

performed a pilgrimage completely unmolested. But soon his clan the Quraysh broke their end of the deal, massacring another clan with alliance to the Prophet (p) attacking them even in the sacred precinct. Abu Sufyan, the head of the Prophet's enemies, attempted to restore the truce but it was too late. News of the massacre enraged the believers. The Prophet (p) summoned the Muslims capable of bearing arms to march on Mecca. When nearly ten thousand Muslims arrived on the outskirts of the city, the Quraysh realized they did not stand a chance and people either fled or stayed in their homes.

And so it was, after years of persecution, the Prophet (p) marched triumphant into the city of his birth at the head of the largest army ever assembled in Arabian history. With his head bowed in humility he declared a general amnesty and granted war criminals refuge. His overwhelming magnanimity of character led to a mass conversion among the citizens of Mecca. Even Abu Sufyan, his archenemy, embraced the religion of Islam. In the months that followed, almost all of Arabia dispatched representatives to swear allegiance to Muhammad (p) and to enter in the faith of Islam. In a period of twenty-three years the Prophet (p), had succeeded in uniting a feuding people trapped in cycles of violence into one people with a sense of destiny and a mission that would transform the world.

He elevated the low, and he lowered the elevated that they might meet in that middle place known as brotherhood. He infused in them a love of learning unleashing a creative power that would lead to extraordinary scientific breakthroughs in history.

He died on the same day he was born, in the same house he had lived in for ten years in Medina, on a small bed made of leather stuffed with palm fibres, in the arms of his wife Aishah. His dying words were, "Treat your women well; do not oppress your servants, the prayer, the prayer, don't be neglectful of the prayer. O God, my highest companion, O highest companion."

The Prophet (p) was more than just a great historical person, he was a father and friend, a husband, a companion and above all he was a human being. The Prophet's unique physical appearance, his high character and willingness to sacrifice for others, are often at the essence of any description of him. He was once described by a contemporary in the following words: "The Prophet (p) was imposing & majestic. His face was luminous like a full moon. He was taller than medium but not excessive in height. He had wavy hair, which he parted and it never went beyond his

shoulders. He was light-skinned with a high brow. He had full eyebrows and a small space between them. He had a fine, aquiline nose. His beard was full, his eyes black. His physique was supple and lithe, with a full chest & broad shoulders. When he walked, he was determined and his pace was as if he was walking downhill.

When he spoke he was always brief and reflective. He spoke when he saw benefit and spent long periods in silent contemplation. His speech was comprehensive being **neither wordy nor laconic**. He had a mild temperament and was never harsh nor cruel, coarse nor rude. He expressed gratitude for everything given to him no matter how insignificant. He did not flatter people but praised them when appropriate.

People entered his gatherings as seekers and left enlightened. He would ask about his companions when they were absent often making inquiries about people's needs. He never reserved a special place for himself in a gathering and sat where space was provided. He gave each of those who sat with him such full attention that everyone felt that he was the most important person in that gathering. Voices were never raised in his presence. The aged were respected for their age and the young were shown compassion for their youth.

The Quran reminds Muslims that when they are slandered by those who reject them they should bear it patiently & be forgiving. The Prophet (p) did. Let's yearn for a deeper understanding of this man, his gentleness towards children, his love of animals, his concern for the weak and oppressed, his sense of justice tempered always with mercy. The Quran & his words invigorated the eye of the soul & purified the intellect from blindness. A greater good never came, nor ever will come again to mankind. He was a surge of bliss, purity and sweet words. His kind heart was a fountain of gladness, making everything in its vicinity freshen into smiles.

Why is your face so stiff, even in a picture? Let's learn to laugh. Like he did. Come on. **Hahaha, hohoho**. Feels good doesn't it? Again, one more time...what a lovely smile...a flash of ecstasy. Some charity...smileee. Look...the corners of your mouth are pointing toward the heavens. God's Throne rocks with laughter. Gibran's timeless poetry explains the balanced beauty of our Prophet (p): "I would that my life remain a tear and a smile. A tear to unite me with those of broken heart; A smile to be a sign of my joy in existence."

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Certainly you are the most Sublime Character *Beloved*

You would love the Prophet's humour. He said: "I joke **but** always tell the truth." Aishah said, "He always made us laugh at home." One of his names is *ad-dahhak* – **the smiling one**. His humour & cheerfulness even in the face of the most difficult of times is so needed today in our troubled world. Just imagine him telling those of us who **don't laugh enough** to lighten up, to show more gratitude even in what appears to be difficulties. And as for those who **laugh too much** and do so inappropriately, he would ask that they reflect deeper on the condition of humanity & nurture compassion in their hearts.

"Those who sin while laughing enter hell crying," he said. An old woman asked him if she would enter paradise & he replied, "**Old people don't go to heaven!**" The woman was crestfallen with the answer he had provided, to which he added with a smile, "You shall enter paradise in the prime of your youth." The Arabs believed dates made eye infections worse. His companion Suhayb was eating dates while his **left** eye was infected. The Prophet (p) said, "Suhayb do you eat dates & your eye is infected?" To which Suhayb said, "I am eating with my **right** eye only, O Messenger." To which the Prophet (p) laughed heartily. A desert Bedouin came into the mosque & prayed out loud saying, "O God forgive me & Muhammad & don't forgive anyone else." Hearing this the Prophet (p) laughed & said, "You are limiting the vast mercy of God." **Fun might not be a term that comes to mind often when considering religion.** Especially when we see those whose faces are warped by "**religiosity.**" We know Jesus (p) wept & was angry but no record exists of events that made him laugh. We should feel so incredibly grateful & blessed to have come to know the easygoing Prophet (p), to learn the **art of living** from him. We should feel indebted to him for the wisdom he has given us in making sense of our lives & our world. For the Believers across the world & through all times he is, indeed,

The Beloved. And as occasions warranted he wept & was angry too.

What a perfected human & exalted soul!

You have in the Messenger of God an Excellent Pattern of Behaviour

It was only sent to perfect noble character, said the man declared as a “mercy to all the worlds.” His religion has been hijacked by some for their own ends distorting his message, forgetting that he was indeed a mercy to all the worlds. Politeness & courtesy, compassion & tenderness, simplicity & humility, sympathy & sincerity were some of the keynotes of his character. We are troubled by the media’s portrayal of him sometimes in the worst of lights. How could the man be so vilified & maligned by those who claim to represent him & by those who aim to be unbiased interpreters?

Muhammad, peace be upon him, was a shy, reticent man who lived among his people with such high moral character they called him al-Amin – the Trustworthy. The Prophet of Islam was born in the city of Mecca, Arabia, into a poor but noble branch of an aristocratic clan known as Quraysh, a people who despised treachery, lies and stupidity, while honouring bravery in battle and cleverness in poetry. The religion of the Arabs at the time was a hodge-podge of superstition, divination & idolatry. To them, man’s life ended with his death. His life, based on military exploits, might be immortalized by a poet’s tongue.

Let’s study this man who was “sent as a giver of glad tidings.” The Prophet Muhammad (p), was born into this world on April 9th, 570, Christian era in the lunar month of Rabi’a al-Awwal. His father, Abdallah died during his mother’s pregnancy. For the first four years he was raised in the relative purity of the desert by a Bedouin woman named Halimah. After which he returned to his mother, Aminah. But in his seventh year, his mother died leaving him in the care of his grandfather.

At the age of twenty-five, he was employed as a commercial agent by Lady Khadijah, a successful widow from his own clan. She soon recognized his honesty and good nature and proposed marriage. Although fifteen years younger than she was, he accepted her proposal, and fathered six of his seven children with her.

At the age of forty, it had become his custom to escape the idolatry of Meccan society by seeking

solitude in a cave on the mountain known as “the Mountain of Light.” In the solitary confines of the small cave a voice pierced his consciousness declaring: “Recite!” Alarmed, shivering he fled to his wife, begging her to wrap him in a cloak. He feared for his sanity, concerned that a desert spirit might be pursuing him. More revelations soon followed & Muhammad (p) came to the understanding that he was not only a prophet in a long line of prophets, but that he was the last of them who was sent with a universal message. As the days passed his revelations increased. They were powerfully rhythmic punctuated with intoxicating messages that challenged listeners to reflect on everyday miracles such as the alternation of the night and day. These revelations revealed to Muhammad (p), came to be known as the Quran. For thirteen years he invited his clan to worship one God, sit with slaves in spiritual solidarity, respect women as soul-full equals and the source of human mercy, care for the widow, the orphan, the weak and the oppressed.

People ridiculed his message & accused him of attempting “to make the gods one.” **His message threatened his people’s financial control of the markets of Mecca where pilgrims from all over Arabia came to spend their wealth.**

When his clan failed to stop his preaching they plotted to kill him in his sleep. But he was warned & told to flee in the cover of darkness to Madina with his beloved friend & lifelong companion Abu Bakr. Setting out, the two sought refuge in a cave to escape the skilled trackers of Mecca hot on their trail. The bounty hunters quickly came upon the cave, but a spider’s web had miraculously covered the entrance and a dove with her young rested in a nest above it. When the posse left and the two felt safe again, they continued their journey to the city of Yathrib. As they entered it the young children of Bani Najjar came out chanting lines of poetry which is still sung all over the world in remembrance of this auspicious occasion.

The name Yathrib was changed to Medina, city of hope. It became a city founded on the brotherhood of virtue. The Prophet (p) enacted a treaty uniting the once warring groups. He secured the rights of the Jewish minority by granting them full citizenship and freedom to practice their religion without constraint.

Days after his arrival in Medina he began the construction of a mosque, a sanctuary of prayer and meditation, in the centre of the city. He had his companions, the Muslims, create their own marketplace in order to ensure

economic strength. The Meccans, sensing that a rising power was now emerging in the peninsula, plotted ways of subverting the Prophet (p) & his growing community of believers.

And the Prophet (p), who had practiced a strict pacifism in Mecca for thirteen years and disliked the use of coercive force, was now given permission by God to defend against any attacks by his enemies. The Quran declared, “Fighting has been prescribed for you and you detest it, but perhaps you detest something and in it is much good. And perhaps you love something and in it is much harm, and God knows and you do not know.” [Quran 2:216].

The Prophet (p), said, “Never desire to meet your enemies, rather **ask God for peace and well-being**; but should you be forced to meet them, then act courageously.” **Some Americans are deeply ashamed of their country’s murderous war machine.** As rightly they should be. Muslims are not ashamed of their Prophet’s teaching about war. On the contrary, for us it is a great source of pride. He was courageous as a great lion against the oppressive yet gentle as a shepherd with the weak & the oppressed. **The true object of war fought for God should always be peace.** What the Prophet (p) taught is that Muslims fight for a just cause only. In this world, there are only two choices: two sides, truth and justice or falsehood and oppression. You don’t have to be a Muslim to understand that.

After years of conflict between members of his clan and his followers, the Prophet (p) had a revelation that he should visit the sacred mosque. In the eighth year after his migration to Medina the Prophet (p) set out for Mecca but his adversaries refused to allow him in. They sent out an arbitrator to strike an agreement that would bring the stand-off to an end. **And on every point of this treaty the Prophet (p) compromised his own position in pursuit of peace.**

On the journey back to Medina some of the companions were deeply troubled by what had just taken place and disappointed that they were thwarted from visiting the sanctuary. When asked to explain, the Prophet (p) replied, “Did I say it was going to be this year?” And so the following year, in accordance with the treaty, the Prophet (p) and his followers

Prayer of humility by Prophet Muhammad (peace)

“O God! I am but a man. If I hurt anyone in any manner, then forgive me and do not punish me.”

(Don’t hold your breath waiting for any living American President, **murderers of millions**, to repent & utter such humble words.)