

## LIFE OF MUHAMMAD 001

### *A few key words*

This module attempts to keep 'technical' Islamic terminology to the minimum. However, there are a few key terms, which are helpful to reflect upon:

- **Hadith** - 'speech' or 'reports'. The term is applied to Muhammad's traditions and sayings. Collections of these traditions influenced biographical sources about Muhammad, as well as the development of knowledge about Islam.
- **Islam** - pronounced I-slaam - means submission (to the Will of God). It is derived from the Arabic root for 'peace'.
- **Muslim** - one who submits to God.
- **Ka'bah** - 'cube': cube shaped building in Great Mosque of Mecca. Ibrahim and Ismail are said to have rebuilt the Ka'bah, originally established by Adam. Muslims direct their prayers to the Ka'bah, although they are not worshipping the Ka'bah, or the *Hajar al-Aswad* 'Black Stone' contained in the Ka'bah.
- **Muslim** - one who submits, submitter (to the Will of God) (terms such as 'Muhammadan' and 'Moslem' are incorrect.)
- **Muhammad** - (1) Arabic proper name. Muhammad bin 'Abd Allah (c. CE 570-632/11AH). Prophet and Founder of Islam. (2) Sura 47 in Qur'an. (3) Muslims frequently say *Salla Allah 'alayhi wa sallam* (or variations) when mentioning Muhammad: this means 'May God bless him and grant him salvation.'
- **Qur'an** - 'Recitation'. Revelation received by Muhammad from God via the Angel Jibril (Gabriel). 114 *surah* (chapters), divided into *ayah* verses.
- **Quraysh** - (1) Meccan tribe: the *Hashim* tribe [Hashim was Muhammad's grandfather] was a part of the *Quraysh*. (2) Sura *Quraysh* 106.
- **Sunni** - the majority of Muslims describe themselves as Sunni or so-called 'orthodox' Muslims. This means they adhere to the customary practise of the Prophet Muhammad
- **Sunna** (pl. *Sunan*) - 'trodden path': the body of sayings and actions of Muhammad, including *hadith*.
- **Shi'i** - 'Party' of **Ali bin Abi Talib** (c. AD 598-40/661) literally followers or believers: *Shi'i*: the Muslims who see Ali as rightful successor to Muhammad

## THE LIFE OF MUHAMMAD 002

### PRE-ISLAMIC MIDDLE EAST:

*This is for guidance only, and is designed to supplement your own note taking and reading. Remember that it is possible to locate alternative definitions of key Islamic concepts and terminology. Check that you know the meaning of words in bold type*

- first urban centres in Mesopotamia. 3500-3000 BCE [Before Common Era]: Sumerian ascendance 3500 BCE. Writing invented. Subsequent civilisations in region include: Sumerian, Akkadian, Babylonian, Assyrian.
- Code Hammurabi (c. 1752 BCE): family laws, inheritance: influenced subsequent Hebrew and Islamic law systems.
- In Persian Mesopotamia, **Zoroastrianism** was the predominant upper class religion. Zoroastrianism dated back to 1000 BCE: supreme God, presiding over a battle between good and evil spirits.
- 539 BCE: Achaemenid King Cyrus II conquered Babylon + much of Mesopotamia, Syria, M.East.
- Babylonia: conquered by Alexander (356-323 BCE): [Alexander conquered Persia, Egypt, Babylon; crossed from Greece into Asia, Middle East then Indian continent - reached Kashmir, then mutiny of forces stopped progress].
- Mediterranean: Greek societies. **Pantheistic**.
- Parthians: kingdom on borders of Roman frontier on Euphrates. Withstands Roman power. Strong from 3rd century BC until 224 CE. Conquest by Sasanians.
- Sasanians (Iranian empire): 224 CE-640 CE (Muslim conquest). Bureaucracy, state religion (Zoroastrian), crafts, traders (including silk from China).
- Ancient Egyptian: structures of law, administration, property.
- Roman conquest. **Pantheon**. Legalistic. Gods and goddesses. Europe, N. Africa, Asia, Mediterranean, Egypt. Christian Roman Church.
- Other religions: **gnostics, pagans, polytheists**, Manichaens, Jews, Christians (2nd century on), Zoroastrian.
- 5th/6th CE: essentially Christian/Jewish Mediterranean Middle East. i.e. **Byzantine** Christian: Diverse languages & expressions of Christianity: Armenian, Syriac, Coptic. Gradual divisions emerging, re. nature of Christ. Nestorian, Monophysite, Copts, Syrian Orthodox-Jacobites, Orthodox, Monotheletes.
- Languages: Persian (varied forms), **Aramaic**, Arabic, Hebrew.

- **ARABIA:** Diversity: religious pantheon, linguistic (dialectal variations), tribal, political.
- Yemen: pantheistic, own language.
- Arab **nomads** travelled into Byzantine-Sasanian areas: the so-called Fertile Crescent. Social organization. Trade contacts. *Knowledge of outside world.*
- Arabic = formal, refined language ... emerged from Arabic dialects.
- Mecca: **Kab'ah** 'house of the gods' had association with **Ishmael**: shrine, pilgrimage place, sanctuary + especially during truce months. Pantheistic society, + Arabic speaking Jews + Christians.
- Into this society: Muhammad was born in Mecca, Arabia, in the year 570 C.E.

### FOR NEXT SESSION

*Using library resources, find out the following:*

1. Locate and read the English language translation of the meaning of *Surah al-'Alaq* in the Qur'an. Bring a copy to the lecture. Locate reference(s) to the *Surah* in a *sira* source.
2. What was the 'Year of the Elephant'?
3. Who were Bahira and Nestor?
4. What was Muhammad's professional occupation, and why was he called '*al-Amin*'?
5. Pre-Islamic society is described by some Muslims as 'the age of *Jahiliyah*'. What does the term mean?

**LIFE OF MUHAMMAD 003****(a) SOURCES****(b) EARLY LIFE OF MUHAMMAD  
AND INITIAL REVELATION**

***"(O Muhammad!) Say: 'I do not say to you I have the treasures of Allah. Nor do I have knowledge of what is beyond the reach of human perfection. Nor do I say to you: I am an angel. I only follow what is revealed to me.' Then ask them: 'Are the blind and the seeing alike?' Do you not then reflect?'"<sup>1</sup>***

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**(A) SOURCES**

The primary sources Muslims use to study the life of the Prophet include:

Qur'an  
*Hadith* (preserving the sayings about and of Muhammad)  
*sunna* (the actions of Muhammad)  
*tafsir* (commentaries on meaning of the Qur'an)  
*sira* (biographies about Muhammad).

The Qur'an is seen as being of Divine origin: the Words of God, uninfluenced by human interpreters, received in the form of Revelation by Muhammad from God via the Angel Gabriel.

Traditions and Sayings of the Prophet - the Sunnah and Hadith - have differing degrees of authenticity. Varying translated collections of traditions exist, the most comprehensive in UWL library being those collections of al-Bukhari and Muslim

*Sira*: chronological, contains non-hadith anecdotes, Qur'anic elaborations, poetry, and oral historical tradition (several generations until written). The Life of Muhammad is contained in numerous editions by various biographers, dating from Muslims close to the time of the Prophet (i.e. Ibn Ishaq, 704-768 CE) onwards. This means there can be varying degrees of 'authenticity', 'reliability', and/or 'recognition'.

The English language sources used in this course are based on varied Arabic and other sources, and incorporate translations of the meaning

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<sup>1</sup> Qur'an, Surah Al-An'am 'Livestock' 6:50

of the Qur'an, Hadith, Tafsir, and legal sources. In addition, there are different emphases on Sira sources. For example:

- **Martin Lings**, Muhammad: his life based on the earliest sources, (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1983) incorporates material from several authoritative sources, primarily the '**Sira**' sources of Muhammad ibn Ishaq (704-768), Muhammad ibn Sa'd (784-845); and Muhammad b. Umar al-Waqidi (747-823 CE). Lings also makes references to other historical sources.
- **W. Montgomery Watt**, The History of al-Tabari (*Ta'rik al-rusul wa'l muluk*) (New York: State University of New York Press, 1987). This is a translation of an Islamic historical source, augmented with references to other sources. Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari (839-923) utilised sources, including Hisham b. Muhammad b. Al-Sa'd al-Kalbi (763-819), ibn Ishaq, ibn Sa'd, and al-Waqidi.

**Therefore, it is important to determine how sources are used, and the purpose behind their use.** Consider levels of 'authority' when quoting from different sources. Consider when they were written, and by whom. Explore different perspectives on one issue. The Qur'an, Sira, and general biographies can all be used in different ways to understand more about the life of Muhammad. Within varied Islamic contexts, there are a number of other 'authorities' and sources which provide information about the life of Muhammad.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>

If you want to find out more about this (although this is not a module requirement), read Annemarie Schimmel, Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam (Edinburgh University Press).

## **(b) LIFE OF MUHAMMAD**

**The Life of Muhammad cannot be covered in every detail in the lectures. Your own reading is essential, in order to fill in the 'gaps' and inform your discussion during the sessions. You are advised to read at least one biographical source on Muhammad. Keeping your own 'chronological' record as you read is one way of remembering the key events. For your own reference, the spellings of key personalities and places mentioned in Session 3 are given below. Those marked “\*” would be particularly useful to remember (in contexts!):**

### **PEOPLE**

- Abrahah
- Nufayl
- Abd Al-Muttalib \*
- Abd 'Allah \*
- Aminah \*
- Quraysh \*
- Abu Talib \*
- Bahira
- Nestor
- Qasim
- Abd Allah
- Zayd
- Safiyyah
- Salma
- Abu Sufyan \*
- Zaynab\*
- Abu L-'As
- Halah

### **EVENTS**

- Year Of Elephant \*
- Early 'Signs' Of Prophethood \*
- Muhammad's Marriage To Khadijah \*
- Initial Revelation Experience

### **PLACES**

- YATHRIB \*
- KA'BAH \*
- BOSTRA
- MOUNT HIRA.\*



## LIFE OF MUHAMMAD

### 004 FOLLOWING THE FIRST REVELATION

***Qur'an quotes. If you choose to use these (or any other) quotes in your essays, ensure that they have appropriate references, including surah name, number, and translation used.***

*“When the Qur'an is recited, listen to it and pay attention, that perchance you may receive mercy.”*

*“Those who believe in the unseen, perform the prayer and give freely from what we provided for them.”*

*“Warn thy family who are thy nearest of kin.”*

*“He frowned and turned away, because the blind man came to him. As to him who sufficeth unto himself, with him thou art engrossed, yet it is no concern of thine if purified he be not. But as for him who cometh unto thee in eager earnestness and in fear of God, from him thou art drawn away.”*

Gabriel teaches Muhammad how to pray. > Muhammad teaches Khadija first.

Then (possibly)

- Ali (aged 10),
- Zayd,
- Abu Bakr
  
- Then others:
- Abdu Amr (became Abd ar-Rahman);
- Khalid (receives dream sign)
- Uthman hears voice in desert

**Other Spellings:**

You are advised to be familiar with those marked with a \*

- Abu Talib \*
- Yathrib.\*
- Hamzah \*
- *Surah Fatihah* \*
- al-Rahman \*
- al-Rahim \*
- Uthman ibn Affan.
- Abu Sufyan \*
- A'isha \*
- Bilal \*
- Ja'far
- Umar \*
- Fatima \*
- Ta'if
- Buraq \*
- Khazrajite \*

Please note that spellings listed above omit transliteration diacritical marks, etc.

Make sure that you have read about the Night Journey, AND are familiar through your own reading with the events discussed to date. Ensure that you keep up to date, by reading Lings' Muhammad up to the relevant point in the lecture. This allows you to be familiar with those important events and key players that we are unable to discuss in depth in our lectures.

## سُورَةُ الْاِسْرَاءِ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

سُبْحَنَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ  
إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَا الَّذِي بَارَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَهُ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا إِنَّهُ  
هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ ﴿١﴾ وَآتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلْنَاهُ  
هُدًى لِبَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ أَلاَّ تَتَّخِذُوا مِنْ دُونِي وَكِيلًا ﴿٢﴾  
ذُرِّيَّةً مَنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوحٍ إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَبْدًا شَكُورًا ﴿٣﴾  
وَقَضَيْنَا إِلَى بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ فِي الْكِتَابِ لُتُفْسِدُنَّ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
مَرَّتَيْنِ وَلِتَعْلُنَّ عَلُوًّا كَبِيرًا ﴿٤﴾ فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ أُولَاهُمَا بَعَثْنَا  
عَلَيْكُمْ عِبَادًا لَنَا أُولَى بَأْسٍ شَدِيدٍ فَجَاسُوا خِلَالَ الدِّيَارِ  
وَكَانَ وَعْدًا مَفْعُولًا ﴿٥﴾ ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَا لَكُمُ الْكُرَّةَ عَلَيْهِمْ  
وَأَمَدَدْنَاكُمْ بِأَمْوَالٍ وَبَنِينَ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ أَكْثَرَ نَفِيرًا ﴿٦﴾  
إِنَّ أَحْسَنَكُمْ أَحْسَنَكُمْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ وَإِنْ أَسَأْتُمْ فَلَهَا فَإِذَا جَاءَ  
وَعْدُ الْآخِرَةِ لِيَسُئَرُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَلِيَدْخُلُوا الْمَسْجِدَ  
كَمَا دَخَلُوهُ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَلِيُتَبِّرُوا مَا عَلَوْا تَتْبِيرًا ﴿٧﴾

Sura al-Israa

**LIFE OF MUHAMMAD****005 THE NIGHT JOURNEY**

The following quotations relate to accounts of the Night Journey:

*Glory to (Allah) Who did take His Servant for Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque whose precincts We did Bless in order that We might show him some of Our Signs: for He is the one Who heareth and seeth (all things).*

**Sura al-Israa, 17:1 [extract from Qur'an reproduced above]**

That he heard Allah's Apostle saying, "When the people of Quraish did not believe me (i.e. the story of my Night Journey), I stood up in Al-Hijr and Allah displayed Jerusalem in front of me, and I began describing it to them while I was looking at it.

**Al-Bukhari, 5:226**

Allah's Apostle talked to his companions about his Night Journey to the Heavens. When he reached the fifth Heaven, he met Aaron. (Gabriel said to the Prophet), "This is Aaron." The Prophet said, "Gabriel greeted and so did I, and he returned the greeting saying, 'Welcome, O Pious Brother and Pious Prophet.' "

**Al-Bukhari, 4:606**

When the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) was taken for the Night Journey, he was taken to Sidrat al-Muntaha, which is situated on the sixth heaven, where terminates everything that ascends from the earth and is held there, and where terminates everything that descends from above it and is held there. (It is with reference to this that) Allah said: "When that which covers covered the lote-tree" (al-Qur'an, III.16). He (the narrator) said: (It was) gold moths. He (the narrator further) said: The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) was given three (things): he was given five prayers, he was given the concluding verses of Surat al-Baqarah, and remission of serious sins for those among his Ummah who associate not anything with Allah.

**Sahih Muslim Hadith 329**

**Accounts of the Night Journey can be found in Lings, and in various Sira sources. There are many references available elsewhere. You may also find accounts on the Internet.**

## LIFE OF MUHAMMAD 006 HIJRAH

*This list is designed to assist in your note taking. Ensure that you are familiar with the names and terms mentioned in this session, and that you have checked unfamiliar meanings through appropriate texts - or by asking :*

- Qaswa'
- Quba'
- Yathrib (Medina/Medina)
- Salman
- Bani Malik Of Najjar
- As'ad And 'Awf.
- Medina Muslims = Ansar 'Helpers' (of Medina)
- Quraysh Muslims = Muhajirah 'Emigrants'.
- Surah Baqarah
- Aws
- Khazraj
- Abu 'Amir
- Ibn Ubayy
- 'Abd Allah .
- Sawdah

*Hijrah means migration. The Hijrah refers to the Prophet's migration from Mecca to Medina. This journey took place in the twelfth year of his mission (622 CE). This is the beginning of the Muslim calendar. The word hijrah means to leave a place to seek sanctuary or freedom from persecution or freedom of religion or any other purpose. Hijrah can also mean to leave a bad way of life for a good or more righteous way. [Alim CD]*

## **LIFE OF MUHAMMAD 007 BADR AND UHUD**

### **Exercise:**

Drawing on accounts of the Battles of Badr and Uhud, draw up a chronology of events, outlining the significant military and political factors that contribute to our understanding of these key issues.

Amongst the issues you should look at are:

- Strategies and military technology
- Key players
- Maps
- Different accounts of events
- Qur'an-ic and other injunctions emerging from the battles
- Muhammad's roles
- Divine intervention in battle

## LIFE OF MUHAMMAD 008 FOLLOWING UHUD

***“It may be that God will establish love between you and those with whom you are at enmity.” Q. LX, 7 Surah***  
.....

***“If ye find not water then purify yourselves with clean earth, wiping therewith your faces and your hands.” Q. IV, 43***

***“Say: I take refuge in the Lord of daybreak from the evil of that which He hath created, and from the evil of dusk when it dimmeth into night, and from the evil of the women who breathe upon knots and from the evil of the envier when he envieth.” Q. CXIII Surah .....***

This session examines the situation after the Battle of Uhud. Make sure you know the significance of the names and events discussed in this session:

- Bani Nadir
- Husayn (Fatimah's son)
- Abu Sufyan
- Salman
- Khaybar
- Umamah
- Bani Qurayzah
- Juwayriyyah
- Labid
- Mariyah
- Abu Hurayah

[note: transliteration letters omitted]

*Using the Encyclopedia of Islam - or another source - establish the dates of the following key events*

The Trench (siege)  
The Necklace  
Hudaybiyah Treaty  
Diplomacy : Yemen, Egypt, Persia, Syria.  
The Lesser Pilgrimage

## LIFE OF MUHAMMAD 009 CONQUEST OF MECCA

"The Truth hath come and the false hath vanished. Verily the false is ever a vanisher." Qur'an 8:81

*Revision advice: Ensure that you have memorised the dates of the significant events in the Life of Muhammad*

### FILL IN THE BLANK DATES

|                |          |                                   |
|----------------|----------|-----------------------------------|
| 622 CE         | ..... AH | HIJRA                             |
| .....          | 2 AH     | BATTLE OF BADR                    |
| 625 CE         | ..... AH | BATTLE OF UHUD                    |
| .....          | ..... AH | WAR OF THE TRENCH                 |
| 6 AH<br>TREATY |          | HUDAYBIYA                         |
| .....          |          | FULFILLED<br>PILGRIMAGE<br>(UMRA) |
|                | .....    | 630CE CONQUEST<br>OF MECCA        |
| .....          |          | 632CE DEATH OF<br>MUHAMMAD        |

### Significant places & names

*What is the importance of the following?:*

- Maymuna bt. Al-Harith
- Bani Hashim
- Bostra
- Ghassanids
- Zayd
- Ja'far
- Abd Allah ibn Rawahah
- Mu'tah
- Khalid
- Duldul
- Amr
- Heraclius

- Abu Sufyann
- Hatib
- Marr az-Zahran.
- Zamzam
- Uthman ibn Talhah.
- Abu Quhafah
- Quraybah
- Safa

## **LIFE OF MUHAMMAD 010**

### **FINAL PILGRIMAGE**

*“O ye who believe, the idolaters are unclean. Therefore let them not come nigh unto the inviolable mosque after this their year. And if ye fear poverty, God will enrich you of his Bounty. Verily God is All-Knowing, Infinitely Wise.” Surah 9:28. Al-Tauba ‘Repentance’*

Ensure that you are aware of the significance of the following:

- Hunayn
- Hawazin
- Thaqif
- Nasr
- Jusham
- Sa’d ibn Bakr
- Malik
- Tabuk
- Shayma’
- Ka’b
- Mariyah
- Ibrahim
- Arafah (Arafat)
- Mina
- Eid ul Adha
- Baqi
- Abu Bakr
- Usamah
- 8 June 632

(Transliteration marks have been left out of the above listing)

**Please make certain that you have read about the *haji* (as exemplified in the ‘Final Pilgrimage’ of Muhammad) and the Final Sermon.**