn Asad ibn ‘Abd al-‘Uzzā, her paternal cousin who was a Christian convert and a scholar with a good knowledge of Hebrew. He used to write from the Gospel in Hebrew whatever God willed him to write. He had lost his eyesight, as he had grown very old.
- 15 Khadijah said to Waraqah: “Uncle, would you like to hear what your nephew<sup>(1)</sup> has to say?” Waraqah said: “Well, nephew, what have you seen?” The Prophet related to him what he saw. [When he had finished], Waraqah said: “It is the same angel as was sent down to Moses.
- 16 I wish I was a young man so that I might be alive when your people turn you away from this city”.
- 17 The Prophet exclaimed: “Would they turn me away?” Waraqah answered: “Yes! No man has ever preached a message like yours and was not met with enmity.
- 18 If I live till that day, I will certainly give you all my support”.
- 19 Waraqah died soon afterwards, and revelations were discontinued for a while.<sup>(2)</sup>

1 Waraqah was not, in fact, the Prophet’s uncle. Khadijah’s reference to Muhammad as his nephew was in accordance with the standards of politeness which prevailed in Arabia at the time.

2 Related by al-Bukhari, 3; Muslim, 160.

## Summary

In this hadith, ‘Ā’ishah, the Prophet’s wife and Mother of the Believers, gives the details of the start of revelations to the Prophet (peace be upon him), starting with having true dreams. She then mentions the Angel Gabriel’s visit when he was spending time in devotion at Hira’ Cave. He was then given his first revelations. The hadith further mentions Khadijah’s words of reassurance and what Waraqah ibn Nawfal said to him.

# Message and Meaning

1

'Ā'ishah reports that the first revelation given to God's Messenger (peace be upon him) was in the form of having true dreams. He would see something in his dream and then it would occur in real life just as he saw in the dream. It was absolutely clear like daylight. His dreams were nothing like confused images or medley of dreams people normally see while asleep. All his dreams came true, as though they were the prelude of something very serious.

It is confirmed that revelation started with such early good signs, including the true dreams he saw, his hearing little stones in Makkah glorifying God and this happening before he received his message, and a stone greeting him calling him prophet, etc. All this was to prepare him for what was soon to come, and such that he would be ready for some great event that would occur to him. Thus, he would not be surprised by the angel in a way that would be too difficult for other human beings. Indeed, the angel came to him when he had enough early signs to reassure him.<sup>(1)</sup>

2

Next he came to like seclusion. He felt comfortable being alone, away from people's society. Such seclusion may be a very good way of discarding the concerns of life. It helps to give a person clear thinking and refined manners.

3

The Prophet (peace be upon him) started to spend many nights in a cave in Mount Ḥirā' in Makkah, where he spent his time in devotion. He would go to this cave taking with him food that was enough for a few days. When his supply of food was exhausted, he would go back home and collect a fresh supply for a similar number of days.

4

As God's Messenger (peace be upon him) was once in such devotion, he was given clear revelations. The Angel Gabriel, who was entrusted with bringing God's revelations to prophets, came to him and said: 'Read'. The Prophet answered: 'I am not a reader', which meant that he had not learned how to read. The Prophet was unlettered and could neither read nor write. God describes him as such: 'Believe, then, in God and His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, who believes in God and His words'. (7: 158)

5

When the Prophet gave him this answer, he held him tight until he was exhausted, then released him and said again: 'Read'. The Prophet (peace be upon him) gave him the same answer and the angel held him tight again then released him. He said once more the same order and the Prophet gave him yet the same answer. He held him tight a third time, then released him and said: 'Read, in the name of Your Lord Who created. It is He Who created man from a clinging cell mass. Read! Your Lord is the most bounteous, who has taught the use of the pen. He has taught man what he did not know'. (96: 1-5) These five short verses were the first of the Qur'an to be revealed to the Prophet (peace be upon him).

1 Al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Vol. 2, pp. 198-197. English edition, The Islamic Foundation and ICMG Australia, Vol. 2, p. 307.

6

The Prophet (peace be upon him) then went back to Khadijah, his wife, feeling scared and his heart beating fast out of fear. He entered his home and asked his wife to cover him. When a person experiences a feeling of fear, he feels very cold, particularly in his limbs and joints. She covered and wrapped him until he calmed down and his fear subsided.

7

He then told his wife what happened to him at the cave. He expressed his feeling, saying: 'I feared for myself'. He meant that he felt his heart might burst out of fear as he beheld the angel.

8

Khadijah reassured him, saying that God would never cause him harm, and that what happened to him could not be bad or something done by a devil. Good deeds protect a person from evil. She went on and outlined his principal good characteristics.

9

He maintained good relations with his relatives, visiting them and enquiring after them.

10

He helped whoever needed assistance, such as weak people, orphans and others.

11

He was generous with his money, giving to those who were in need.

12

He was hospitable to his guests, serving them with food and drink.

13

He helped people who suffered some calamity through no fault of theirs. Such help should not be extended to people whose calamity is the result of their disobedience of God and indulgence in what He has forbidden.

14

Khadijah then took him to her cousin, Waraqah ibn Nawfal, who had abandoned idolatry and embraced Christianity. He knew both the Torah and the Gospel, and he learnt writing and was proficient in Hebrew. He could write the Gospel in Hebrew. Waraqah was by this time very advanced in age, and he had lost his eyesight.

15

When the Prophet (peace be upon him) related to Waraqah what he saw, the latter told him that he saw the trusted angel whom God sent to Moses, meaning Gabriel (peace be upon him). Waraqah gave Gabriel this description because he was the only angel entrusted with delivering God's revelations. Thus, Waraqah's explanation meant that Muhammad (peace be upon him) became a prophet sent to his people in the same way as Moses was a prophet sent to the Children of Israel.

16

Waraqah also told the Prophet (peace be upon him) that his people would deny him and show him determined opposition and hostility until they drove him out of his hometown. Waraqah lamented his gone youth and wished that he would be alive and strong at the time so that he could defend the Prophet and fight alongside him.

# Message and Meaning

17

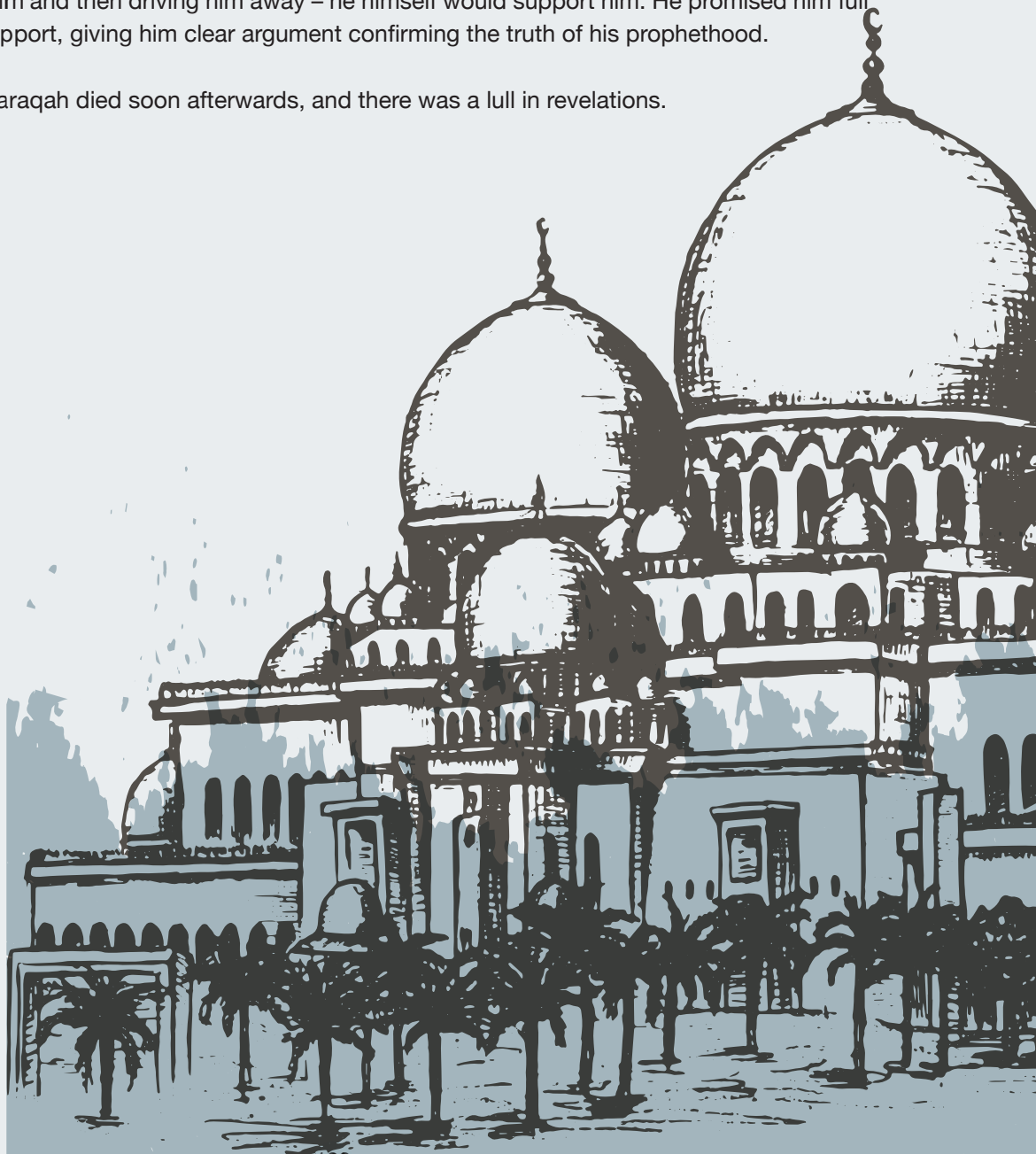
The Prophet (peace be upon him) was surprised with what Waraqah said and felt it very strange that his people would drive him out when he was calling on them to believe in God's oneness and to save themselves from God's punishment. He felt it strange that they should resort to such a measure when they were well aware of his truthfulness and honesty. Waraqah informed him that this was the case with all prophets. Every prophet was met with hostility and enmity.

18

Waraqah then told him that should he be alive when Muhammad's prophethood was known and his faith was attracting followers – and perhaps he meant when his people would go to extremes in denying him and then driving him away – he himself would support him. He promised him full and clear support, giving him clear argument confirming the truth of his prophethood.

19

However, Waraqah died soon afterwards, and there was a lull in revelations.





# Implementation

1

The Prophet (peace be upon him) married 'Ā'ishah when she was young. When these verses were revealed to him: "Prophet! Say to your wives: 'If you desire the life of this world and its charms, I shall provide for you and release you in a becoming manner. (28) But if you desire God and His Messenger and the life of the Hereafter, know that God has readied great rewards for those of you who do good'" (33: 28-29) He started with 'Ā'ishah and told her to consult her parents. She refused and said: 'Messenger of God, would I consult my parents concerning you? I definitely choose God, His Messenger and the life of the Hereafter'.<sup>(1)</sup> She was still young at the time. However, in choosing God and His Messenger, she provides a good example for us to follow.

2

'Ā'ishah narrated this hadith which outlines the merits of Khadījah, concerning whom she had said: 'I was never jealous of any of his wives as much as I was jealous of Khadījah'.<sup>(2)</sup> Jealousy is a natural feeling for women generally, but 'Ā'ishah's jealousy did not prevent her from narrating this hadith. It does not behove any person to conceal or deny someone else's merit or right because he is his competitor or rival, whether in work or life generally.

3

That Gabriel pressed the Prophet hard and said to him, 'Read', several times shows that it is desirable to repeat something that is important for the listener to understand, and to start with something that will remove any distraction and help to focus the listener's attention. This is very useful for advocates, teachers and educators generally. They should try to remove whatever may cause their audience to be distracted.

4

When the Prophet (peace be upon him) returned home and met his wife, feeling scared at what had happened, he told her to cover him. However, she did not panic and was not at a loss. She did not bother him by asking what had happened. Instead, she was quick to cover him and ensure that he regained calmness. She neither showed disbelief nor doubted his sanity. On the contrary, she believed him and reassured him that a person with his fine qualities would never be disgraced by God. She used very affirmative words, such as 'No, by God; never'. She reassured him, citing his good qualities. She took a further step, taking him to her cousin who would give him a good explanation of what he had experienced. She was then the first person to believe in him. She was the perfect example of a good wife who helps her husband and comforts him in the face of life's problems and burdens.

5

Wise and intelligent, Khadījah realized that it is the pattern of God's action in life that He helps a person who helps other people. He would not cause disgrace to such a person. Therefore, one should not withhold one's effort, money, time or ideas from others. Do your good deeds with an open heart, dedicating them for God's sake, and do them in your time of ease, so that God will help you when you encounter difficulty.

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 4785; Muslim, 1475.

2 Related by al-Bukhari, 3816; Muslim, 2435.





Try to emulate those fine qualities of the one who was the best of mankind. These deeds were not something that was done once or on the odd occasion. They were consistent practices that became his natural qualities. These qualities then that we should seek to emulate are: kindness to relatives demonstrated by visits, enquiries, help and similar fine gestures; a willingness to help those in need, whether because of their physical weakness or lack of experience; financial help to needy people or helping them to gain some means of income; hospitality to guests at home or the place of work, and supporting whoever is suffering a calamity.



The rule is to avoid praising people in their presence, because such praise may lead to conceit or a negative change of motive. However, Khadijah's action shows that it is permissible for a Muslim to praise someone in his presence for some good reason, such as giving that person encouragement when facing a difficulty, or highlighting the fact that he will gain reward for perseverance during times of hardship, etc. This is particularly relevant if the one saying such praise knows that such praise will not cause the praised one to think too highly of himself.



Waraqah said to the Prophet (peace be upon him): 'No man has ever preached a message like yours and was not met with enmity'. This makes it clear that people's opposition to religious people and advocates of faith is not a new trend. Indeed, it has always been the pattern. Prophets and people who followed their example in advocating the divine message suffered such enmity. No advocate of Islam should stop his work because he faces strong opposition.



The Prophet (peace be upon him) used to love attending to worship in seclusion, when he would not be bothered by worldly desires or concerns. Seclusion is beneficial at times, provided that it does not involve negligence of other people's dues and interests. A Muslim should not abandon his work or other affairs to go into seclusion, as done by followers of some deviant creeds, or devote his seclusion to some devotion which is not a proper act of worship.

