

Revelation: A brief pause and its modes of occurrence

After the life-changing event that occurred to the Prophet (ﷺ) at cave Hira, there was a brief pause in the revelation. Although some historians have opined that this may have lasted up to 2-3 years, but it seems that it lasted for few days as per the report of Ibn Sa'd is closest to the truth¹. Perhaps this pause was to give the Prophet (ﷺ) relief from the fear he experienced and additionally to make him long for the revelation.

The Prophet (ﷺ) informed us what happened next: "While I was walking, I heard a voice from the sky. I looked up and lo, it was the same angel who had visited me in the cave of Hira. He was sitting on a chair between the earth and the sky. I was very afraid of him and knelt on the ground. I (then) went home saying 'cover me, cover me.'" [Bukhari]

Then Allah revealed, the verses 74:1-5

Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) revealed several verses from the beginning of Surah Al-Muddaththir. These beautiful and short, yet comprehensive verses, contained numerous commands, including the foremost command to warn the people.

Modes of revelation

Before we go through the rest of the Seerah, it should be noted that Revelation was the constant source of information to the Prophet regarding the humongous task. There are numerous ways that revelation came down to the Prophet (ﷺ). These may be categorised as follows:

¹ Fathul Bari, 1/27, 12/ 360

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1. Initially, it was true dreams, which the Prophet (ﷺ) saw prior to the incident at cave Hira – whatever he saw in his dreams came true exactly. These true dreams are one part from the 46 parts of prophethood, as stated by the Prophet (ﷺ). [Bukhari]
2. Inspiration cast by angel Jibreel (عليه السلام) into the heart of the Prophet (ﷺ) without being seen.
3. Angel Jibreel (عليه السلام) would sometimes visit the Prophet (ﷺ) in the form of a human being and communicate as humans communicate.
4. Revelation came to the Prophet (ﷺ) like the ringing of a bell. This mode was the most difficult upon the Prophet (ﷺ), so much so that sweat would be seen on his forehead even on a cold day. The burden was such that if the Prophet (ﷺ) was upon a camel during revelation, the camel would sit.
5. Angel Jibreel (عليه السلام) twice appeared to the Prophet (ﷺ) in his actual, original angelic form. He covered the horizon and had 600 wings. Mentioned in Surah AnNajm.
6. Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) spoke to the Prophet (ﷺ) directly, without any intermediary. This happened only once - during the incident of Israa and Miraaj. That was when He (سبحانه وتعالى) obligated upon us the greatest and most important deed in Islam – the five daily prayers.

The Early Converts

With the revelation pacing up, the light of Islam began penetrating through dark clouds of ignorance that had enveloped the entire world, in darkness. Hardly anyone knew their real Lord, the One Who alone deserved to be worshipped. Even though the Arabs, including Quraish in Makkah, acknowledged Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) as the only Creator, they did not single Him out for worship. They performed acts of worship for their idols and sought them as intermediaries

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between them and Allah, which is shirk. This was ingrained in them and became an unshakeable and non-negotiable part of their faith.

But there were people who readily responded to the call to Islam without nursing any seed of doubt and embraced Islam.

The first woman to believe was none other than Khadeejah (رضي الله عنها), who paved the way for all women after her. She did not hesitate in believing after she was informed about what happened on cave Hira. Among the initial converts was Zaid Ibn Al-Harith, رضي الله عنه the freed slave. Among family, his (صلى الله عليه وسلم) cousin Ali (رضي الله عنه), who himself became a great role model and left behind a most praiseworthy legacy, readily accepted Islam as he was living with the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) since a long time and so knew his impeccable character and lofty morals.

Another convert at this initial secret phase to whom the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) preached directly was none other than Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه), his close friend.

Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه), proved to be a great asset to Islam. He immediately conveyed the message of Islam and via him, Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) guided to Islam Uthman ibn Affaan, Al-Zubair ibn Awwaam, Abdul Rahman ibn 'Awf, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqaas and Talhah ibn Ubaidallah (رضي الله عنهم).

Other early converts were Bilal ibn Abi Rabah, Abu Ubaidah 'Amir ibn Al-Jarrah, Abu Salamah, Abdullah ibn Mas'ood, Saeed ibn Zaid and his wife Fatimah (رضي الله عنهم). She was the sister of Umar ibn Al-Khattaab (رضي الله عنه), who had not yet accepted Islam by then.

These people were the foremost of the Muslim Predecessors.

The faith of these initial converts was unshakeable as they preferred the worship of Allah (سبحانه) alone and they rejected the twisted beliefs and practices of their family and society. The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) would secretly meet these people and teach them Islam including new verses which were being revealed.

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