

Ibn 'Abbās narrated:

1

The Prophet (peace be upon him) was given his message when he was forty years of age.

2

He continued to live in Makkah receiving revelations for thirteen years.

3

He was then commanded to migrate and he stayed in his place of migration for ten years.

4

He passed away when he was sixty-three years old.⁽¹⁾

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 3851; Muslim, 2351 (al-Bukhari's text.).

From the Qur'an

- ﴿ Muhammad is only a messenger: all messengers have passed away before him. If, then, he dies or is slain, will you turn about on your heels? He that turns about on his heels will not harm God in any way. God will reward those who are grateful [to Him]. ﴾ (3: 144)
- ﴿ Anyone who migrates for God's cause will find on earth many places for refuge and great abundance. He who leaves his home, fleeing from evil unto God and His Messenger, and is then overtaken by death, his reward is reserved for him with God. God is much-forgiving, ever-merciful. ﴾ (4: 100)
- ﴿ If you do not help him [the Prophet]; God [will, as He] supported him at the time when the unbelievers drove him away. He was only one of two. When these two were alone in the cave, he said to his companion: 'Do not grieve, for God is with us'. Thereupon God bestowed on Him the gift of inner peace, and sent to his aid forces which you did not see. He brought the word of the unbelievers utterly low, while the word of God remained supreme. God is mighty, wise. ﴾ (9: 40)
- ﴿ Read in the name of your Lord who has created (1) – created man out of a clinging cell mass. (2) Read – for your Lord is the most Bountiful One, (3) who has taught the use of the pen, (4) taught man what he did not know. ﴾ (96: 1-5)

The Narrator

Abu al-'Abbās 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, belonged to the Hāshim branch of the Quraysh and resided mostly in Madinah. He was born in the Hāshimī quarter in Makkah three years before the Prophet's migration. He was the leading scholar of the Muslim community and the one who explained the Qur'an best. He was the Prophet's cousin. He was nicknamed *al-bahr*, which means 'the sea', because of his broad knowledge. The Prophet (peace be upon him) included him in his prayers, saying: 'My Lord, grant him insight into the religion'.⁽¹⁾ He was one of the Prophet's companions who narrated a large number of hadiths. He embraced Islam at a young age and he remained very close to the Prophet after the takeover of Makkah. He lost his eyesight when he became old. He died at Taif in Year 68 AH 688 CE.

Summary

Ibn 'Abbās mentions some of the important points in the Prophet's life. He states that his prophethood started when he was forty years of age. He migrated from Makkah to Yathrib, which was subsequently named Madinah, thirteen years later. He stayed in Madinah for ten years and then passed away to be with his Lord when he was sixty-three.

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 143 (his text); Muslim, 2477.



Message and Meaning

Islam is based on the declaration: 'I bear witness that there is no deity other than God and that Muhammad is God's Messenger'. The more we know of the Prophet (peace be upon him) the better we believe in him, because he had the most sublime character and he did us the greatest favour of all. In this hadith, Ibn 'Abbās tells us of the most important points in God's Messenger's life.



The Angel Gabriel brought the Prophet his first revelations and the command to deliver God's message when he had attained forty years of age. This means that the Prophet was born in Year 53 BH (i.e. before the hijrah or migration), 570 CE. That year is called the Year of the Elephant. He received his first revelations and became God's Messenger in Year 13 BH, 609 CE.

God chose Makkah to be the birthplace and residence of His Messenger. He was the descendent of a noble lineage. His father was 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib of the Hāshim branch of the Quraysh tribe, and his mother was Aminah bint Wahb ibn 'Abd Manāf ibn Zuhrah of the Quraysh. Thus, he had the noblest line of descent among the Arabs. He said: 'God chose Kinānah from among Ishmael's descendants, then chose the Quraysh from Kinānah, then from the Quraysh He chose Banī Hāshim, and He chose me from Banī Hāshim'.⁽¹⁾ His father died before the Prophet was born, and as such he was an orphan⁽²⁾ at birth. He lived with his mother, but she died when he was a six-year-old child. He continued to live under the care of his grandfather, but his grandfather died when Muhammad was eight years old. He was then looked after by his uncle Abu Ṭālib.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) lived in Makkah for forty years, being reared by God and prepared for the task for which he was chosen. God says to him: 'Has He not found you an orphan and given you a shelter? (6) And found you in error, and guided you? (7) And found you poor and enriched you?' (93: 6-8) He lived among his people and was renowned for his fine manners and morality. He took part in every good thing and stayed away from every evil.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) married Khadījah bint Khuwaylid who gave him six children. These were al-Qāsim, 'Abdullāh, Zaynab, Ruqayyah, Umm Kulthūm and Fāṭimah. His only other child was born to him by Maria, a Copt, when he was in Madinah. Gabriel came to him for the first time when he was in seclusion at Cave Ḥirā' and gave him God's first revelations: 'Read in the name of your Lord who has created (1) – created man out of a clinging cell mass. (2) Read – for your Lord is the most Bountiful One, (3) who has taught the use of the pen, (4) taught man what he did not know'. (96: 1-5) He undertook his full responsibilities as a Messenger of God.



The Prophet lived in Makkah for thirteen years receiving revelations and calling on people to believe. He was met with an hostile reception and various forms of harm. Those who believed in him were also subjected to torture and various forms of hostility. When this became unbearable, the Prophet told his companions to migrate to Abyssinia where they could find safety. This

1 Related by Muslim, 2276.

2 In Arab culture, an orphan is a child who has lost his father. This is different from the definition of 'orphan' in English, which is a child who has lost both parents. – Editor's note.

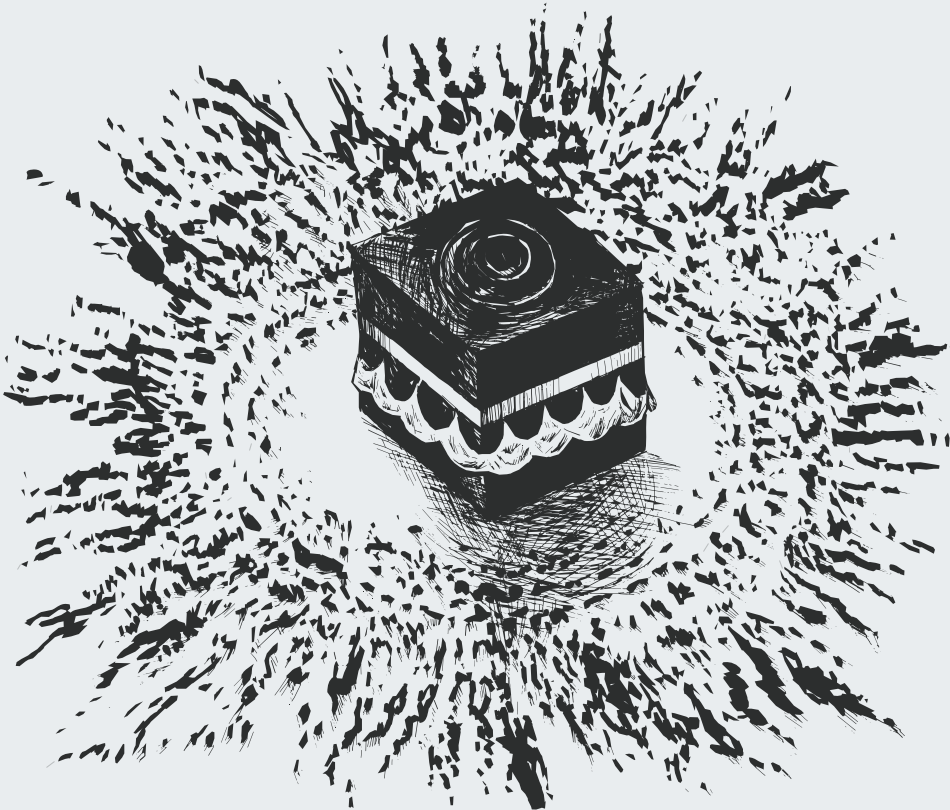
took place in the fifth year of the start of his prophethood. They migrated more than once. The Prophet himself stayed on in Makkah. God gave him the support of his uncle Abu Ṭālib and his wife Khadījah, but both of them died in Year 10 of prophethood. He travelled to Taif, looking for support for his faith, and he spoke to people during the pilgrimage season and at other times, but he always faced negative responses.

3

When the Prophet (peace be upon him) completed thirteen years in Makkah, God chose Madinah as the place to which he migrated, accompanied by Abu Bakr. Many of his companions migrated to Madinah before him and others who were able to migrate followed him. He stayed in Madinah ten years advocating his message, striving for God's cause and looking after his community. As this period came to a close, God had perfected His blessing on His Messenger and people had embraced the divine faith in their thousands.

4

Ibn 'Abbās then states that the Prophet was sixty-three when he passed away, having spent his last twenty-three years advocating his message, thirteen of which were in Makkah and ten in Madinah. He passed away in his wife, 'Ā'ishah's, apartment on Monday, 12 Rabī' I, in Year 11 AH, 632 CE.



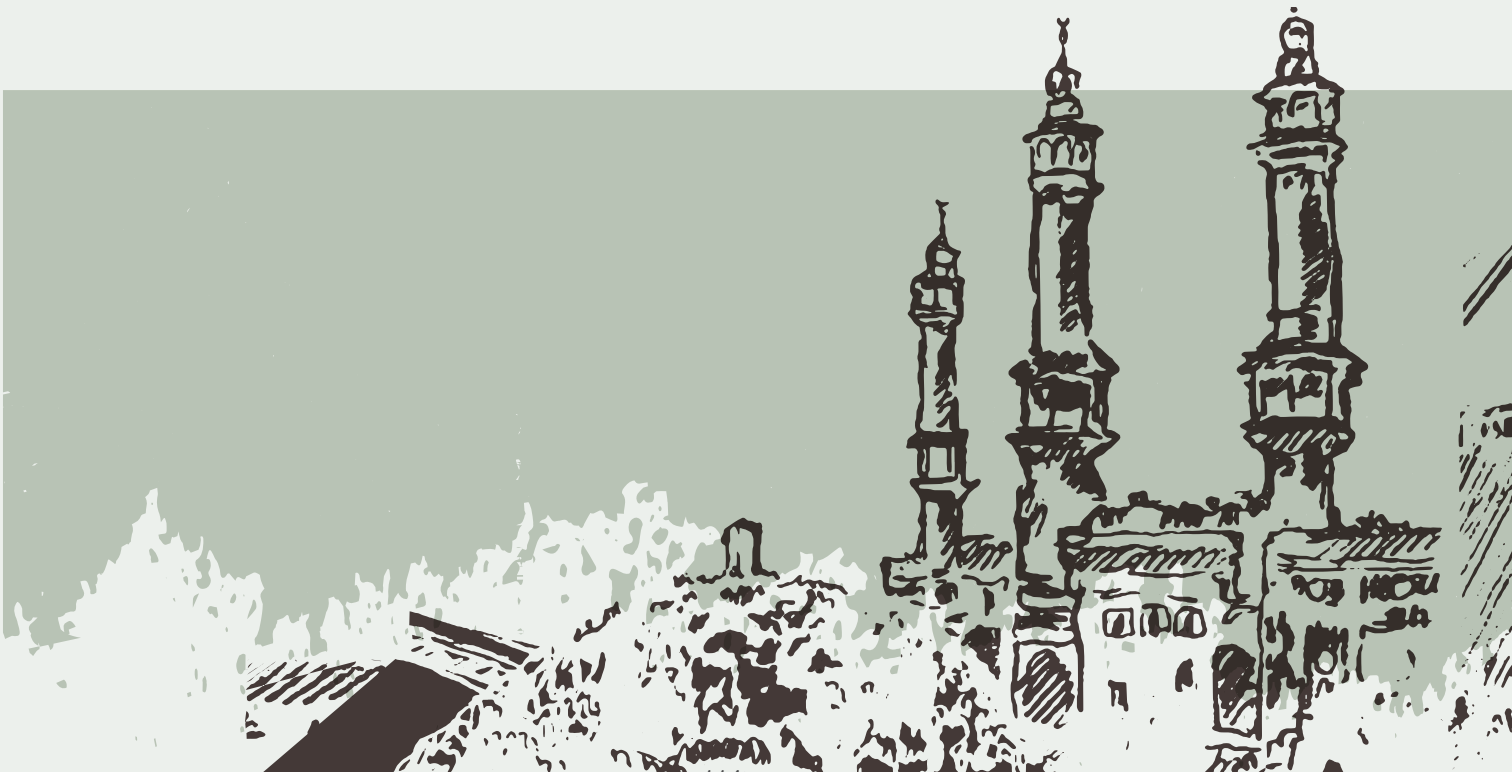
Implementation

1

Be certain of God's Lordship and His mercy, and seek His help. The Prophet (peace be upon him) was an orphan when he was born, and his mother and grandfather died when he was still a young child. He was looked after by his uncle who was poor and had a large family. In many cases, such an orphan feels deprived and suffers lack of care, but God determines all affairs. Hence, this orphan child became the most honourable of mankind. Therefore, no one should ever despair of receiving God's grace, no matter how difficult one's circumstances are. Everyone must be confident that it is God who determines all affairs and He only needs to say to anything, 'Be', for it to become a reality.

2

The Prophet (peace be upon him) remained in Makkah for thirteen years advocating his message, calling on people in the market and meeting places to believe in God. He never tired or despaired of ultimately persuading his people to accept Islam. He was not troubled by his people's rejection and false accusations. On the contrary, he maintained his gentle address, treated his people with kindness and compassion, prayed to God to guide them to the truth. He also helped with people's needs, such as safekeeping their valuables for them. He did not panic when his uncle who supported and protected him passed away, nor when his loving wife, Khadijah, who comforted him and supported him physically and financially, died shortly afterwards. In all this, he provides the best example to follow for advocates of God's message, scholars and preachers: they should always be patient when they encounter adversity. They should remember that whatever they may endure, it is much less than what he endured for God's cause.





When God commanded His Messenger (peace be upon him) to migrate, he did not grieve at departing his hometown and his people. He obeyed God's command, even though it was hard for him. Such is the attitude of every believer towards any hardship he is called upon to endure for God's sake.



Migration may provide an ample opportunity. Migration need not be from one country to another; it may be to take up a job in an environment that is more likely to please God.



The Prophet's life witnessed different stages and circumstances, varying between ease and hardship, poverty and good means, war and peace, secrecy and publicity, weakness and power, etc. Thus, it comprised all situations of human life and provided a perfect example to emulate, with acceptance of God's will.



Death is inevitable and applies to even the most noble of people and those endowed with the best minds, strength and health. It also applies to one who continuously prays for safety from all ills, and to one who extends best benefit to all people. May God grant peace and blessings to Prophet Muhammad who combined all good qualities. Therefore, no rational person should overlook the fact that we will all die. No one should panic at the death of a close relative, a loved person, a scholar or reformer.



Ḥassān ibn Thābit was a fine poet and a companion of the Prophet. In his poetry, he praised his people, the Anṣār, for supporting the Prophet, welcoming him in their city and fighting against his enemies who tried to suppress the message of Islam. The Anṣār were distinguished as the most welcoming people who extended exemplary generosity towards the Muhājirīn who migrated to join them in their city.



