



The Character of the Prophet ﷺ: The Proofs of Prophethood Series

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In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Grantor of Mercy

Introduction

The Bible reports that Jesus Christ (as) offered the following logical criteria for distinguishing true prophets from false ones:

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore, by their fruits you will know them.¹

The Prophet Jesus (as) may have intended that actions speak louder than words about a person's character, and therefore the personal conduct of a true prophet must be good. He may have also intended that the positive impact of his teachings on others would be good, or that the message itself must be a clear call to purity and goodness. The beauty of analyzing the ministry of Muhammad ﷺ is that all three interpretations would stand true for him. This paper will illustrate how just his character makes a powerful case for his prophethood.

The character of the Prophet ﷺ

God combined in Muhammad ﷺ the most illustrious qualities, as evidence that he was in fact authorized by the Divine. His character sparkled from every angle, and this was noticed both by those who experienced him firsthand and those who later read his biography. They all found in Muhammad ﷺ a lifestyle of extraordinary sincerity, conviction, and virtue that posed a formidable challenge to any doubter in his prophethood. As Ibn Taymīyah (d. 1328), an eminent Muslim theologian, said,

It is known that someone who claims to be a prophet is either one of the best and noblest of the creation, or the worst and most wicked of them... so how

¹ Matthew 7:15–20 (New King James Version).

could there ever be any confusion between the best and noblest and between the worst and most wicked?... There has never been any liar who claimed prophethood except that his ignorance, dishonesty, wickedness, and devilish ways became clear to anyone who possessed the smallest degree of discernment.²

A person may wonder about the historical reliability of the reports in the following pages, and why trust that these are anything more than pious exaggerations by Muhammad's ﷺ admirers on the greatness of his character. This concern will be revisited in greater detail in the discussion on miracles, but let us cite here the testimony of two non-Muslim historiographers who specialized in the traceability of Islam's prophetic traditions. David S. Margoliouth (d. 1940), the famous English Orientalist, said regarding the *isnād* system in Islamic scholarship, which requires that reports only be transmitted through a rigorously scrutinized chain of narrators,

...its value in making for accuracy cannot be questioned, and the Muslims are justified in taking pride in their science of tradition. In other ancient records, we have to take what is told on the author's assertion: it is rare that a Greek or Roman historian tell us the source of his information...³

Even a staunch Orientalist like Bernard Lewis (d. 2018), who was a sharp critic of Islam and Muslims in modern times, acknowledged the strength of the Hadith tradition. The British-American historiographer wrote,

But their careful scrutiny of the chains of transmission and their meticulous collection and preservation of variants in the transmitted narratives give to medieval Arabic historiography a professionalism and sophistication without precedent in antiquity and without parallel in the contemporary medieval West. By comparison, the historiography of Latin Christendom seems poor and meagre, and even the more advanced and complex historiography of Greek Christendom still falls short of the historical literature of Islam in volume, variety and analytical depth.⁴

² Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Taymīyah, *Sharḥ al-'aqīdah al-Aṣḥānīyah* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 2001), 156–57.

³ David S. Margoliouth, *Lectures on Arabic Historians: Delivered before the University of Calcutta 1929* (Kolkata, India: University of Calcutta, 1930), 20.

⁴ Bernard Lewis, *Islam in History: Ideas, People, and Events in the Middle East* (Illinois: Open Court Publishing, 2001), 105.

The following pages will demonstrate how even a brief overview of Muhammad's character not only refutes the oft-recycled charges leveled against him—being an imposter prophet or a ruthless warlord—but also establishes the truth of his claim that he was God's final prophet to the world.

His honesty and integrity

The Prophet ﷺ was a person whose honesty was common knowledge to those around him. In fact, his clansmen had officially titled him *al-Amīn* (the Trustworthy).⁵ Even when they persecuted him and rejected his message, they still trusted him with their most precious possessions. 'Āishah (rA) said, "He ﷺ instructed 'Alī (rA) to stay behind in Mecca, to return all the property the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had held in trust for people. There was nobody in Mecca (even his enemies) who had valuables that he feared for except that he kept them with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, due to the honesty and trustworthiness that was known [to all] about him. 'Alī (rA) stayed back for three days and three nights to deliver everything entrusted by the people to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and then caught up with him ﷺ after completing that task."⁶

His honesty was so evident that even people from different eras, backgrounds, and religions recognize it. It is indeed difficult to imagine a fair person reading his life and arriving at a different conclusion. Although the Scottish philosopher and historian Thomas Carlyle (d. 1881) had his reservations about Islam, his fascination with the Final Prophet's ﷺ sincerity at times seemed to veer between skepticism and apparent conviction. For instance,

It goes greatly against the impostor-theory, the fact that he lived in this entirely unexceptionable, entirely quiet and commonplace way, till the heat of his years was done. He was forty before he talked of any mission from Heaven. All his irregularities, real and supposed, date from after his fiftieth year, when the good Kadijah died. All his 'ambition,' seemingly, had been, hitherto, to live an honest life; his 'fame,' the mere good-opinion of neighbors that knew him, had been sufficient hitherto. Not till he was

⁵ Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīrah al-nabawīyah*, 1:183, 197.

⁶ Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyah, 2003), 6:472, no. 12696; see also Ismāʿīl ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wal-nihāyah* (Cairo: Dār Hajar, 1997), 4:445.

already getting old... and peace growing to be the chief thing this world could give him, did he start on the ‘career of ambition,’ and, belying all his past character and existence, set up [by others] as a wretched empty charlatan to acquire what he could now no longer enjoy! For my share, I have no faith whatever in that [impostor-theory].⁷

In the same book, Carlyle says, “The lies (Western slander) which well-meaning zeal has heaped round this man (Muhammad) are disgraceful to ourselves only.”⁸

Historical figures who dismissed the impostor theory as preposterous slander existed well before Carlyle. When Prophet Muhammad ﷺ first corresponded with Heraclius (d. 641), the Byzantine emperor, calling him to embrace Islam, Heraclius immediately dispatched a brigade to find anyone who could verify this man’s claims to prophethood. The leading adversary of Muhammad at that time, Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb, was among those apprehended and interrogated in the presence of the Byzantine dignitaries. Heraclius—a military commander versed in Judeo-Christian scriptures—asked Abū Sufyān a series of key questions, and then cross-checked his answers with his fellow clansmen. Upon completing his investigation, the following is some of what Heraclius said to Abū Sufyān,

I asked you whether you ever accused him of lying before he stated what he stated [about prophethood]. You replied in the negative, and I know that he would not refrain from lying about others and then lie about God... And I asked you whether he ever betrayed [anyone]. You replied in the negative, and likewise the messengers never betray... If what you are saying is true, he will conquer the place of these two feet of mine. And I knew [from scripture] that he would soon emerge, but I never assumed that he would be from among you. And if I knew that I could reach him [safely], I would have been bent on meeting him. And if I were in his presence, I would personally wash his feet.⁹

In the history of humanity, many imposters have claimed prophethood, but it was always a matter of time before they were discovered to either be psychologically disturbed individuals or unethical opportunists. The first category has never had

⁷ Thomas Carlyle, David R. Sorensen (ed.), and Brent E. Kinser (ed.), *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 59.

⁸ Carlyle, Sorensen, and Kinser, *On Heroes*, 52.

⁹ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 1:8, no. 7.

any influence on the world stage, let alone produced a complete system of beliefs and laws that would earn the respect of thousands of sages, historians, philosophers, and other men and women of wisdom. The second category is eventually exposed with the passage of time as sinister and manipulative, with the notorious Joseph Smith (d. 1844) being an iconic example of this in recent history. These are endemic qualities that permeate this second category, and should be expected to, because just as lying about your friends is worse than lying about a random person, and just as lying about your parents is worse than lying about your friends, there is nothing uglier than a person lying about God. So, when a man who had the unique impact on the world that Muhammad ﷺ did was also known for his impeccable honesty, despite his public and private life being documented with granular detail, then his claim of being God's prophet should not be disregarded.

Another powerful testament to his integrity was his adamant refusal to allow anyone to aggrandize him. Jābir ibn 'Abdillāh (rA) narrates that there was a solar eclipse on the day that Ibrāhīm, the son of Allah's Messenger ﷺ, had died. When the people began to say that the eclipse was due to the death of this young child, Allah's Messenger ﷺ rose at once and said, "The sun and the moon are not eclipsed because of the death or birth of anyone. Rather, they are two of God's signs, by which He instills fear in His slaves. When you see an eclipse, pray and invoke God."¹⁰ Had the Prophet ﷺ been a narcissistic imposter, this would have been the perfect opportunity to capitalize on such a convenient credibility booster. These coinciding events represented an immense opportunity for any personal agenda, and yet the Prophet ﷺ would not allow others to interpret this as the skies being saddened for Ibrāhīm. Though hurting from the tragic loss, he ﷺ still ascended the pulpit, dismissed the false interpretation, and established that eclipses follow nothing but the cosmic order set by God in the created universe.

On another occasion, Ḥudhayfah b. al-Yamān (rA) came to the Prophet ﷺ prior to the Battle of Badr with an ethical dilemma. The pagans of Quraysh had just released Ḥudhayfah and his father on the condition that he would not join Muhammad's ranks and fight Quraysh alongside him. Despite the Muslim army

¹⁰ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 2:39, no. 1060; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 2:630, no. 915.

being disadvantaged and about to face a military force three times its size, the Prophet ﷺ still said, “Then proceed on [to Madinah]. We will keep our promise to them, and we will seek aid from Allah against them.”¹¹ His prophetic morals did not allow him ﷺ, even in an extremely vulnerable position, to compromise the principles of honesty and uprightness.

His simplicity and humility

The simple, austere lifestyle of the Prophet ﷺ is a major indication that his mission could not have been self-serving, especially when contrasted with the decadent, extravagant lifestyles of so many false prophets in world history. After all, this was a man who controlled all of Arabia by the end of his life. Even before that, he had thousands of followers in Madinah, followers who obsessed over him and would have done anything in the world for him. Yet, we see no signs of luxury in any sphere of his life.



3D Rendering by Yaqeen Institute. Inspired by Amany Saqqāf, 2009, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia Exhibition.

¹¹ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 3:1414, no. 1787.

His living quarters were so tight that when he ﷺ wished to pray, he would tap ‘Āishah (rA) to bend her legs to make room for him to prostrate. To drink or bathe, he would reach for the small leather waterskin that hung in his room. For months on end, no fire would be kindled for cooking in his home, and his family was content with dates and water unless someone gifted them some milk.¹² ‘Umar ibn al-Khattāb (rA) reports that he once entered the room of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to find him lying down and noticed that the coarseness of the straw mat under him had left marks on his side. Upon noticing that, and the meager rations of barley and leaves, and the leather bag hanging in the corner, his eyes welled with tears. The Prophet ﷺ said, “What makes you weep, O son of al-Khattāb?” He said, “O Prophet of Allah, how can I not cry after seeing how the mat has left these marks on your side, and how little you have in your food cupboard? Caesar and Chosroes live surrounded by fruits and springs of water, while you are the Messenger of God and His chosen one, and yet this is your condition.” The Prophet ﷺ said, “O son of al-Khattāb, does it not please you that these [luxuries] are for us in the Hereafter and for them in this world?” I said, “Of course.”¹³ In another narration, he began his response with, “Are you in doubt, O son of al-Khattāb? These are a people whose pleasures have been expedited in the life of this world.”¹⁴

Edward Gibbon (d. 1794), a historian and member of England’s Parliament, wrote,

The good sense of Muhammad despised the pomp of royalty. The Apostle of God submitted to the menial offices of the family; he kindled the fire; swept the floor; milked the ewes; and mended with his own hands his shoes and garments. Disdaining the penance and merit of a hermit, he observed without effort or vanity the abstemious diet of an Arab.¹⁵

In other words, he ﷺ not only endured the coarseness of an austere life, but it came naturally to him. He was not trying to encourage monkship or stoicism, nor was he faking this minimalism to earn praise. Gibbon continues,

¹² Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 8:97, no. 6459.

¹³ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 2:1105, no. 1479.

¹⁴ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 3:133, no. 468.

¹⁵ Edward Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire: Volume the Fifth* (London: Electric Book Co, 2001), chapter L, 252.

On solemn occasions, he feasted his companions with rustic and hospitable plenty. But, in his domestic life, many weeks would pass without a fire being kindled on the hearth of the Prophet.¹⁶

According to Washington Irving (d. 1859), an American biographer and diplomat,

He was sober and abstemious in his diet and a rigorous observer of fasts. He indulged in no magnificence of apparel, the ostentation of a petty mind; neither was his simplicity in dress affected but a result of real disregard for distinction from so trivial a source...¹⁷

And,

His military triumphs awakened no pride nor vainglory, as they would have done had they been effected for selfish purposes. In the time of his greatest power, he maintained the same simplicity of manners and appearance as in the days of his adversity. So far from affecting a regal state, he was displeased if, on entering a room, any unusual testimonials of respect were shown to him.¹⁸

Regarding these “unusual testimonials of respect,” Anas ibn Mālik (rA) said, “Nobody was more beloved to them (the Companions) than the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Despite that, when they would see him, they would not stand for him, knowing how much he disliked that.”¹⁹ Bosworth Smith (d. 1908), a reverend and author, writes,

Head of the State as well as the Church; he was Caesar and Pope in one; but he was Pope without the Pope’s pretensions, and Caesar without the legions of Caesar, without a standing army, without a bodyguard, without a police force, without a fixed revenue. If ever a man ruled by a right divine, it was Muhammad, for he had all the powers without their supports. He cared not for the dressings of power. The simplicity of his private life was in keeping with his public life.²⁰

¹⁶ Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 251–52.

¹⁷ Washington Irving and Bertram R. Davis, *The Life of Mahomet* (London: G. Routledge and Co, 1850), 186–87.

¹⁸ Irving and Davis, *The Life of Mahomet*, 203.

¹⁹ Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, 5:90, no. 2754, authenticated by al-Tirmidhī in the comments.

²⁰ Bosworth Smith, *Mohammed and Mohammedanism* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1874), 235.

Until this very day, the canons of literature on Islamic ethics, and the weekly sermons of Muslim preachers, are replete with examples of the Prophet ﷺ as the paragon of humility. He was the educator who was never ashamed to say “I don’t know,”²¹ the general who would allow others to share his riding animal,²² the busiest statesman who would allow the weakest members of society to take him by the hand for their needs,²³ the elder who would compete with the youth to carry the bricks of the first mosque,²⁴ and the considerate husband who noticed subtle signs of his wife being upset with him.²⁵ Finally, he ﷺ was the greatest messenger of God who would reiterate throughout his life, “My similitude compared to the prophets before me is that of a person who built a beautiful, brilliant structure—completing its construction save for a single brick in one of its corners. People began to walk around it, admiring its construction, but saying, ‘If only that final brick were set in place, it would have been perfect.’ I am that brick, and I am the seal of the prophets.”²⁶ In another hadith, he humbly cautioned, “Do not aggrandize me as the Christians exaggerated in praising the son of Mary. I am but a slave, so call me the slave of God and His messenger.”²⁷

His mercy and compassion

The Prophet’s ﷺ “character was the Qur’an,”²⁸ as described by his wife, ‘Āishah (rA). He ﷺ practiced everything that he preached, and since the Qur’anic message preached mercy above all, this quality was more pronounced in his practice than anything else. The Prophet’s ﷺ call to mercy was therefore not mere words, but rather teachings that he held to be sacred and felt he must embody better than any other adherent of Islam. In the clearest terms and on various occasions, he would announce to the people, “The merciful will be shown mercy

²¹ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:1, no. 8.

²² Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 8:74, no. 6228.

²³ Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* (Sidon: al-Maktabah al-‘Aṣrīyah, 1980), 43:46, no. 4818.

²⁴ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 5:58, no. 3906.

²⁵ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 7:62, no. 5228.

²⁶ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 43:22, no. 2286.

²⁷ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 4:55, no. 3445.

²⁸ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:512, no. 746.

by the Most Merciful. Be merciful to those on the earth, and the One in the heavens will have mercy upon you.”²⁹

Even while observing the ritual prayer, a pillar of Islam and its most important physical act, the Prophet ﷺ remained cognizant of people’s suffering. Abū Qatādah (rA) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ once said, “I sometimes stand in prayer then hear a child crying, so I make my prayer brief due to not wanting to cause hardship for his mother.”³⁰ In another hadith, he cautioned, “When one of you leads the people in prayer, he should be light, for among them are the weak, and the ill, and the elderly. And when one of you is praying alone, then let him elongate it as he pleases.”³¹

The authentic narrations on the Prophet’s ﷺ exemplary mercy with children, and his counseling of mercy towards them, would fill dozens of pages. In one telling exchange, al-Aqra‘ ibn Ḥābis (rA) became perplexed at Muhammad’s ﷺ elaborate display of affection, upon seeing the Prophet ﷺ kiss his grandchild. This Companion’s rugged Bedouin upbringing made him feel that this was contrary to masculinity, and so he said in pride, “You kiss your boys? I have ten sons and have never kissed any one of them.” The Prophet ﷺ responded, “And what do I possess [to help you] if Allah has plucked mercy from your heart?”³² While parents naturally love their children, many overlook the child’s emotional need for expressions of that love, but the Prophet of Mercy ﷺ never did. In fact, it was not just his own children that he treated this way. Anas ibn Mālīk (rA) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ once entered to find a son of Abū Ṭalḥah (rA) in a sad state, and quickly noticed that his pet *nughayr* (sparrow) was no longer around, so he lightheartedly said to him in consolation, “O Abū ‘Umayr, what happened to the *nughayr*?”³³ He inquired about the creature because it meant so much to the young child, and called him the father of ‘Umayr despite him not yet being a

²⁹ Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, 3:388, no. 1924.

³⁰ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 1:143, no. 710.

³¹ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 1:142, no. 702; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:340, no. 466.

³² Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 8:7, no. 5998.

³³ Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, 4:293, no. 4969.

parent, to rhyme with the word *nughayr* and playfully uplift his spirits with the thoughts of his future manhood.

The Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ heart even empathized with the pain of animals. He ﷺ would tell his followers about sinners of the past who were forgiven by God for climbing down into a well to retrieve water for a parched dog,³⁴ and stated on another occasion, “In every living creature is an opportunity for charity.”³⁵ He ﷺ taught that sharpening one's blade is a necessary part of the kindness due to a sacrificial animal,³⁶ and forbade that a harmless animal be killed for sport or for other than consumption. He ﷺ would reprimand his followers for overworking their camels in the fields, and for not relieving their riding mounts of the loads they carried promptly after reaching their destination, and once warned them of a woman who was bound for the Hellfire due to trapping a cat without food.³⁷ In one beautiful hadith, ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd (rA) narrates that as they once traveled on a journey with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, he stepped away to relieve himself. The Companions then saw a nest of young birds and captured them. The mother then came, frantically flapping its wings in panic. When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ saw this, he said, “Who caused this bird to grieve over its young chicks? Return its young ones to it!”³⁸ Such a kindhearted disposition even towards animals is not unexpected, especially when Allah (the Most High) affirmed in the Qur'an, “And We have not sent you [O Muhammad] except as a mercy to all the worlds.”³⁹

Finally, his profound and universal mercy was above all reflected in his concern for people's salvation. The Qur'an would often address his deep grief over people's resistance to guidance, in verses such as, “Then perhaps you would kill yourself through grief over them, [O Muhammad], if they do not believe in this message, [and] out of sorrow.”⁴⁰ The Prophet ﷺ would weep passionately during his night prayers, pleading to God to spare his nation of the torment that many former nations had faced, until Allah ultimately instructed the archangel, “O Gabriel, go to

³⁴ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 4:130, no. 3321.

³⁵ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 8:9, no. 6009.

³⁶ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 3:1548, no. 1955.

³⁷ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 4:176, no. 3482.

³⁸ Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, 4:367, no. 5268.

³⁹ Qur'an 21:107 (Saheeh International Translation).

⁴⁰ Qur'an 18:6 (Saheeh International Translation).

Muhammad and tell him that We will please him regarding his nation, and We will not disappoint him.”⁴¹ In another hadith, ‘Āishah (rA) reports that upon seeing the Prophet’s ﷺ face beaming cheerfully one day, she said, “O Messenger of Allah, supplicate to Allah for me.” He said, “O Allah, forgive ‘Āishah for her past and future sins, those in secret and those in public.” Ecstatic at the fortune she just secured, ‘Āishah (rA) laughed so hard that her head fell from his lap. The Prophet ﷺ then added, “Did my supplication make you happy?” She said, “How could your supplication not make me happy?” He said, “By Allah, this is my supplication for my nation in every single prayer.”⁴²

His clemency and forgiveness

When the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ began to call to Islam openly, his initial followers discovered that merely professing faith meant facing ruthless torture and even execution. Some were beaten to near death in the streets, and others were dragged out to the desert to scream for hours under the inferno of its midday sun. Hefty, sizzling hot stones were situated atop their chests to crush them, scorching suits of chainmail armor were fastened to roast their bodies, and some like Khabbāb ibn al-Aratt (rA) were hurled directly upon ignited coals which caused them to smell their own flesh cooking.⁴³ Many of these atrocities only escalated as this tragic decade progressed, and the Prophet ﷺ himself suffered brutal abuse from the idolaters of Quraysh. They spared no opportunity to demonize him, they divorced his daughters, and they starved his entire clan for three years which led to the death of his wife and his most supportive uncle. In terms of physical assault, ‘Uqbah ibn Abī Mu‘ayṭ would strangle him from behind when he prayed in public, Abū Jahl had bloody camel intestines dumped over him while he prostrated, ‘Utaybah ibn Abī Lahab spat at him, and others beat him unconscious. These examples are a drop from the ocean of cruelty and persecution faced by the Prophet ﷺ and the earliest Muslims. And yet, this ocean was never able to drown the mercy, goodwill, and protective concern the Prophet’s ﷺ heart had for friends

⁴¹ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:191, no. 202.

⁴² Muḥammad ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān* (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risālah, 1993), 16:47, no. 7111.

⁴³ Abū Nu‘aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā’ wa ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyā’* (Egypt: Maṭba‘at al-Sa‘ādah, 1974), 1:143.

and foes alike. The following are a few brief depictions of his magnanimous character, even at the height of his power, in the face of enmity and insult.

Abū Jahl was one of his earliest and staunchest adversaries; the pharaoh of his nation. Despite all the physical and emotional wounds he inflicted on the Prophet ﷺ, and despite breaking his Companions' bones and later leading the first army against them, the guidance and salvation of Abū Jahl was still on the Prophet's mind. He ﷺ used to say while still in Mecca, "O Allah, strengthen Islam with Abū Jahl ibn Hishām or 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb." A short time thereafter, 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (rA) embraced Islam.⁴⁴ Abū Jahl being a heartless murderer did not prevent the Prophet ﷺ from praying for him, nor from appreciating his promising leadership qualities that could potentially be used for good.

Upon wielding the power of a statesman, the Prophet ﷺ never enacted a policy of vengeance or intolerance. Instead, he implemented a system of mercy that was in direct opposition to the cruelty he and his followers had been subjected to in Mecca. On one occasion, a group of Jews from Madinah entered upon the Prophet ﷺ and mockingly said, "*Al-sāmu 'alaykum* (death be upon you)," in place of the customary Islamic greeting of "*Al-salāmu 'alaykum* (peace be upon you)." His wife 'Āishah (rA), appalled by their brazen disrespect, repeated the curse back to them, but the Prophet ﷺ said, "O 'Āishah, be gentle! Allah is Gentle and loves gentleness in all matters, so beware of harshness and vulgarity."⁴⁵ His authority in that phase still did not tempt him to retaliate, or respond in kind, or to even let his wife respond harshly to those who had insulted him ﷺ.

During the Battle of Uḥud, Quraysh's army—3,000 strong against the Muslims' 700—managed to ambush the Prophet ﷺ. His front tooth was broken, his body was battered, and blood flowed from where his helmet had pierced his face. Somehow, after bleeding at their hands yet again, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ still had the resilience of character to say as he wiped the blood from his face, "O Allah, forgive my people, for they do not know."⁴⁶ In other narrations, he first said,

⁴⁴ Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, 6:58, no. 3681.

⁴⁵ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 8:85, no. 6401 and 9:16, no. 6927.

⁴⁶ Ibn Hibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Hibbān*, 3:254, no. 973.

“How can a people succeed after they have wounded their Prophet and caused him to bleed as he calls them to Allah?” Then, he ﷺ fell silent for a moment, before appealing to Allah with the prayer for forgiveness. His Companions came to him ﷺ and said as the dust cleared, “Invoke a curse against the polytheists.” He ﷺ said, “I have not been sent as a curser. Rather, I was sent as a mercy.”⁴⁷ Though the Qur’an mentions that the wicked among the Israelites were cursed on the tongue of their prophets,⁴⁸ and though the Prophet ﷺ cursed certain practices like usury, and initially asked Allah to curse the leading persecutors, his normative demeanor was to seek forgiveness for those who wronged him and his followers.

Years later, as the Muslims traveled home from Dhāt al-Riqā‘, the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions dismounted and sought shade from the midday sun. He ﷺ rested under a leafy tree and hung his sword on it. The army slept for a while, but then heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ calling for them. Jābir ibn ‘Abdillāh (rA) reports that upon their arrival, they found sitting with him a Bedouin man named al-Ghawrath ibn al-Hārith. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “This person drew my sword as I slept, and I awoke to find an unsheathed blade in his hand.” He said to me, ‘Are you afraid of me?’ I said, ‘No.’ He said, ‘Who will protect you from me?’ I said, ‘Allah,’ thrice, and so he returned the sword to its scabbard. And thus, here he is, sitting.”⁴⁹ Jābir (rA) added, “And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not punish him thereafter.”⁵⁰ In another narration, the sword fell from his hand, so the Prophet ﷺ took it and said, “Who will protect you?” He said, “Be the better victor.” He said, “Will you still not testify that none is worthy of worship except Allah?” He said, “I will promise to never fight you, nor be with a people that fight you.” The Prophet ﷺ let him go, and so the man returned to his tribe and said, “I have come to you from the best of people.”⁵¹ Just like that, the Prophet ﷺ forgave him unconditionally and released him despite the man’s refusal to convert to Islam.

⁴⁷ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 3:1417, no. 1791.

⁴⁸ See Qur’an 5:78.

⁴⁹ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 4:2006, no. 2599.

⁵⁰ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 4:39, no. 2910.

⁵¹ Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal* (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risālah, 2001), 23:369, no. 15190.

Hind bint ‘Utba (rA) was the wife of Abū Sufyān and the daughter of ‘Utba ibn Rabī‘ah, two nobles from Quraysh who were both belligerent enemies of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Hind was a woman who boiled with venomous hate against Muhammad, and personally campaigned against Islam and the Muslims. She was among those who recruited Waḥshī to kill Ḥamzah ibn ‘Abdul-Muṭṭalib (rA), the paternal uncle of the Prophet ﷺ, promising him great rewards for avenging her father who was slain at Badr. Early chroniclers report that she had Ḥamzah’s ears and nose cut off and used for a necklace, and some report that she gouged out his liver and attempted to eat it. When the Prophet ﷺ located his uncle’s mutilated body after Uḥud, he was devastated as he bade farewell to his beloved uncle, saying, “May Allah have mercy on you, my uncle. Indeed, you used to maintain the ties of kinship, and always rushed to do good.” ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd (rA) says, “Never did we see the Messenger of Allah ﷺ weep as intensely as he wept for Ḥamzah.”⁵²

Five years later, Hind stood at the Conquest of Mecca, chastising Quraysh for surrendering to the Muslims. But she soon realized that resisting was futile, and that the heavens really did seem to support Muhammad ﷺ, and so she went to him among a group of women and gave her pledge of allegiance as a Muslim. Upon learning who she was, the Prophet ﷺ kindly replied, “Welcome, O Hind.” Touched by the unexpected magnanimity of the Messenger ﷺ, she proclaimed, “By Allah, there was no household that I wished to destroy more than yours, but now there is no household that I wish to honor more than yours.”⁵³ As for Waḥshī, the Ethiopian slave-assassin who earned his freedom by killing Ḥamzah, he fled the city at the conquest of Mecca, certain that killing a ruler’s family member warranted his death. However, the Prophet ﷺ was unlike any ruler. Waḥshī later said, “I heard that no matter how grave a person’s crime against him, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ always chose forgiveness.” This encouraged him to eventually return to Mecca, embrace Islam, and experience firsthand the forgiveness of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.⁵⁴ Waḥshī (rA) could hardly believe he lived long enough to redeem himself. He would often recall it and say, “Allah honored Ḥamzah ibn

⁵² Saḥī al-Raḥmān al-Mubārakfurī, *al-Raḥīq al-makhtūm* (Cairo: Dār al-Wafā’, 1987), 1:255.

⁵³ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 9:66, no. 7161.

⁵⁴ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 5:100, no. 4072.

‘Abdil-Muṭṭalib and al-Ṭufayl ibn al-Nu‘mān [with martyrdom] at my hands, and did not humiliate me [by being slain while a disbeliever] at their hands.’⁵⁵

His bravery and valor

The consistent and matchless bravery of Muhammad ﷺ indicated that he was not only truthful, but certain of his truthfulness, which serves as yet another endorsement of his prophethood. The Prophet ﷺ never fled in battle. Rather, he at times fought fearlessly on the front lines. It would have been perfectly understandable for the Prophet ﷺ to shield himself behind the army, for his early death would have meant the end of the message. Yet, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (rA), the celebrated warrior, would say, “I myself witnessed on the Day of Badr how we used to stay close to the Prophet ﷺ for cover, and he was the closest of us to the enemy, and he was the fiercest warrior on that day.”⁵⁶

A man once said to al-Barā’ ibn ‘Āzib (rA), “Did you flee on the Day of Ḥunayn, O Abū ‘Umārah?” He replied, “I can testify that the Prophet of Allah ﷺ did not retreat. There were some hasty young men who met—without adequate arms—a group from Hawāzin and Banū al-Naḍīr. They happened to be excellent archers, and they shot at them a volley of arrows that exposed their ranks. The people turned [for help] to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, whose mule was being led by Abū Sufyān ibn al-Ḥārith. He ﷺ dismounted, prayed, and invoked God’s help. What he said was, “I am the Prophet; this is no untruth! I am the son of ‘Abdul-Muṭṭalib! O Allah, send Your help!” By Allah, when the battle grew fierce, we would seek protection behind him, and only the bravest among us could stand by his side in battle.”⁵⁷

When Allah revealed, “O Messenger, convey that which has been revealed to you... and Allah will protect you from the people,”⁵⁸ the Prophet ﷺ forbade his Companions from continuing to stand guard at night by his door.⁵⁹ One night, the

⁵⁵ Muḥammad ibn Sa’d, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1968), 3:573.

⁵⁶ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Aḥmad*, 2:81, no. 653, authenticated by al-Arnā’ūt in the comments.

⁵⁷ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 4:30, no. 2864; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 3:1401, no. 1776b.

⁵⁸ Qur’an 5:67 (Saheeh International Translation).

⁵⁹ Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, 5:101, no. 3046.

Muslims—who remained anxious that the Romans would attack Madinah at any time—awoke, startled by a loud crash. Rushing to the scene, they found the Prophet ﷺ already returning bareback on a horse belonging to Abū Ṭalhah (rA), his sword hanging around his neck, reassuring them that it was a false alarm.⁶⁰ It takes exemplary courage, racing out alone to face potential danger like that, courage that even the bravest souls would admire.

His generosity

Everyone who interacted with Muhammad ﷺ recognized him as the most generous of people, and it was well known that he never consumed any of the charity he collected. He ﷺ would even share the wealth he acquired with his enemies to help them overcome their prejudices.

Zayd b. Su‘nah (rA) was one of the leading rabbis of Madinah. Shortly before deciding to become Muslim, Zayd thought of testing the Prophet ﷺ by lending him eighty *mithqāl* (350 grams of gold) for a fixed period. A few days before repayment was due, Zayd grabbed the Messenger of Allah ﷺ angrily by his cloak, in front of all the senior Companions, and said, “O Muhammad, why are you not paying what is due? By Allah, I know your family well! You are all known for deferring your debts!” The Prophet ﷺ said to the infuriated ‘Umar (rA) who threatened to kill Zayd for his insolence, “O ‘Umar, we do not need this... Go with him, pay off his loan, and give him twenty additional *ṣā‘* (32 kilograms) of dates because you frightened him.” It was that response that convinced Zayd b. Su‘nah to embrace Islam. He explained to ‘Umar, “There was not a single sign of prophethood except that I recognized it upon looking at Muhammad’s face—except for two that I had not yet seen from him: that his tolerance overcomes his anger, and that intense abuse only increases him in forbearance. I have now verified these, so know, O ‘Umar, that I accept Allah as my Lord, Islam as my religion, Muhammad as my Prophet, and that half my wealth—for I have much wealth—is a donation for the nation of Muhammad ﷺ.”⁶¹

⁶⁰ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 4:66, no. 3040.

⁶¹ Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān*, 1:521, no. 288.

On another occasion, Anas (rA) reports, “I was walking with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and he was wearing a Najrāni cloak with a rough collar. A Bedouin man caught up with him, then violently pulled him by his cloak, causing the cloak to tear, and leaving its collar hanging on the neck of Allah’s Messenger ﷺ. I looked at the Messenger of Allah’s ﷺ neck, and the cloak’s collar had left marks from how roughly he had snatched it. Then, he said, ‘O Muhammad, instruct them to give me from Allah’s wealth that you hold!’ The Messenger of Allah ﷺ turned to him, smiled, and then ordered that he be given something.”⁶²

‘Uqbah ibn al-Hārith (rA) reports that he once offered the afternoon prayer with the Prophet ﷺ, after which he ﷺ quickly stood and entered his apartment. Then, he reemerged and noticed some wonderment on people’s faces due to his haste. To clarify, he ﷺ said, “I remembered while I was praying that we had some gold remaining, and I disliked that our evening pass while we still have it, so I instructed that it be distributed.”⁶³ In a similar incident, ‘Āishah (rA) narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had entrusted her with seven or nine gold coins around the time of his final illness. She says that despite the severe agony he was experiencing, he kept asking her to confirm that it had been given away in charity, and each time she would explain that she could not due to being preoccupied with caring for him. Finally, he insisted, “Give it to me,” and upon receiving the gold in his hands, he ﷺ said, “What should Muhammad expect if he were to dare meet Allah while still holding onto these?”⁶⁴

His perseverance and trust in God

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ showed exemplary endurance and consistency throughout his life. Consider a man who never knew his father, lost his mother at a young age, then lost his grandfather, and then his uncle and wife simultaneously. Consider a man who lived to witness five of his six children die, and who was treated like a menace and fugitive after decades of building a flawless reputation among his people. Consider a man who experienced physical abuse until he would

⁶² Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 8:24, no. 6088.

⁶³ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 2:67, no. 1221.

⁶⁴ Ibn Hībān, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Hībān*, 2:491, no. 715.

faint, was starved for years by his own people, and faced countless campaigns of character assassination. Consider a man who was driven out of his home, sent fleeing to Madinah for shelter, only to find hypocrites there awaiting every opportunity to betray him. Consider a man watching assassination attempts against his life unfold regularly, as well as the murder and mutilation of his relatives and Companions, and then the slander of his cherished wife ‘Āishah (rA), the daughter of his most loyal comrade. Somehow, he ﷺ still persevered with hope and persisted in matchless ethics. The Prophet ﷺ rose from that abyss of negativity and not only survived but became a fountain of mercy and empathy for people, animals, and plants alike. Should we not consider this miraculous? Does it not suggest that he ﷺ must have been granted unique aid from the heavens? Only God brings the dead out of the living, and produces a spring from a rock, and nourishes a rose in the desert. Only God could have kept him smiling throughout, playing with his grandchildren, maintaining his principles, and lifting the spirits of those who had suffered so much less than him. Only God could have empowered him ﷺ to have compassion for the heartless, forgiveness for his enemies, and concern for the arrogant. Only God could have kept his heart grateful at times when others could not even be patient, and his heart merciful at times when others could not even be just.

Though the incidents reflecting his perseverance are innumerable, it suffices the honest person to simply familiarize himself with the boycott in the ravine of Abū Ṭālib. For an utterly brutal three years, the Prophet ﷺ watched the lips of his Companions turn green from eating leaves and gnawing at animal hides, out of desperation for any nourishment. In fact, he ﷺ watched his dearest family members slowly deteriorate in front of his eyes. Khadijah (rA) and Abū Ṭālib were so debilitated by the embargo that they never recovered from it; they both died soon thereafter. And with the protection of Abū Ṭālib gone, the Prophet ﷺ received in that year the most humiliating treatment of his life.

‘Āishah (rA) reported that she once asked the Prophet ﷺ, “Have you ever encountered a more difficult day than the Battle of Uḥud?” The Prophet ﷺ said,

Your tribe (Quraysh) has troubled me a great deal, but nothing was worse than the day of ‘Aqabah when I presented myself to [the chief of Taif] ‘Abd Yālayl ibn ‘Abd Kulāl, and he did not respond as I had hoped. I eventually departed, overwhelmed with grief, and did not return to my senses until I found myself at a tree where I lifted my head towards the sky to see a cloud shading me. I looked up and saw Gabriel. He called out to me, saying, “Allah has heard your people’s statements to you and how they have replied, and Allah has sent the Angel of the Mountains so that you may order him to do whatever you wish to these people.” The Angel of the Mountains greeted me and said, “O Muhammad, order what you wish, and if you like, I will let the two mountains fall upon them.” I said, “No, rather I hope that Allah will bring from their descendants people who will worship Allah alone without associating partners with Him.”⁶⁵

In other reports, he ﷺ spent ten days in Taif after speaking to its leadership and calling its people to Islam, before the mobs gathered to drive him out. They then made two rows and forced him to walk through them, while they hurled obscenities and pelted stones until blood ran down his blessed legs. The head of Zayd ibn Hārithah (rA), his adopted son, was also gashed in that assault as he attempted to shield him ﷺ.⁶⁶ But even in that darkest hour, all this compounded anguish still did not break the Prophet’s ﷺ perseverance.

It is equally remarkable how the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ never lost hope in the support and victory of Allah, regardless of how hopeless his situation would sometimes appear.⁶⁷ This optimism tells of a heart filled with supreme faith. Upon leaving Mecca for the migration, the Prophet ﷺ and Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (rA) were tracked to a cave. Mercenaries stood at the mouth of the cave, and simply had to bend over to look inside, and nothing would have prevented them from noticing and capturing the Prophet ﷺ. In that unnerving moment, when despair would

⁶⁵ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 4:115, no. 3231; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 3:1420, no. 1795.

⁶⁶ Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, 1:212.

⁶⁷ A narration exists from al-Zuhrī about the Prophet ﷺ experiencing suicidal ideation when the Revelation paused for a short period. This report has a *mu‘allaq* (incomplete) chain of transmission, as hadith specialists such as Shu‘ayb al-Arnā‘ūṭ showed in his critique on *Musnad Ahmad* (43:114). Even if it were traceable, it simply portrays the suffering, turmoil, and sadness that he ﷺ endured. After all, he ﷺ never surrendered to these passing thoughts but instead quieted them. Therefore, this incident proves—if anything—that his optimism overrode his pains, and that nothing about his life and humanness was ever hidden. Ultimately, this hiatus in revelation served to increase Muhammad’s longing for the angelic visits, and to ensure he would never take these divine communications for granted.

penetrate even the firmest of souls, the Prophet ﷺ calmly said to his Companion, “O Abū Bakr, what do you think of two when Allah is their third?”⁶⁸ The Qur’an later referenced this incident by saying,

If you do not aid the Prophet, Allah has already aided him when those who disbelieved had driven him out [of Mecca] as one of two, when they were in the cave and he said to his Companion, ‘Do not grieve; indeed Allah is with us.’ And Allah sent down His tranquility upon him and supported him with angels you did not see and made the word of those who disbelieved the lowest, while the word of Allah that is the highest. And Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise.⁶⁹

A skeptic may wonder how we know that Muhammad ﷺ did not fabricate this verse after the event, to portray a false image of his unwavering conviction in God? Such a suspicion not only ignores the established trustworthiness of Muhammad ﷺ, but also overlooks that Abū Bakr (rA) personally witnessed how calm and collected the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was in those terrifying moments and attested to it for years thereafter.

Thus was the conviction the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ had in his faith, whereby the promise of Allah that his heart saw overrode the hopelessness his eyes saw. This is identical to what occurred to Moses (as) at the shore: “And when the two companies (the Israelites and Pharaoh’s legions) saw one another, the companions of Moses said, ‘Indeed, we are to be overtaken!’ He (Moses) said, ‘No! Indeed, with me is my Lord; He will guide me.’”⁷⁰ This degree of certitude was unique to the Prophets and Messengers; even if the world lost hope, they would never unravel.

The preceding provides a glimpse of the incredible personality of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. His truly great moral character was evident to those centuries and seas apart from his lifetime. In the words of Stanley Lane-Pool (d. 1931), a British Orientalist,

⁶⁸ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 5:4, no. 3653; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 4:1854, no. 2381.

⁶⁹ Qur’an 9:40 (Saheeh International Translation).

⁷⁰ Qur’an 26:61–62 (Saheeh International Translation).

He was the most faithful protector of those he protected, the sweetest and most agreeable in conversation. Those who saw him were suddenly filled with reverence; those who came near him loved him; they who described him would say, “I have never seen his like either before or after.” He was of great taciturnity, but when he spoke it was with emphasis and deliberation, and no one could forget what he said.⁷¹

While the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is the single most followed individual in human history, his greatest followers were undoubtedly his Companions, and this is what distinguishes their testimony for his character and the truth of his message. When evaluating the integrity of Muhammad’s character, one must not overlook how profoundly admired and emulated he was by his Companions, even in the most private and nuanced particularities of his demeanor. William Montgomery Watt (d. 2006), a Scottish historian and Emeritus Professor in Arabic and Islamic Studies, wrote,

His readiness to undergo persecution for his beliefs, the high moral character of the men who believed in him and looked up to him as a leader, and the greatness of his ultimate achievement—all argue his fundamental integrity. To suppose Muhammad an imposter raises more problems than it solves. Moreover, none of the great figures of history is so poorly appreciated in the West as Muhammad... Thus, not merely must we credit Muhammad with essential honesty and integrity of purpose, if we are to understand him at all; if we are to correct the errors we have inherited from the past, we must in every particular case hold firmly to the belief in his sincerity until the opposite is conclusively proved; and we must not forget that conclusive proof is a much stricter requirement than a show of plausibility, and in a matter such as this only to be attained with difficulty.⁷²

These Companions outdid one another in emulating his smile, his selflessness, his standing for truth, and his service of humanity. They were captivated for a lifetime by his loyalty, his clarity of thought, his balanced opinions, his gentleness in teaching, his determination, and his charismatic speech. In one of dozens of

⁷¹ Stanley Lane-Poole, *The Speeches and Table-Talk of the Prophet Mohammad* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1882), xxix.

⁷² William Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), 52.

riveting narrations that have been reported from his first wave of followers, ‘Alī ibn ‘Abī Ṭālib (rA) says,

When he ﷺ looked at someone, he looked them in the eyes. He was the most generous-hearted of men, the most truthful of them in speech, the mildest-tempered of them and the noblest of them in lineage. Anyone who would describe him would say I never saw before or after him the like of him.⁷³

These Companions were not merely good people who prayed at night and devoted their lives to God. The genius of just ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (rA), for instance, has been recognized by many historians. In fact, the *Columbia History of the World* asserts how ‘Umar effected a superior bureaucracy than that of the juggernaut Roman Empire that preceded Muslim rule.⁷⁴ When a tribal Arab can construct a federal government with centralized power, but also the flexibility to make the peripheries of this union sustainable—and through that change the course of history—one should concede that this was at least an exceptional mind. This is but one person who believed in the prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ, one who mimicked him with a deep admiration. Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (rA) giving half his wealth for the sake of Islam, Bilāl ibn Rabāḥ (rA) refusing to recant his beliefs despite unthinkable torture, and Sumayyah bint Khayyāt (rA) being executed for refusing to pretend she did not believe in Muhammad ﷺ, are not trivial events. As for those who survived, they undertook the momentous task of incorporating his spirit and message into their lives, making them fully deserving of God’s praise in the Qur’an: “You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah.”⁷⁵ Being followed so ardently by this caliber of people, who experienced him before and after prophethood, and witnessed his daily behavior for decades, is a clear gauge as to how certain they were in him ﷺ and his mission.

⁷³ Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, 6:35, no. 3638.

⁷⁴ John A. Garraty and Peter Gay, eds., *The Columbia History of the World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 264.

⁷⁵ Qur’an 3:110 (Saheeh International Translation).