

JAMIA HAFS
SCIENCES OF THE QUR'AN

SEERAH SERIES · BOOK ONE: BEFORE PROPHETHOOD · PART 4

# Childhood and Youth

*From the tents of Banu Sa'd to the house of 'Abdullah ibn Jud'an: the early years of the Prophet ﷺ, his losses, his guardians, his journeys and the reputation he earned among Quraysh.*

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ABOUT THIS SERIES

The life of the Prophet ﷺ in thirty parts, told from the sources. A reference follows each statement: the Qur'an by surah and ayah, hadith by collection and number, and the early biographies by name.

Reports from the biographies and the historians are historical accounts and are not held to the standard of authentic hadith; the text says when a statement rests on such a report. Dates before the Hijrah are approximate.

CHAPTER 1

# Nursing in the Desert

Part 3 told how the Prophet ﷺ was born in Makkah in the Year of the Elephant, an orphan whose father had died before his birth, and how he was nursed in his first days by his mother Aminah and by Thuwaybah, a slave woman of his uncle Abu Lahab. (Ibn Hisham; Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat; Bukhari 5101) This part follows him from the first years of his life, spent among the desert tribes, to his early manhood in Makkah.

## The custom of the townspeople

It was the custom of the settled Arabs of Makkah, especially of its noble families, to send their newborn children to be nursed by women of the desert tribes. (Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum) The biographers explain the reasons that lay behind the custom: the desert was thought healthier than the crowded town, with its heat and its seasons of epidemic; children raised among the Bedouin grew hardy; and they learned the pure Arabic of the desert, which the Arabs regarded as the most correct and eloquent form of the language. (Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah)

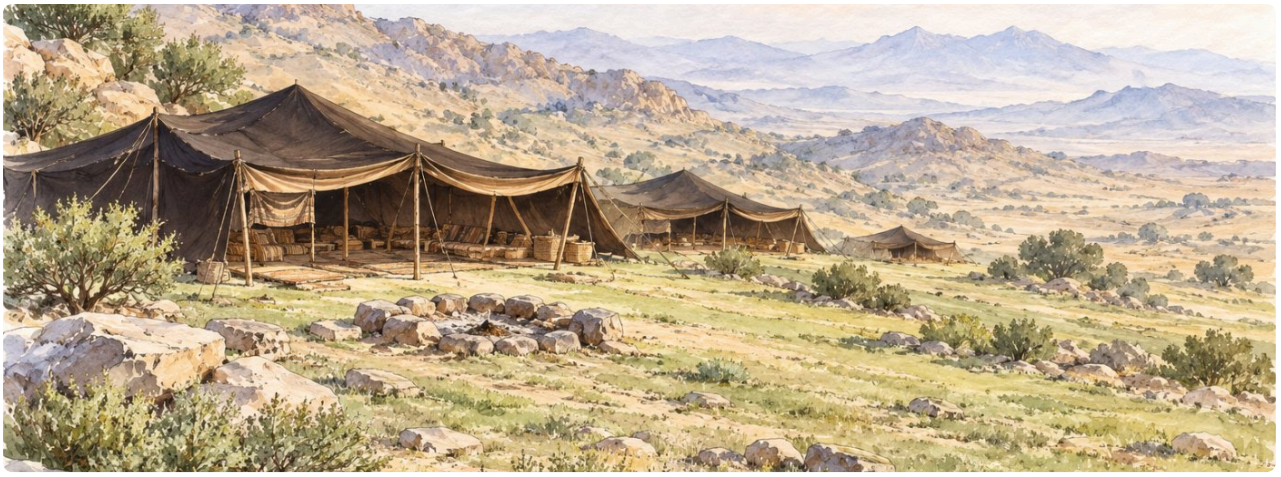
Ibn Ishaq reports that the Prophet ﷺ used to say: "I am the most Arab of you: I am of Quraysh, and I was nursed among Banu Sa'd ibn Bakr." (Ibn Hisham) Ibn Ishaq gives this saying without a chain, and it is recorded as his report. (Ibn Hisham)

## The women who came to Makkah

The women of the desert tribes came to Makkah in groups at certain times to seek infants to nurse. Ibn Ishaq says that the Prophet's ﷺ family sought a nurse for him among them. (Ibn Hisham) The nursing woman would take the child to her tribe and raise him among her own children, usually for two years, receiving a payment and gifts from the child's family, and the bond between the child and the nursing family was regarded as a true kinship. (Ibn Hisham; Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum)

## Banu Sa'd ibn Bakr

The nurse who took the Prophet ﷺ was from Banu Sa'd ibn Bakr, a clan of the large tribal confederation of Hawazin. (Ibn Hisham) Their lands lay in the highlands to the south-east of Makkah, towards Ta'if, and they were known among the Arabs for the purity of their speech. (Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah) It was among them that the Prophet ﷺ spent the greater part of his first years.



The highland pastures of Banu Sa'd ibn Bakr.

CHAPTER 2

# Halimah and the Year of Drought

The woman who nursed him was Halimah bint Abi Dhu'ayb. Ibn Ishaq gives her father's name as 'Abdullah ibn al-Harith, known as Abu Dhu'ayb, of Banu Sa'd ibn Bakr ibn Hawazin. (Ibn Hisham) Her husband, the Prophet's ﷺ foster father, was al-Harith ibn 'Abd al-'Uzza, also of Banu Sa'd. (Ibn Hisham)

## Halimah's account

Ibn Ishaq records the story of how Halimah came to take the Prophet ﷺ in her own words, as she is reported to have told it. (Ibn Hisham) She said that she set out from her land with her husband and with a small son of her own whom she was nursing, among a company of women of Banu Sa'd ibn Bakr who were seeking infants to nurse. (Ibn Hisham)

It was a year of drought that had left them with nothing. Halimah was riding a grey she-donkey of hers, and with them was an old she-camel which, she said, did not yield a single drop of milk. (Ibn Hisham) They could not sleep the whole night because of their child crying from hunger; she had nothing in her breasts to satisfy him, and the she-camel had nothing to feed him; but they hoped for rain and relief. (Ibn Hisham) Her donkey was so weak and thin that it kept falling behind the others on the road and delayed the whole company. (Ibn Hisham)

## The orphan

When they reached Makkah, Halimah said, there was not one woman among them to whom the Prophet ﷺ was not offered, and every one of them refused him when she was told that he was an orphan. (Ibn Hisham) She explained that they hoped for generosity from a child's father, and they said: "An orphan! What will his mother and his grandfather be able to do?" So they turned away from him for that reason. (Ibn Hisham)

Every woman who had come with Halimah found an infant to take, except Halimah herself. When the company was about to leave, she said to her husband: "By Allah, I do not like to go back among my companions without having taken a child to nurse. By Allah, I will go to that orphan and take him." (Ibn Hisham) He said: "There is no harm in that; perhaps Allah will put a blessing for us in him." So she went and took him, and she said that nothing made her take him except that she could find no other. (Ibn Hisham)

### The chain of the report

Ibn Ishaq transmits Halimah's account from Jahm ibn Abi Jahm, the freedman of al-Harith ibn Hatib al-Jumahi, from 'Abdullah ibn Ja'far ibn Abi Talib, "or from someone who told it to him from him". (Ibn Hisham) Because of this uncertainty in the chain, and because Jahm is little known, the scholars of hadith have discussed its authenticity. (Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah; al-Bayhaqi, Dala'il an-Nubuwwah) It was nevertheless widely transmitted: Abu Ya'la, Ibn Hibban and al-Bayhaqi, among others, recorded it, and the biographers have accepted it as the account of the Prophet's ﷺ nursing. (al-Bayhaqi, Dala'il an-Nubuwwah; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah) It is given here as Ibn Ishaq's report.

CHAPTER 3

## The Blessings in Banu Sa'd

Halimah's account continues with what happened once she had taken the child. (Ibn Hisham)

### The first night

She said that when she brought him back to her camp and put him to her breast, her breasts gave him all the milk he wanted. He drank until he was satisfied, and his foster brother drank with him until he too was satisfied, and then both of them slept — though before that they had not been able to sleep because of her own son's hunger. (Ibn Hisham) Her husband went to their old she-camel and found her udders full. He milked her, and he and Halimah drank until they were full, and they spent the best of nights. (Ibn Hisham) In the morning her husband said to her: "Know, Halimah, by Allah, that you have taken a blessed soul." She said: "By Allah, that is what I hope." (Ibn Hisham)

### The return journey

Then they set out for home. Halimah rode her she-donkey and carried the child with her, and the donkey now went so fast that it outpaced the whole company; none of their donkeys could keep up with it. (Ibn Hisham) Her companions called out to her: "Daughter of Abu Dhu'ayb, wait for us! Is this not the donkey you came out on?" She said: "Yes, by Allah, it is the same one." They said: "By Allah, something has happened to it." (Ibn Hisham)

### In the land of Banu Sa'd

They reached their homes in the land of Banu Sa'd, and Halimah said she knew of no land of Allah more barren than it was that year. (Ibn Hisham) Yet her flock would come home to her in the evenings, while the child was with them, well fed and full of milk, so that they could milk them and drink, while no one else was able to milk a drop. (Ibn Hisham) At last the men of her people who were in the camp said to their own shepherds: "Woe to you! Graze your flocks where the shepherd of the daughter of Abu Dhu'ayb grazes." Even so, their flocks came home hungry and gave no milk, while hers came home satisfied and full of milk. (Ibn Hisham)

Halimah said: "We continued to see increase and good from Allah, until his two years were over and I weaned him." (Ibn Hisham) She added that he grew as no other boy grew, so that by the time he was two years old he was a sturdy, well-built child. (Ibn Hisham)

### Back to Makkah, and back to the desert

At the end of the two years Halimah and her husband brought him to his mother, as the custom required. Halimah said that they were very eager for him to stay with them, because of the blessing they had seen through him. (Ibn Hisham) She spoke to Aminah and said: "Will you not leave my son with me until he grows stronger? I fear for him the sickness of Makkah." Halimah said that they kept asking her until she agreed to send him back with them. (Ibn Hisham) So he returned with them to the land of Banu Sa'd.

CHAPTER 4

## The Foster Family

Through Halimah, the Prophet ﷺ gained a foster family in Banu Sa'd who were regarded as his relatives for the rest of his life. Kinship through nursing was recognised by the Arabs, and the Shari'ah later confirmed it: the Prophet ﷺ said that what is unlawful through lineage is unlawful through nursing. (Bukhari 2645)

### His foster father and siblings

His foster father was al-Harith ibn 'Abd al-'Uzza. (Ibn Hisham) Ibn Ishaq names his foster brother and sisters, the children of al-Harith and Halimah, as 'Abdullah ibn al-Harith, Unaysah bint al-Harith, and Hudhafah bint al-Harith, who was known as ash-Shayma'. Ibn Ishaq says that the name ash-Shayma' came to be used in place of her own, so that she was known among her people only by it. (Ibn Hisham) Some reports give her name as Judhamah. (Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah) Ash-Shayma' used to carry the Prophet ﷺ as a small child, together with her mother. (Ibn Hisham)

The historians also mention that Abu Sufyan ibn al-Harith ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib, the Prophet's ﷺ cousin, was nursed for a time by Halimah and so was his foster brother as well. (Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah)

## Ash-Shayma' at Hunayn

The bond with this family appears again many years later. Ibn Ishaq reports that after the Battle of Hunayn, when captives were taken from Hawazin, ash-Shayma' was among them. She told the Muslims who held her that she was the foster sister of their leader, and they brought her to the Prophet ﷺ. (Ibn Hisham) She said to him that she was his sister, and when he asked for a sign she said it was a bite he had given her on her back when she had carried him as a child. He recognised the mark, spread out his cloak for her to sit on, and gave her the choice of staying with him in honour or returning to her people with gifts; she chose to return to her people, and he gave her gifts. (Ibn Hisham) These events belong to a later part of this series and are mentioned here only for the light they cast on his foster family.

## Halimah in later years

Ibn Sa'd reports that after the Prophet's ﷺ marriage to Khadijah, Halimah came to Makkah and complained to him of a drought that had struck her people and destroyed their animals; he spoke to Khadijah, who gave Halimah forty sheep and a camel to carry her back to her people. (Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat) A report in Sunan Abi Dawud from Abu at-Tufayl relates that he saw the Prophet ﷺ distributing meat at al-Ji'ranah when a woman came to him, and he spread out his cloak for her to sit on; when Abu at-Tufayl asked who she was, he was told: "This is his mother who nursed him." (Sunan Abi Dawud) Some scholars have graded the chain of this report weak. (Sunan Abi Dawud)

## The delegation of Hawazin

The tie of nursing was also invoked by the people of Hawazin as a whole. Ibn Ishaq reports that after Hunayn a delegation of Hawazin, who had by then accepted Islam, came to the Prophet ﷺ at al-Ji'ranah to ask for the return of their captives, and that their spokesman, Zuhayr ibn Surad of Banu Sa'd, reminded him that among the captive women were his aunts and the women who had nursed and cared for him. (Ibn Hisham) The Prophet ﷺ returned their captives to them, as is recorded in the authentic hadith of the delegation of Hawazin. (Bukhari 2307; Ibn Hisham)

## "Ibn Abi Kabshah"

When Abu Sufyan ibn Harb, before he accepted Islam, left the court of the Roman emperor Heraclius, he said to his companions: "The affair of Ibn Abi Kabshah has become great." (Bukhari 7) The idolaters of Quraysh used this name for the Prophet ﷺ. Ibn Hajar records

several explanations of it: one is that Abu Kabshah was the kunyah of his foster father al-Harith ibn 'Abd al-'Uzza; another is that it was the kunyah of one of his ancestors on his mother's side; and a third is that Abu Kabshah was a man of Khuza'ah who had abandoned the worship of idols, so that Quraysh likened the Prophet ﷺ to him. (Ibn Hajar, Fath al-Bari)



A tent of the desert tribes, where infants of Makkah were nursed.

CHAPTER 5

# The Opening of the Chest

It was during these years with Banu Sa'd that the event known as the opening of the chest (*shaqq as-sadr*) took place. It is reported in an authentic hadith and in the account of Ibn Ishaq. (Muslim 162; Ibn Hisham)

## The hadith of Anas

Anas ibn Malik reports:

> *Jibril came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ while he was playing with the boys. He took hold of him, laid him on the ground, split open his chest and took out the heart. He removed a clot from it and said: "This is the portion of Shaytan in you." Then he washed it in a basin of gold with the water of Zamzam, then joined it together and returned it to its place. The boys came running to his mother — that is, his nurse — saying: "Muhammad has been killed!" They went to him and found him pale.*
>
> Muslim 162

Anas added: "I used to see the mark of that stitching on his chest." (Muslim 162)

## Halimah's account

Ibn Ishaq's account, in the words reported from Halimah, places the event a few months after she brought him back to Banu Sa'd. She said that he and his foster brother were out with their lambs behind the tents when his brother came running, saying: "That Qurashi

brother of mine — two men in white clothes came and took him, laid him down and split open his belly, and they are stirring it." (Ibn Hisham) Halimah and her husband ran out and found him standing, his colour changed. They held him and asked what had happened, and he said: "Two men in white clothes came to me, laid me down and split open my belly, and searched in it for something; I do not know what it was." (Ibn Hisham)

Ibn Ishaq also reports, from Khalid ibn Ma'dan, that some of the Companions asked the Prophet ﷺ to tell them about himself, and that among the things he told them was this: while he was with a foster brother behind their tents tending their lambs, two men in white clothes came to him with a gold basin full of snow; they split open his belly, took out his heart, split it and removed a black clot from it, and washed his heart and belly with the snow until they had cleansed them. (Ibn Hisham) In the same report he said that one of the men then told the other to weigh him against ten of his people, then a hundred, then a thousand, and each time he outweighed them, until the man said: "Leave him; if you weighed him against his whole nation, he would outweigh them." (Ibn Hisham) This is a report of Ibn Ishaq's; the core of the event is established by the hadith of Anas. (Muslim 162; Ibn Hisham)

### His age at the time

According to Ibn Ishaq's account the event took place when he was a little over two years old, some months after Halimah had taken him back. (Ibn Hisham) Other reports put it at four or five years of age. (Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah; Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum)

### Later occurrences

The opening of the chest is reported to have happened again at the Night Journey, when the Prophet ﷺ described how his chest was opened, washed with the water of Zamzam, and filled with wisdom and faith from a basin of gold before he was taken up. (Bukhari 349; Muslim 162) That event is told in Part 14. Ibn Hajar discusses the reports that it took place more than once and the occasions on which they place it. (Ibn Hajar, Fath al-Bari)

Some commentators mention the opening of the chest in connection with the verse "Did We not expand for you your chest?", while others take the verse to refer to the expansion of his heart for guidance and revelation; Ibn Kathir mentions both explanations. (Qur'an Ash-Sharh 94:1; Ibn Kathir, Tafsir)

CHAPTER 6

## Aminah and the Journey to Yathrib

The event frightened Halimah and her husband. Ibn Ishaq reports that al-Harith said to her: "Halimah, I fear that this boy has been struck by something. Take him back to his family before it shows." (Ibn Hisham) So they brought him to his mother in Makkah. (Ibn Hisham)

## Aminah's words

Aminah asked Halimah why she had brought him back when she had been so eager to keep him. Halimah said that Allah had brought him to an age where he could be weaned, that she had done what was required of her, and that she feared some harm might come to him. (Ibn Hisham) Aminah said: "That is not your reason. Tell me the truth," and she pressed her until Halimah told her what had happened. (Ibn Hisham)

Ibn Ishaq reports that Aminah then said: "Do you fear Shaytan for him? No, by Allah, Shaytan has no way to him. My son will have a great affair. Shall I not tell you about him?" She told her of the light she had seen when she was carrying him, of the ease of her pregnancy, and of the manner of his birth, and then said: "Leave him, and go, rightly guided." (Ibn Hisham)

## Years in Makkah

From this time the Prophet ﷺ lived in Makkah with his mother Aminah and his grandfather 'Abd al-Muttalib. (Ibn Hisham) Ibn Ishaq says that he was with them in the protection and care of Allah, who made him grow as a fine plant, because of the honour He intended for him. (Ibn Hisham) Umm Ayman, the Abyssinian woman who had belonged to his father, cared for him in these years, as she had from his birth. (Muslim 1771; Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat)

## The journey to Yathrib

Ibn Ishaq reports that when the Prophet ﷺ was six years old his mother took him to Yathrib to visit his maternal relatives of Banu 'Adi ibn an-Najjar. (Ibn Hisham) Ibn Hisham explains the relationship: the mother of 'Abd al-Muttalib, Salma bint 'Amr, was of Banu 'Adi ibn an-Najjar, so they were the maternal kin of the family of 'Abd al-Muttalib, as told in Part 2. (Ibn Hisham) Yathrib was also the town in which his father 'Abdullah had died and was buried. (Ibn Hisham; Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat)

Ibn Sa'd reports that Umm Ayman went with them, and that they stayed in Yathrib for a month. (Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat) He also reports that after the Hijrah, when the Prophet ﷺ looked at the houses of Banu 'Adi ibn an-Najjar, he recalled that his mother had stayed there with him, pointed to the house in which his father 'Abdullah was buried, and said that he had learned to swim well in the pool of Banu 'Adi ibn an-Najjar. (Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat) These are reports of Ibn Sa'd's.

CHAPTER 7

# The Grave at al-Abwa’

On the way back to Makkah, Aminah fell ill and died at al-Abwa', a place on the road between Makkah and Yathrib. (Ibn Hisham) Ibn Ishaq says: "The mother of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, Aminah bint Wahb, died when he was six years old, at al-Abwa', between Makkah and Madinah. She had brought him to his maternal uncles of Banu 'Adi ibn an-Najjar to visit them, and she died while returning with him to Makkah." (Ibn Hisham) She was buried at al-Abwa'. (Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah)

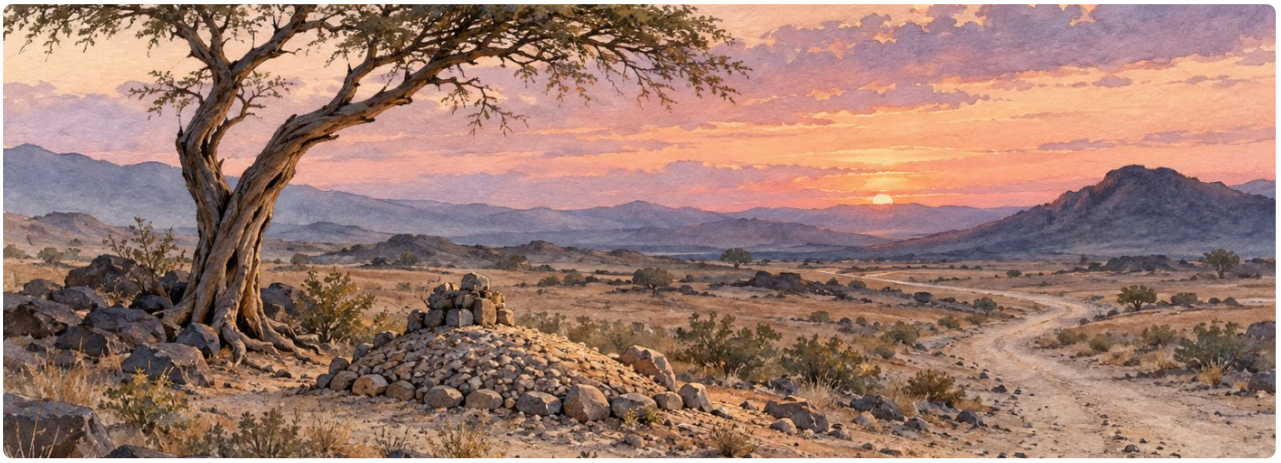
Ibn Sa'd reports that Umm Ayman brought the boy back to Makkah after his mother's death. (Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat) The Prophet ﷺ had now lost both his parents.

## His visit to her grave

Many years later, during his prophethood, the Prophet ﷺ visited his mother's grave. Abu Hurayrah reports:

> *The Prophet ﷺ visited the grave of his mother, and he wept and made those around him weep. Then he said: “I asked my Lord for permission to seek forgiveness for her, and He did not give me permission. I asked Him for permission to visit her grave, and He gave me permission. So visit graves, for they remind you of death.”*
>
> Muslim 976

The hadith is narrated by Muslim; the scholars have discussed its meaning in the works of creed and in the commentaries on the hadith, and it is recorded here as it is narrated. (Muslim 976) In a related hadith, Buraydah reports that the Prophet ﷺ said: "I had forbidden you to visit graves; now visit them." (Muslim 977)



Al-Abwa’, on the road between Makkah and Yathrib.

CHAPTER 8

# In the Care of ʿAbd al-Muttalib

After the death of Aminah, the Prophet ﷺ came into the care of his grandfather 'Abd al-Muttalib. (Ibn Hisham) 'Abd al-Muttalib was the leading man of Makkah, and, as told in Part 2, 'Abdullah, the boy's father, had been his son whom he had once vowed to sacrifice and then ransomed with a hundred camels. (Ibn Hisham)

### The mat in the shade of the Ka'bah

Ibn Ishaq describes the place the boy had with his grandfather. A mat used to be spread for 'Abd al-Muttalib in the shade of the Ka'bah, and his sons would sit around the edge of it until he came out; none of his sons would sit on it, out of respect for him. (Ibn Hisham) The Prophet ﷺ, then a sturdy young boy, would come and sit on it, and his uncles would take hold of him to move him off. When 'Abd al-Muttalib saw this he would say: "Leave my son. By Allah, he will have a great affair." (Ibn Hisham) Then he would seat him beside him on the mat, stroke his back with his hand, and be pleased with what he saw him do. (Ibn Hisham)

### Other reports

Ibn Sa'd records further reports of 'Abd al-Muttalib's attachment to the boy, among them that he once sent him out to look for some stray camels, and that when he was slow in returning 'Abd al-Muttalib was greatly distressed and went round the Ka'bah praying for his return, until he came back with the camels. (Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat) Ibn Sa'd also reports that 'Abd al-Muttalib would not eat a meal until the boy was brought to him. (Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat) These are reports of the biographers and are recorded as such.

CHAPTER 9

# The Death of ʿAbd al-Muttalib

The Prophet ﷺ was eight years old when 'Abd al-Muttalib died. (Ibn Hisham) Ibn Ishaq says: "When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was eight years old, eight years after the Year of the Elephant, 'Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hashim died." (Ibn Hisham) The historians give 'Abd al-Muttalib's age at his death variously, with figures ranging from about eighty to more than a hundred years. (Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah)

### The elegies of his daughters

Ibn Ishaq reports that when 'Abd al-Muttalib was near death and knew it, he gathered his six daughters — Safiyyah, Barrah, 'Atikah, Umm Hakim al-Bayda', Umaymah and Arwa — and said to them: "Weep for me, so that I may hear what you will say before I die." (Ibn Hisham) Each of them recited an elegy for him, and Ibn Ishaq records the verses of all six. (Ibn Hisham)

### His burial

Ibn Sa'd reports that 'Abd al-Muttalib was buried at al-Hajun, the burial ground of Makkah, and that Umm Ayman used to say she saw the Prophet ﷺ that day weeping behind his grandfather's bier. (Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat)

### His offices

Ibn Ishaq reports that after 'Abd al-Muttalib's death the office of giving water to the pilgrims (*as-siqayah*), together with the care of Zamzam, passed to his son al-'Abbas, who held it until the coming of Islam; the Prophet ﷺ confirmed him in it. (Ibn Hisham)

### "The son of 'Abd al-Muttalib"

The Prophet ﷺ remained closely identified with his grandfather throughout his life, and the Arabs often called him by his grandfather's name rather than his father's. When the Bedouin Dimam ibn Tha'labah came to Madinah to question him, he addressed him as "Son of 'Abd al-Muttalib". (Bukhari 63) At the Battle of Hunayn, when the Muslim ranks broke and he stood his ground, the Prophet ﷺ himself called out: "I am the Prophet, it is no lie; I am the son of 'Abd al-Muttalib." (Bukhari 2864; Muslim 1776)

### The bequest to Abu Talib

Ibn Ishaq reports that 'Abd al-Muttalib, before his death, entrusted the boy to his son Abu Talib, because Abu Talib and 'Abdullah, the boy's father, were full brothers, both born of Fatimah bint 'Amr of Banu Makhzum. (Ibn Hisham) From this time Abu Talib became his guardian, and remained his protector for more than forty years, until his own death in the tenth year of prophethood, as will be told in Part 13. (Ibn Hisham; Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum)

CHAPTER 10

## Abu Talib

The Qur'an later recalled the Prophet's ﷺ orphanhood and the care he received in it: "Did He not find you an orphan and give you shelter?" Ibn Kathir explains the verse with reference to the death of his father before his birth and of his mother when he was six, and to the care of his grandfather and then of his uncle Abu Talib. (Qur'an Ad-Duha 93:6; Ibn Kathir, Tafsir)

Abu Talib's name was 'Abd Manaf; he was known by the kunyah taken from his eldest son, Talib. (Ibn Hisham) He was one of the most respected men of Banu Hashim, but he was not wealthy, and he had a large family to support. (Ibn Hisham; Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat)

## His household

His wife was Fatimah bint Asad ibn Hashim, who was herself of Banu Hashim. (Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat) Their sons were Talib, 'Aqil, Ja'far and 'Ali, and their daughters included Umm Hani', whose name is given as Fakhitah, and Jumanah. (Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah) Into this household the Prophet ﷺ came at the age of eight.

## His affection for the boy

Ibn Sa'd reports that Abu Talib loved him with an intense love, more than he loved his own children; that he would not sleep unless the boy was beside him; and that he took him with him whenever he went out. (Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat) Ibn Sa'd also reports that when the family of Abu Talib ate, whether together or separately, they did not eat their fill, but when the Prophet ﷺ ate with them they were satisfied, so that Abu Talib would tell them to wait until his son came. (Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat) These are reports of the biographers.

## The poverty of Abu Talib

Abu Talib's lack of means is reflected in a report of Ibn Ishaq from the time just before the revelation: in a year of hardship that struck Quraysh, the Prophet ﷺ proposed to his uncle al-'Abbas that each of them should take one of Abu Talib's sons into his own household to lighten his burden, and so the Prophet ﷺ took 'Ali and al-'Abbas took Ja'far. (Ibn Hisham) That event is told in its place in Part 8.

Abu Talib never accepted Islam, but he protected his nephew against Quraysh through all the years of the call in Makkah. That protection, the boycott that Banu Hashim endured with him, and his death are told in Parts 9 to 13. (Ibn Hisham)

## Abu Talib's verse

Abu Talib's attachment to his nephew is reflected in his poetry. Among his verses is the line, quoted by 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar when he recalled the Prophet ﷺ praying for rain: "A fair one by whose face the clouds are asked for rain, a refuge for orphans and a protector of widows." (Sahih al-Bukhari; Ibn Hisham) Ibn Ishaq records the long poem in which this line occurs, which Abu Talib composed later, during the years of persecution in Makkah. (Ibn Hisham)

CHAPTER 11

# The Journey to Sham and the Monk Bahira

The best-known event of the Prophet's ﷺ boyhood under Abu Talib's care is his journey with his uncle to Sham and his meeting with the Christian monk known as Bahira. (Ibn Hisham; Tirmidhi 3620)

## His age

Most biographers say that he was twelve years old at the time; Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum gives twelve years, two months and ten days. (Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat; Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum) Another report gives his age as nine. (Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah)

## Setting out

Ibn Ishaq reports that Abu Talib set out with a trading caravan to Sham. When he was ready to leave, the boy clung to him, and Abu Talib was moved and said: "By Allah, I will take him with me; he shall never be parted from me, nor I from him." So he took him with him. (Ibn Hisham)

## Busra and the monk

When the caravan reached Busra, a market town of Sham — today Bosra in southern Syria — they stopped near the cell of a monk named Bahira, who was learned in the scripture of the Christians. (Ibn Hisham) Ibn Ishaq says that there had always been a monk in that cell, and that the knowledge of the monks passed from one to another through a book that was kept there. (Ibn Hisham) Some sources give Bahira's own name as Jirjis. (al-Suhayli, ar-Rawd al-Unuf)

Busra was the first large town that caravans from the Hijaz reached on entering Roman Sham, and a regular market for the merchants of Quraysh. (Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah) It appears more than once in the Seerah: Ibn Ishaq reports that Aminah saw, in the light that came out of her, the palaces of Busra, as told in Part 3; and years later the Prophet's ﷺ letter to the Roman emperor Heraclius was delivered by Dihyah al-Kalbi to the governor of Busra, who sent it on to the emperor. (Ibn Hisham; Bukhari 7)

The caravans of Quraysh had often passed by him before, and he had never spoken to them or paid them any attention. That year, Ibn Ishaq reports, he prepared a large meal for them, because from his cell he had seen the Prophet ﷺ among the riders with a cloud shading him from the sun; and when the caravan stopped in the shade of a tree near the cell, he saw the cloud shading the tree, and the branches of the tree bending down over the Prophet ﷺ until he was in their shade. (Ibn Hisham)

## The meal

Bahira sent word to the caravan: "I have prepared food for you, men of Quraysh, and I would like all of you to come, young and old, slave and free." One of them said: "By Allah, Bahira, something has happened to you today; you never used to do this for us when we passed by you." He said: "You are right, but you are guests, and I wished to honour you." (Ibn Hisham) They all came, but they left the Prophet ﷺ behind with their baggage under the tree, because he was the youngest of them. (Ibn Hisham)

When Bahira looked at the company and did not see among them the description he knew, he said: "Let none of you stay behind from my meal." They told him that no one had stayed behind except a boy, the youngest of them, who was with their baggage. He said: "Do not do that; call him to eat with you." One of the men of Quraysh said: "It is a shame on us that the son of 'Abdullah ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib should be left out of the meal," and he went and brought him and seated him with the others. (Ibn Hisham)

## The questions

Ibn Ishaq reports that Bahira watched him closely, looking for features of his body that he found in the description he knew. When they had eaten and dispersed, Bahira went to him and said: "Boy, I ask you by al-Lat and al-'Uzza to tell me what I ask you." Ibn Ishaq explains that Bahira said this only because he had heard his people swear by them. (Ibn Hisham) The Prophet ﷺ said: "Do not ask me by al-Lat and al-'Uzza. By Allah, nothing is more hateful to me than they are." (Ibn Hisham) Bahira said: "Then by Allah, tell me what I ask you." He said: "Ask me what you wish." (Ibn Hisham)

Bahira asked him about his sleep, his appearance and his affairs, and his answers agreed with the description Bahira knew. Then he looked at his back and saw the seal of prophethood between his shoulders, in the place where he expected it. (Ibn Hisham)

## The seal of prophethood

The seal of prophethood (*khatam an-nubuwwah*), which Bahira is reported to have looked for, is described in the authentic hadith. As-Sa'ib ibn Yazid said that he stood behind the Prophet ﷺ and saw the seal between his shoulders, like the button of a curtained canopy. (Bukhari 190) Jabir ibn Samurah described it as being like the egg of a pigeon, of the same colour as his body. (Muslim 2344)

## The warning to Abu Talib

Bahira then asked Abu Talib: "What is this boy to you?" Abu Talib said: "My son." Bahira said: "He is not your son. It cannot be that the father of this boy is alive." Abu Talib said: "He is my brother's son." "What happened to his father?" "He died while the boy's mother

was carrying him." Bahira said: "You have told the truth. Take your nephew back to his land, and guard him against the Jews; for by Allah, if they see him and recognise in him what I have recognised, they will seek to harm him. A great affair lies ahead for this nephew of yours, so take him home quickly." (Ibn Hisham) Abu Talib completed his trade in Sham and then took him back quickly to Makkah. (Ibn Hisham)

Ibn Ishaq adds that, according to what people relate, three men of the People of the Book had seen in him what Bahira saw and wanted to harm him, and Bahira turned them back, reminding them of what they found in their scripture. (Ibn Hisham)

## The hadith in at-Tirmidhi

The story is also recorded with a chain by at-Tirmidhi, from Abu Musa al-Ash'ari. In this version, when the caravan stopped near the monk he came out to them, though he had never come out to them before, took the Prophet ﷺ by the hand and said: "This is the master of the worlds; this is the messenger of the Lord of the worlds, whom Allah will send as a mercy to the worlds." (Tirmidhi 3620) When the elders of Quraysh asked him how he knew this, he said that when they came over the pass, every tree and stone fell down in prostration, and they prostrate only to a prophet; and that he recognised him by the seal of prophethood below his shoulder-blade, like an apple. (Tirmidhi 3620)

The hadith goes on to tell that the monk prepared food for them; that the Prophet ﷺ was out with the camels, and when he came he had a cloud shading him; and that when he sat down, the shade of the tree inclined over him. (Tirmidhi 3620) It then relates that seven men came from the Romans seeking a prophet whom they expected to appear that month, and that the monk persuaded them to turn back; and that he urged the elders to take the boy home, until Abu Talib sent him back. (Tirmidhi 3620)

At-Tirmidhi graded the hadith *hasan gharib*, and al-Hakim graded it authentic. (Tirmidhi 3620; al-Hakim, al-Mustadrak) The scholars, however, criticised one phrase at its end, which says that "Abu Bakr sent Bilal with him". Al-Dhahabi pointed out that Abu Bakr was then a child, and that Bilal had not yet been bought by Abu Bakr, and he judged that part of the hadith to be objectionable (*munkar*). (al-Dhahabi, Tarikh al-Islam) Ibn al-Qayyim also described the mention of Abu Bakr and Bilal as a mistake, and Ibn Hajar said that the narrators of the hadith are reliable but that this phrase is likely to have entered it in error from another report. (Ibn al-Qayyim, Zad al-Ma'ad; Ibn Hajar, al-Isabah) The core of the story — the journey with Abu Talib, the monk's recognition of him, and his warning — is accepted by the biographers; the phrase about Abu Bakr and Bilal is not. (Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah; Ibn al-Qayyim, Zad al-Ma'ad)



Busra, in today's southern Syria, a market town on the caravan road.

CHAPTER 12

# The Shepherd of Makkah

Like the other boys of Makkah who were not of wealthy families, the Prophet ﷺ worked as a shepherd in his youth. He himself spoke of it. (Bukhari 2262)

## The hadith of Abu Hurayrah

> *Allah did not send any prophet except that he herded sheep. His Companions said: "And you?" He said: "Yes. I used to herd them for the people of Makkah for qirats."*
> Bukhari 2262

The Qur'an itself mentions the herding of flocks by earlier prophets. Musa says of his staff: "I lean upon it, and with it I beat down leaves for my sheep." (Qur'an Ta-Ha 20:18) And in Madyan he agreed to work for the old man whose daughter he married for eight years, or ten if he chose to complete them; the commentators explain that this work was the tending of his flocks. (Qur'an Al-Qasas 28:27; Ibn Kathir, Tafsir)

## The meaning of *qirats*

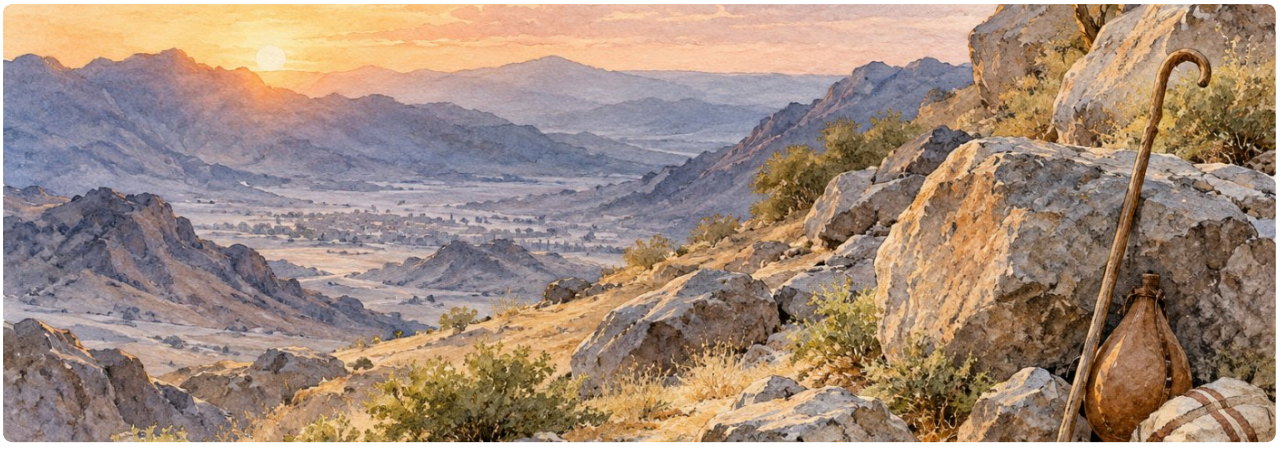
The scholars differ on the meaning of *qirats* in this hadith. Most understood it as a small unit of money, a fraction of a dinar or dirham, meaning that he herded the sheep of the people of Makkah for a small wage. (Ibn Hajar, Fath al-Bari) Others, among them Ibrahim al-Harbi, held that Qararit was the name of a place near Makkah where he grazed the flocks. Ibn Hajar preferred the first view, noting that the people of Makkah did not know of a place by that name. (Ibn Hajar, Fath al-Bari)

### The black berries of the arak tree

Jabir ibn 'Abdullah reports that the Companions were with the Prophet ﷺ at Marr az-Zahran gathering the berries of the arak tree, and he said: "Take the black ones, for they are the best." They said: "Were you a shepherd?" He said: "Is there any prophet who was not a shepherd?" (Bukhari 3406; Muslim 2050) The knowledge of which berries were ripe was a shepherd's knowledge, gained while grazing flocks among such trees. (Ibn Hajar, Fath al-Bari)

### Earlier, among Banu Sa'd

The reports of his childhood among Banu Sa'd, given in Chapter 5, already show him as a small boy out with his foster brother tending the lambs behind the tents. (Ibn Hisham) His work as a shepherd in Makkah continued this, and it was one of the ways in which he supported himself while living in the household of his uncle. (Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum)



The hills around Makkah, where he herded sheep for its people.

CHAPTER 13

## Kept Apart from the Ways of Jahiliyyah

The biographers record that in his youth the Prophet ﷺ took no part in the idolatry and the vices that were common among the young men of Makkah. (Ibn Hisham; Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum) The refusal to swear by al-Lat and al-'Uzza, which Ibn Ishaq records from the meeting with Bahira, is one example. (Ibn Hisham)

### The report of the wedding

A report transmitted through Ibn Ishaq and recorded by al-Hakim and al-Bayhaqi relates from 'Ali ibn Abi Talib that he heard the Prophet ﷺ say that he had never intended to do any of the things the people of Jahiliyyah used to do, except on two occasions, and that each time Allah came between him and it. (al-Hakim, al-Mustadrak; al-Bayhaqi, Dala'il an-Nubuwwah; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah) In this report he said that one night, while he was herding sheep with a boy of Quraysh in the upper part of

Makkah, he asked the boy to watch his flock so that he could go into Makkah and spend the evening as the young men did. When he reached the first house of Makkah he heard music and was told that a wedding was being held. He sat down to listen, and Allah closed his ears so that he fell asleep, and nothing woke him but the heat of the sun the next morning. The same happened on a second night, and after that he never again intended anything of the kind until Allah honoured him with prophethood. (al-Bayhaqi, Dala'il an-Nubuwwah; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah)

Al-Hakim graded this report authentic, but Ibn Kathir described it as very unusual (*gharib jiddan*), and other scholars have judged its chain weak. (al-Hakim, al-Mustadrak; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah) It is recorded here as a report.

### At the rebuilding of the Ka'bah

An authentic hadith records a similar incident from the time when Quraysh rebuilt the Ka'bah, when the Prophet ﷺ was carrying stones with his uncle al-'Abbas. Al-'Abbas told him to put his waist-wrapper over his shoulder to protect it from the stones, and when he did so he fell to the ground, his eyes turned to the sky, and he called for his wrapper until it was tied on him again. (Bukhari 364) That event belongs to the rebuilding of the Ka'bah, and is told in Part 5.

CHAPTER 14

## The War of al-Fijar

In the Prophet's ﷺ youth a war broke out between Quraysh, with their allies of Kinanah, and the tribes of Qays 'Aylan, among them Hawazin. It was called the war of *al-Fijar*, "the war of wickedness", because in it the sanctity of the sacred months was violated. (Ibn Hisham; Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum)

### The sacred months

The Arabs before Islam observed four sacred months, in which fighting was forbidden among them: Dhul-Qa'dah, Dhul-Hijjah and Muharram, which came together, and Rajab, which stood alone. (Bukhari 4662) The Qur'an confirmed their sanctity: "The number of months with Allah is twelve months in the Book of Allah, from the day He created the heavens and the earth; of them, four are sacred." (Qur'an At-Tawbah 9:36) The great fairs of 'Ukaz, Majannah and Dhul-Majaz were held in these months, so that the tribes could travel to them and trade without fear, as described in Part 1. (Ibn Hisham) To kill a man in a sacred month, and especially on the way to a fair, was regarded as a grave violation. (Ibn Hisham; Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum)

### Four Fijar wars

The historians count four wars of this name between the tribes of the Hijaz. The first three were small affairs; the fourth, in which the Prophet ﷺ was present, was the largest, and it is the one usually meant when the war of al-Fijar is mentioned. (Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat; Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum)

### The cause

Ibn Ishaq reports that the cause of the war was the killing of 'Urwah ar-Rahhal ibn 'Utbah of Hawazin by al-Barrad ibn Qays of Kinanah. (Ibn Hisham) 'Urwah had undertaken to give protection to a trading caravan which an-Nu'man ibn al-Mundhir, the king of al-Hirah, was sending to the fair of 'Ukaz. Al-Barrad said to him: "Will you protect it even against Kinanah?" 'Urwah said: "Yes, and against all creation." Al-Barrad followed him and killed him, and he did so in a sacred month. (Ibn Hisham)

### The fighting

The news reached Quraysh at 'Ukaz, and they left for Makkah. Hawazin pursued them and overtook them before they reached the sanctuary, and they fought until nightfall; then Quraysh entered the sanctuary and Hawazin held back from them. (Ibn Hisham) The two sides fought on a number of days afterwards. (Ibn Hisham) Ibn Ishaq reports that Quraysh and Kinanah were led by Harb ibn Umayyah, the father of Abu Sufyan, because of his age and standing, and that each clan of Quraysh was led by its own chief. (Ibn Hisham) According to the historians the war went first against Quraysh and then in their favour, and it ended in a truce in which the dead of both sides were counted and blood-money was paid for those who exceeded the other side's dead. (Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah)

### The Prophet's ﷺ part

Ibn Hisham reports that the Prophet ﷺ was present on some of the days of the war, that his uncles took him out with them, and that he said: "I used to gather up the arrows for my uncles," meaning that he collected the enemy's arrows that fell among them and handed them back to his uncles. (Ibn Hisham)

His age at the time is given differently. Ibn Ishaq says that the war of al-Fijar broke out when the Prophet ﷺ was twenty years old; Ibn Hisham reports from Abu 'Ubaydah that he was fourteen or fifteen. (Ibn Hisham) Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum gives fifteen. (Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum)

CHAPTER 15

# Hilf al-Fudul

Shortly after the war of al-Fijar, several clans of Quraysh made a pact to defend anyone wronged in Makkah. It became known as *Hilf al-Fudul*, and the Prophet ﷺ was present at it. (Ibn Hisham; Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum) Ibn Sa'd and others place it in the month of Dhul-Qa'dah, one of the sacred months, after Quraysh returned from al-Fijar, when the Prophet ﷺ was about twenty. (Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat; Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum)

## The man from Zabid

The historians report that the occasion of the pact was the wrong done to a merchant from Zabid in Yemen. (Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah; Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum) He came to Makkah with goods and sold them to al-'As ibn Wa'il of Banu Sahm, who took the goods and withheld the price. (Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah; Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum) The Zabidi sought help from the clans allied with Banu Sahm — 'Abd ad-Dar, Makhzum, Jumah, Sahm and 'Adi — but they refused to act against al-'As because of his standing. (Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah) He then climbed the hill of Abu Qubays overlooking the Ka'bah, at a time when Quraysh were gathered in their assemblies around it, and called out in verse to the people of Fihr to help a man wronged of his goods in the midst of Makkah. (Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah; Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum) Az-Zubayr ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib, the Prophet's ﷺ uncle, stood up and said: "Is there no one to help this man?" (Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah)

## The meeting in the house of Ibn Jud'an

Ibn Ishaq reports that the clans who agreed to the pact gathered in the house of 'Abdullah ibn Jud'an of Banu Taym, because of his age and standing, and that he prepared food for them. (Ibn Hisham) The clans were:

| CLAN | NOTE |
|---|---|
| **Banu Hashim** | The clan of the Prophet ﷺ and of az-Zubayr ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib. (Ibn Hisham) |
| **Banu al-Muttalib** | The brothers' clan of Banu Hashim, descended from al-Muttalib ibn 'Abd Manaf. (Ibn Hisham) |
| **Banu Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzza** | The clan of Khuwaylid, the father of Khadijah. (Ibn Hisham) |
| **Banu Zuhrah ibn Kilab** | The clan of Aminah bint Wahb. (Ibn Hisham) |
| **Banu Taym ibn Murrah** | The clan of 'Abdullah ibn Jud'an, in whose house they met. (Ibn Hisham) |

Ibn Ishaq reports that they agreed and bound themselves by covenant that they would not find anyone wronged in Makkah, whether of its own people or of those who came into it from elsewhere, without standing with him against the one who had wronged him until his right was returned to him; and Quraysh called this alliance *Hilf al-Fudul*. (Ibn Hisham) The historians add that they then went to al-'As ibn Wa'il, took from him the goods of the Zabidi and returned them to him. (Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah)

## The name

The historians give different explanations of the name. One is that, long before, in the days when the tribe of Jurhum held Makkah, three men each named al-Fadl had made a similar pact, and the new alliance was named after theirs. (al-Suhayli, ar-Rawd al-Unuf; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah) Another is that the members pledged to return to the owners the "surplus" (*fudul*) of what had been taken from them, or that it was so called because of the virtue (*fadl*) of what they undertook. (al-Suhayli, ar-Rawd al-Unuf; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah)

## The Prophet's ﷺ words about it

Ibn Ishaq reports, through Talhah ibn 'Abdullah ibn 'Awf az-Zuhri, that the Prophet ﷺ said:

> *I witnessed in the house of ʻAbdullah ibn Judʻan an alliance which I would not exchange for red camels; and if I were called to it in Islam, I would respond.*
>
> Ibn Hisham (from Ibn Ishaq)

Red camels were the most valuable possession among the Arabs. (Ibn Hajar, Fath al-Bari) 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn 'Awf reports that the Prophet ﷺ said: "I witnessed with my uncles, when I was a boy, the alliance of the Mutayyabin, and I would not wish to have red camels and break it." (Musnad Ahmad 1655) The alliance of the Mutayyabin, "the perfumed ones", was the alliance made between the clans of 'Abd Manaf and their allies in their dispute with the clan of 'Abd ad-Dar over the offices of the Ka'bah, long before the Prophet's ﷺ birth, as told in Part 2. (Ibn Hisham) Al-Bayhaqi and others therefore explained that the alliance meant in this hadith is Hilf al-Fudul, which was made by the same clans who had formed the Mutayyabin, and which the Prophet ﷺ did witness. (al-Bayhaqi, Dala'il an-Nubuwwah; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah)

In another hadith, the Prophet ﷺ said: "There is no alliance in Islam; and whatever alliance existed in Jahiliyyah, Islam only adds to its strength." (Muslim 2530) The scholars explain that alliances to support the wronged and uphold what is right, such as Hilf al-Fudul, are of the kind that Islam confirmed. (Ibn Hajar, Fath al-Bari)

### 'Abdullah ibn Jud'an

'Abdullah ibn Jud'an was one of the wealthiest and most generous men of Quraysh, famous for feeding people. (Ibn Hisham; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah) 'A'ishah asked the Prophet ﷺ about him: "Ibn Jud'an used, in the Jahiliyyah, to keep the ties of kinship and feed the poor; will that benefit him?" He said: "It will not benefit him; he never once said: My Lord, forgive me my sins on the Day of Judgement." (Muslim 214)

### Hilf al-Fudul after Islam

Ibn Ishaq records that the memory of the pact lasted into Islam. He reports that a dispute arose over some property between al-Husayn ibn 'Ali and al-Walid ibn 'Utbah ibn Abi Sufyan, then governor of Madinah, and that al-Husayn said he would take his sword, stand in the Mosque of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and call people to Hilf al-Fudul. (Ibn Hisham) 'Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr said that if he were called to it he would answer, and other men of the clans of the pact said the same, and when al-Walid heard this he gave al-Husayn his right. (Ibn Hisham) This is a report of Ibn Ishaq's.



A gathering in the house of ʻAbdullah ibn Judʻan.

CHAPTER 16

## Trade and the Name al-Amin

As he grew into a man, the Prophet ﷺ turned to trade, the main occupation of Quraysh. (Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum) He had first seen the trade of Sham as a boy with Abu Talib, and he later traded on his own account and in partnership with others. (Ibn Hisham; Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum)

### As-Sa'ib ibn Abi as-Sa'ib

One of his partners before Islam was as-Sa'ib ibn Abi as-Sa'ib of Banu Makhzum. As-Sa'ib reports that when he came to the Prophet ﷺ after Islam, people began praising him and mentioning him, and the Prophet ﷺ said: "I know him better than you." As-Sa'ib said: "You

are right — may my father and mother be ransomed for you — you were my partner, and what an excellent partner you were: you never contended with me and never disputed with me." (Abu Dawud 4836)

## A report about keeping a promise

'Abdullah ibn Abi al-Hamsa' is reported to have said that before the Prophet ﷺ was sent, he made a sale with him and still owed him something, and promised to bring it to him at a certain place; he forgot, and remembered only three days later, and found the Prophet ﷺ still in that place, who said to him: "You have put me to trouble; I have been here for three days waiting for you." (Abu Dawud 4996) Its chain is weak; al-Albani and other scholars graded it weak, and it is recorded here only as a report. (Abu Dawud 4996)

## The name al-Amin

By his early manhood the Prophet ﷺ had become known among Quraysh for truthfulness and trustworthiness. Ibn Ishaq says that before revelation came to him, Quraysh used to call him *al-Amin*, "the trustworthy". (Ibn Hisham) When the clans of Quraysh later disputed over who should replace the Black Stone in the rebuilt Ka'bah, and he was the first to enter, they said: "This is al-Amin; we are content with him." (Ibn Hisham) That event is told in Part 5.

The same reputation is attested by those who later opposed him. When he called Quraysh from the hill of as-Safa after the revelation and asked them whether they would believe him if he told them that horsemen were in the valley about to attack them, they said: "Yes; we have never experienced anything from you but truthfulness." (Bukhari 4770) When Heraclius questioned Abu Sufyan, then still the Prophet's ﷺ enemy, he asked: "Did you ever accuse him of lying before he said what he said?" Abu Sufyan answered: "No." Heraclius asked: "Does he betray?" and Abu Sufyan said: "No." (Bukhari 7)

## The early years in summary

| AGE | EVENT |
|---|---|
| **Birth** | Born in Makkah in the Year of the Elephant; nursed by Aminah and Thuwaybah. (Ibn Hisham; Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat) |
| **0–2** | Nursed by Halimah among Banu Sa'd; returned briefly to Aminah, then taken back. (Ibn Hisham) |
| **About 2–5** | The opening of the chest among Banu Sa'd; returned to his mother. (Muslim 162; Ibn Hisham; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa an-Nihayah) |
| **6** | Journey to Yathrib with Aminah and Umm Ayman; Aminah's death at al-Abwa'. (Ibn Hisham; Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat) |
| **8** | Death of 'Abd al-Muttalib; guardianship of Abu Talib begins. (Ibn Hisham) |
| **9 or 12** | Journey to Sham with Abu Talib; the monk Bahira at Busra. (Ibn Hisham; Tirmidhi 3620; Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtum) |
| **Youth** | Herding sheep for the people of Makkah. (Bukhari 2262) |
| **14/15 or 20** | The war of al-Fijar. (Ibn Hisham) |
| **About 20** | Hilf al-Fudul in the house of 'Abdullah ibn Jud'an. (Ibn Hisham; Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabaqat) |

## The trade of Quraysh

The trade of Quraysh was carried on in large caravans to Sham in summer and to Yemen in winter, as told in Part 2, and many people of Makkah, including women of means, invested their goods in these caravans. (Qur'an Quraysh 106:1–2; Ibn Hisham) Ibn Ishaq reports that it was the practice of some merchants of Makkah to hire men to take their goods and trade with them on their behalf, in return for a share of the profit. (Ibn Hisham) A young man of a noble but not wealthy family, like the Prophet ﷺ, could make his way in trade by such arrangements and by partnerships of the kind he had with as-Sa'ib ibn Abi as-Sa'ib. (Ibn Hisham; Abu Dawud 4836)

In the years that followed, his reputation for honesty in trade led Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, a merchant woman of Banu Asad, to entrust her goods to him for a journey to Sham, which led in turn to their marriage. That story is told in Part 5. (Ibn Hisham)

*Part 5: Khadijah and the Rebuilding of the Ka'bah.*

## Sources

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Qur'an and hadith are given in English meaning. Please refer to the Arabic in the mushaf and the books of hadith.