

The Coming of The Archangel Gabriel

Muhammad (pbuh) believed that there was only one Allah, Creator of the sun, the moon, the earth, the sky, and of all living things, and that all people should worship only Him. Muhammad (pbuh) would often leave the crowded city and go to the cave in Mount Hira'. He liked to be alone there, away from all thoughts of the world and daily life, eating and drinking little. In his fortieth year, Muhammad (pbuh) left Mecca to spend Ramadan, the traditional month of retreat, in the cave. In the second half of Ramadan, Allah began to reveal His message for mankind through Muhammad (pbuh). This first Revelation occurred as follows. The Archangel Gabriel came to Muhammad (pbuh) in the cave and commanded him to 'Read'. Muhammad (pbuh) replied 'I cannot read.' At this the Archangel took Muhammad (pbuh) in his arms and pressed him to him until it was almost too much to bear. He then released him and said again 'Read.' 'I cannot', replied Muhammad (pbuh), at which the Archangel embraced him again. For the third time the Archangel commanded Muhammad (pbuh) to read, but still he said he could not and was again embraced. On releasing him this time, however, the Archangel Gabriel said:

“Read: In the Name of thy Lord who createth, Createth man from a clot. Read: And thy Lord is the Most Generous Who teacheth by the pen, Teacheth man that which he knew not. (Qur'an 96.1-5) Muhammad (pbuh) repeated these verses, just as the Archangel had said them. When the Archangel was sure Muhammad (pbuh) knew them by heart, he went away. Now that he was alone Muhammad (pbuh) could not understand what had happened to him. He was terribly afraid and rushed out of the cave. Perhaps the cave was haunted? Perhaps the devil had taken a hold of his mind? But he was stopped by a voice from heaven which said; 'O Muhammad (pbuh) you are the Messenger of Allah, and I am Gabriel.' He looked up at the sky and wherever he turned he saw the Archangel Gabriel.

In a state of confusion he returned home to Khadijah. When his wife saw him she became very worried as he began to shiver, as though in a fever. He asked her to wrap him in blankets, which she did. After a while he recovered sufficiently to tell her what had happened at Hira'. Khadijah believed all that he told her and with great respect said: 'Be happy, O son of my uncle and be confident. Truly I swear by Allah who has my soul in His hands, that you will be our people's Prophet.' Muhammad (pbuh), the Messenger of Allah, was eased by her faith in him, but after all that had happened he was exhausted and felt fast asleep.

Khadijah left the Prophet (pbuh) sleeping and went to see her cousin, Waraqah Ibn Nawfal, to ask him what he thought about all that had happened. Waraqah was a very wise man who had read many books and had become a Christian after studying the Bible. He told Khadijah that Muhammad (pbuh) had been chosen by Allah to be His Messenger. Just as the Archangel Gabriel had come to Moses before and had ordered him to guide his people, so, too, would Muhammad (pbuh) be the Prophet of his people. But Waraqah warned that all the people would not listen to the Prophet and some would mistreat his followers. He must, however, be patient because he had a great message for all the world. From that day on, the Archangel Gabriel came often to the Prophet (pbuh) and the verses he taught him, the message from Allah to man, were later written down, and are known to us as the Holy Qur'an.

The First Muslims

After that momentous day in the month of Ramadan, Revelation came again and again to the Prophet (pbuh). He understood now what he had to do and prepared himself for what was to come. Only a strong and brave man, helped by Allah, can be a true prophet because people often refuse to listen to Allah's message. Khadijah was the first to believe the Prophet (pbuh) and accept as true what he brought from Allah. Through her, Allah made things easier for the Prophet (pbuh). Khadijah strengthened him, helped him spread his message, and stood up to the people who were against him.

Then Revelation ceased for a time. The Prophet (pbuh) was upset and unhappy, thinking that Allah had left him, or that he might have angered Allah in some way so that Allah no longer thought him worthy of His message. However, the Archangel Gabriel came back to him and brought this surah, or chapter, of the Qur'an:

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

“By the morning hours, And by the night when it is stillest, Thy Lord hath neither forsaken thee nor doth He hate thee, And verily the Last will be better for thee than the First. And verily thy Lord will give unto thee so that thou wilt be content. Did He not find thee an orphan and protect thee? Did He not find thee wandering and guide thee? Did He not find thee destitute and enrich thee? Therefore the orphan oppress not, Therefore the beggar drive not away, And as for thy Lord's blessing, declare it”. (Qur'an: 93.1-11)

The Prophet (pbuh) began to speak secretly of Allah's message to those Who were close to him and whom he could trust. At that time Mecca was going through hard times. There was very little food to be had. Abu Talib, the Prophet's uncle, who had taken care of him after his grandfather's death, was finding it very difficult to feed his large family.

The Prophet (pbuh) said that he and another uncle, al-'Abbas, who was a rich man, would each bring up one of Abu Talib's children in order to help him. The Prophet (pbuh) took 'Ali and his uncle took Ja'far.

One day, when the Prophet (pbuh) was outside the city, the Archangel Gabriel appeared to him. The Archangel kicked the side of a hill and a spring of water began to flow out. He then began to wash himself in the running water to show the Prophet (pbuh) the ritual ablution to be made before prayer. Then the Archangel showed him all the positions of Muslim prayer-the various movements and things to be said with each

movement. The Prophet (pbuh) returned home and taught all these things first to Khadijah and then to his followers. Since then Muslims have continued to purify themselves before prayer by performing the ritual ablution and have followed the same movements and prayers first performed by the Prophet (pbuh). To begin with, though, only the Prophet (pbuh) and his wife knew of these things. Then one day 'Ali entered the room and found the Prophet (pbuh) and Khadijah praying. He was puzzled and asked what they were doing. The Prophet (pbuh) explained to him that they were praising Allah and giving thanks to Him. That night 'Ali stayed up thinking about all that the Prophet (pbuh) had said; he had great admiration and respect for his cousin. Finally he came to a decision and the next day he went to the Prophet (pbuh) and told him that he wanted to follow him. Thus Khadijah was the first woman to embrace Islam, the teachings which the Prophet (pbuh) brought from Allah, and 'Ali was the first young man. Shortly after they were joined by Zayd ibn Harithah, a slave, freed and adopted by the Prophet (pbuh).

The Prophet (pbuh) began to leave Mecca with 'An in order to pray. One day Abu Talib happened to pass by and when he saw them he stopped and asked them what they were doing. The Prophet (pbuh) told him that they were praying and following the same religion as Abraham. He explained that, like Abraham, he had been ordered to guide the people to Allah's truth. Abu Talib looked at his son, 'Ali, and said: 'Muhammad (pbuh) would never make you do anything that was wrong. Go with him.

But I cannot leave the religion I now follow and which was followed by my father.' Then he turned to the Prophet (pbuh), saying, 'Even so, I promise you, Muhammad (pbuh), that no one will hurt you as long as I am alive.' And with that Abu Talib went on his way. At about this time the news of Muhammad (pbuh) being the Prophet reached an honest, wise, and respected merchant of Mecca called Abu Bakr. He knew Muhammad (pbuh) well and believed he could never lie, so he went to find out for himself if the story were true. The Prophet (pbuh) told him that he had indeed been sent by Allah to teach everyone to worship the one true Allah. On hearing this from the Prophet's own lips Abu Bakr knew it to be the truth and became a believer instantly. Later the Prophet (pbuh) was reported to have said that everyone he ever invited to accept Islam showed signs of disbelief and doubt, except Abu Bakr; when he was told of it he did not hold back or hesitate. Because of his wisdom, honesty, and kindness people had always turned to Abu Bakr for advice. He was, therefore, a man of some influence and through him many people came to Islam. Among these was Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas as, the uncle of Aminah, the Prophet's mother. The night before Abu Bakr came to visit him and tell him about Islam, Sa'd Ibn Abi Waqqas dreamt that he was