

# Islamic Scholastic Bowl “History of Islam” Topic IV

Source: USC-MSA Compendium of Muslim Texts

<b><u>THE RIGHTLY-GUIDED CALIPHS (AL-KHULAFU-UR-RASHIDUN)</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>
<b>THE FIRST CALIPH, ABU BAKR (632-634 A.C.)</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>THE SECOND CALIPH, UMAR (634-644 A.C.)</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>THE THIRD CALIPH, UTHMAN (644-656 A.C.)</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>THE FOURTH CALIPH, ALI (656-661 A.C.)</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>END OF THE RIGHTLY GUIDED CALIPHS</b>	<b>12</b>
<b><u>AISHAH BINT ABI BAKR</u></b>	<b><u>12</u></b>
<b><u>FATIMAH BINT MUHAMMAD</u></b>	<b><u>17</u></b>

# The Rightly-Guided Caliphs (Al-Khulafa-ur-Rashidun)

## Meaning of the Word 'Caliph'

The word 'Caliph' is the English form of the Arabic word 'Khalifa,' which is short for **Khalifatu Rasulil-lah**. The latter expression means **Successor to the Messenger of God**, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him). The title 'Khalifatu Rasulil-lah' was first used for Abu Bakr, who was elected head of the Muslim community after the death of the Prophet.

## The Significance of the Caliphate

The mission of Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him), like that of the earlier messengers of God, was to call people to the worship of and submission to the One True God. In practice, submission to God means to obey His injunctions as given in the Holy Qur'an and as exemplified by Sunnah (the practice of the Prophet). As successor to the Prophet, the Caliph was the head of the Muslim community and his primary responsibility was to continue in the path of the Prophet. Since religion was perfected and the door of Divine revelation was closed at the death of the Prophet, the Caliph was to make all laws in accordance with the Qur'an and the Sunnah. He was a ruler over Muslims but not their sovereign since sovereignty belongs to God alone. He was to be obeyed as long as he obeyed God. He was responsible for creating and maintaining conditions under which it would be easy for Muslims to live according to Islamic principles, and to see that justice was done to all. Abu Bakr, at the time he accepted the caliphate, stated his position thus:

"The weak among you shall be strong with me until their rights have been vindicated; and the strong among you shall be weak with me until, if the Lord wills, I have taken what is due from them... Obey me as long as I obey God and His Messenger. When I disobey Him and His Prophet, then obey me not."

Those Caliphs who truly followed in the Prophet's foot steps are called 'The Rightly-Guided Caliphs' (Al-Khulafa-ur Rashidun in Arabic). They are the first four Caliphs: Abu Bakr, 'Umar, Uthman and Ali. All four were among the earliest and closest Companions of the Prophet (peace be on him). They lived simple and righteous lives and strove hard for the religion of God. Their justice was impartial, their treatment of others was kind and merciful, and they were one with the people - the first among equals. After these four, the later Caliphs assumed the manners of kings and emperors and the true spirit of equality of ruler and ruled diminished to a considerable extent in the political life of Muslims.

It should be clearly understood that the mission of Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him), and hence that of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, was not political, social or economic reform, although such reforms were a logical consequence of the success of this mission, nor the unity of a nation and the establishment of an empire, although the nation did unite and vast areas came under one administration, nor the spread of a civilization or culture, although many civilizations and cultures developed, but only to deliver the message of God to all the peoples of the world and to invite them to submit to Him, while being the foremost among those who submitted.

## What About the Present?

The primary responsibility of an Islamic government is still the same as it was in the days of the early Caliphs: to make all laws in accordance with the Qur'an and the Sunnah, to make positive efforts to create and maintain conditions under which it will be possible and easy for Muslims to live an Islamic life, to secure impartial and speedy justice for all, and to strive hard in the path of God. Any government which is committed to such a policy is truly following the message delivered by the Prophet (peace be on him).

## **The First Caliph, Abu Bakr (632-634 A.C.)**

*"If I were to take a friend other than my Lord, I would take Abu Bakr as a friend." (Hadith)*

### **Election to the Caliphate**

The Prophet's closest Companion, Abu Bakr, was not present when the Holy Prophet (peace be on him) breathed his last in the apartment of his beloved wife of later years, Aisha, Abu Bakr's daughter. When he came to know of the Prophet's passing, Abu Bakr hurried to the house of sorrow.

"How blessed was your life and how beatific is your death,"

he whispered as he kissed the cheek of his beloved friend and master who now was no more.

When Abu Bakr came out of the Prophet's apartment and broke the news, disbelief and dismay gripped the community of Muslims in Medina. Muhammad (peace be on him) had been the leader, the guide and the bearer of Divine revelation through whom they had been brought from idolatry and barbarism into the way of God. How could he die? Even Umar, one of the bravest and strongest of the Prophet's Companions, lost his composure and drew his sword and threatened to kill anyone who said that the Prophet was dead. Abu Bakr gently pushed him aside, ascended the steps of the lectern in the mosque and addressed the people, saying

"O people, verily whoever worshipped Muhammad, behold! Muhammad is indeed dead. But whoever worships God, behold! God is alive and will never die."

And then he concluded with a verse from the Qur'an:

*"And Muhammad is but a Messenger. Many Messengers have gone before him; if then he dies or is killed, will you turn back upon your heels?" [\[3:144\]](#)*

On hearing these words, the people were consoled. Despondency gave place to confidence and tranquility. This critical moment had passed. But the Muslim community was now faced with an extremely serious problem: that of choosing a leader. After some discussion among the Companions of the Prophet who had assembled in order to select a leader, it became apparent that no one was better suited for this responsibility than Abu Bakr. A portion of the speech the First Caliph gave after his election has already been quoted in the introduction.

### **Abu Bakr's Life**

Abu Bakr ('The Owner of Camels') was not his real name. He acquired this name later in life because of his great interest in raising camels. His real name was Abdul Ka'aba ('Slave of Ka'aba'), which Muhammad (peace be on him) later changed to Abdullah ('Slave of God'). The Prophet also gave him the title of 'Siddiq' - 'The Testifier to the Truth.'

Abu Bakr was a fairly wealthy merchant, and before he embraced Islam, was a respected citizen of Mecca. He was three years younger than Muhammad (peace be on him) and some natural affinity drew them together from earliest childhood. He remained the closest Companion of the Prophet all through the Prophet's life. When Muhammad first invited his closest friends and relatives to Islam, Abu Bakr was among the earliest to accept it. He also persuaded Uthman and Bilal to accept Islam. In the early days of the Prophet's mission, when the handful of Muslims were subjected to relentless persecution and torture, Abu Bakr bore his full share of hardship. Finally when God's permission came to emigrate from Mecca, he was the one chosen by the Prophet to accompany him on the dangerous journey to Medina. In the numerous battles which took place during the life of the Prophet, Abu Bakr was always by his side. Once, he brought all his belongings to the Prophet, who was raising money for the defense of Medina. The Prophet asked "Abu Bakr, what did you leave for your family?" The reply came: "God and His Prophet."

Even before Islam, Abu Bakr was known to be a man of upright character and amiable and compassionate nature. All through his life he was sensitive to human suffering and kind to the poor and helpless. Even though he was wealthy, he lived very simply and spent his money for charity, for freeing slaves and for the cause of Islam. He often spent part of the night in supplication and prayer. He shared with his family a cheerful and affectionate home life.

### **Abu-Bakr's Caliphate**

Such, then, was the man upon whom the burden of leadership fell at the most sensitive period in the history of the Muslims.

As the news of the Prophet's death spread, a number of tribes rebelled and refused to pay Zakat (poor-due), saying that this was due only to the Prophet (peace be on him). At the same time a number of impostors claimed that the prophethood had passed to them after Muhammad and they raised the standard of revolt. To add to all this, two powerful empires, the Eastern Roman and the Persian, also threatened the new-born Islamic state at Medina.

Under these circumstances, many Companions of the Prophet, including Umar, advised Abu Bakr to make concessions to the Zakat evaders, at least for a time. The new Caliph disagreed. He insisted that the Divine Law cannot be divided, that there is no distinction between the obligations of Zakat and Salat (prayer), and that any compromise with the injunctions of God would eventually erode the foundations of Islam. Umar and others were quick to realize their error of judgment. The revolting tribes attacked Medina but the Muslims were prepared. Abu Bakr himself led the charge, forcing them to retreat. He then made a relentless war on the false claimants to prophethood, most of whom submitted and again professed Islam.

The threat from the Roman Empire had actually arisen earlier, during the Prophet's lifetime. The Prophet had organized an army under the command of Usama, the son of a freed slave. The army

had not gone far when the Prophet had fallen ill so they stopped. After the death of the Prophet the question was raised whether the army should be sent again or should remain for the defence of Medina. Again Abu Bakr showed a firm determination. He said, "I shall send Usama's army on its way as ordered by the Prophet, even if I am left alone."

The final instructions he gave to Usama prescribed a code of conduct in war which remains unsurpassed to this day. Part of his instructions to the Muslim army were:

"Do not be deserters, nor be guilty of disobedience. Do not kill an old man, a woman or a child. Do not injure date palms and do not cut down fruit trees. Do not slaughter any sheep or cows or camels except for food. You will encounter persons who spend their lives in monasteries. Leave them alone and do not molest them."

Khalid bin Waleed had been chosen by the Prophet (peace be on him) on several occasions to lead Muslim armies. A man of supreme courage and a born leader, his military genius came to full flower during the Caliphate of Abu Bakr. Throughout Abu Bakr's reign Khalid led his troops from one victory to another against the attacking Romans.

Another contribution of Abu Bakr to the cause of Islam was the collection and compilation of the verses of the Qur'an.

Abu Bakr died on 21 Jamadi-al Akhir, 13 A.H. (23 August 634 A.C.), at the age of sixty-three, and was buried by the side of the Holy Prophet (peace be on him). His caliphate had been of a mere twenty-seven months duration. In this brief span, however, Abu Bakr had managed, by the Grace of God, to strengthen and consolidate his community and the state, and to secure the Muslims against the perils which had threatened their existence.

## **The Second Caliph, Umar (634-644 A.C.)**

*"God has placed truth upon Umar's tongue and heart. (Hadith)"*

### **'Umar's Life**

During his last illness Abu Bakr had conferred with his people, particularly the more eminent among them. After this meeting they chose 'Umar as his successor. 'Umar was born into a respected Quraish family thirteen years after the birth of Muhammad (peace be on him). Umar's family was known for its extensive knowledge of genealogy. When he grew up, 'Umar was proficient in this branch of knowledge as well as in swordsmanship, wrestling and the art of speaking. He also learned to read and write while still a child, a very rare thing in Mecca at that time. 'Umar earned his living as a merchant. His trade took him to many foreign lands and he met all kinds of people. This experience gave him an insight into the affairs and problems of men. 'Umar's personality was dynamic, self-assertive, frank and straight forward. He always spoke whatever was in his mind even if it displeased others.

'Umar was twenty-seven when the Prophet (peace be on him) proclaimed his mission. The ideas Muhammad was preaching enraged him as much as they did the other notables of Mecca. He

was just as bitter against anyone accepting Islam as others among the Quraish. When his slave-girl accepted Islam he beat her until he himself was exhausted and told her, "I have stopped because I am tired, not out of pity for you." The story of his embracing Islam is an interesting one. One day, full of anger against the Prophet, he drew his sword and set out to kill him. A friend met him on the way. When 'Umar told him what he planned to do, his friend informed him that 'Umar's own sister, Fatima, and her husband had also accepted Islam. 'Umar went straight to his sister's house where he found her reading from pages of the Qur'an. He fell upon her and beat her mercilessly. Bruised and bleeding, she told her brother, "Umar, you can do what you like, but you cannot turn our hearts away from Islam." These words produced a strange effect upon 'Umar. What was this faith that made even weak women so strong of heart? He asked his sister to show him what she had been reading; he was at once moved to the core by the words of the Qur'an and immediately grasped their truth. He went straight to the house where the Prophet was staying and vowed allegiance to him.

'Umar made no secret of his acceptance of Islam. He gathered the Muslims and offered prayers at the Ka'aba. This boldness and devotion of an influential citizen of Mecca raised the morale of the small community of Muslims. Nonetheless 'Umar was also subjected to privations, and when permission for emigration to Medina came, he also left Mecca. The soundness of 'Umar's judgment, his devotion to the Prophet (peace be on him), his outspokenness and uprightness won for him a trust and confidence from the Prophet which was second only to that given to Abu Bakr. The Prophet gave him the title 'Farooq' which means the 'Separator of Truth from Falsehood.' During the Caliphate of Abu Bakr, 'Umar was his closest assistant and adviser. When Abu Bakr died, all the people of Medina swore allegiance to 'Umar, and on 23 Jamadi-al-Akhir, 13 A.H., he was proclaimed Caliph.

### **'Umar's Caliphate**

After taking charge of his office, 'Umar spoke to the Muslims of Medina:

"...O people, you have some rights on me which you can always claim. One of your rights is that if anyone of you comes to me with a claim, he should leave satisfied. Another of your rights is that you can demand that I take nothing unjustly from the revenues of the State. You can also demand that... I fortify your frontiers and do not put you into danger. It is also your right that if you go to battle I should look after your families as a father would while you are away. "O people, remain conscious of God, forgive me my faults and help me in my task. Assist me in enforcing what is good and forbidding what is evil. Advise me regarding the obligations that have been imposed upon me by God..."

The most notable feature of 'Umar's caliphate was the vast expansion of Islam. Apart from Arabia, Egypt, Iraq, Palestine and Iran also came under the protection of the Islamic government. But the greatness of 'Umar himself lies in the quality of his rule. He gave a practical meaning to the Qur'anic injunction:

*"O you who believe, stand out firmly for justice as witnesses to God, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it concerns rich or poor, for God can best protect both." [4:135]*

Once a woman brought a claim against the Caliph 'Umar. When 'Umar appeared on trial before the judge, the judge stood up as a sign of respect toward him. 'Umar reprimanded him, saying, "This is the first act of injustice you did to this woman!"

He insisted that his appointed governors live simple lives, keep no guard at their doors and be accessible to the people at all times, and he himself set the example for them. Many times foreign envoys and messengers sent to him by his generals found him resting under a palm tree or praying in the mosque among the people, and it was difficult for them to distinguish which man was the Caliph. He spent many a watchful night going about the streets of Medina to see whether anyone needed help or assistance. The general social and moral tone of the Muslim society at that time is well-illustrated by the words of an Egyptian who was sent to spy on the Muslims during their Egyptian campaign. He reported:

"I have seen a people, every one of whom loves death more than he loves life. They cultivate humility rather than pride. None is given to material ambitions. Their mode of living is simple... Their commander is their equal. They make no distinction between superior and inferior, between master and slave. When the time of prayer approaches, none remains behind..."

'Umar gave his government an administrative structure. Departments of treasury, army and public revenues were established. Regular salaries were set up for soldiers. A population census was held. Elaborate land surveys were conducted to assess equitable taxes. New cities were founded. The areas which came under his rule were divided into provinces and governors were appointed. New roads were laid, canals were dug and wayside hotels were built. Provision was made for the support of the poor and the needy from public funds. He defined, by precept and by example, the rights and privileges of non-Muslims, an example of which is the following contract with the Christians of Jerusalem:

"This is the protection which the servant of God, 'Umar, the Ruler of the Believers has granted to the people of Eiliya [Jerusalem]. The protection is for their lives and properties, their churches and crosses, their sick and healthy and for all their coreligionists. Their churches shall not be used for habitation, nor shall they be demolished, nor shall any injury be done to them or to their compounds, or to their crosses, nor shall their properties be injured in any way. There shall be no compulsion for these people in the matter of religion, nor shall any of them suffer any injury on account of religion... Whatever is written herein is under the covenant of God and the responsibility of His Messenger, of the Caliphs and of the believers, and shall hold good as long as they pay Jizya [the tax for their defense] imposed on them."

Those non-Muslims who took part in defense together with the Muslims were exempted from paying Jizya, and when the Muslims had to retreat from a city whose non-Muslim citizens had paid this tax for their defense, the tax was returned to the non-Muslims. The old, the poor and the disabled of Muslims and non-Muslims alike were provided for from the public treasury and from the Zakat funds.

## **'Umar's Death**

In 23 A.H., when Umar returned to Medina from Hajj, he raised his hands and prayed,

"O God! I am advanced in years, my bones are weary, my powers are declining, and the people for whom I am responsible have spread far and wide. Summon me back to Thyself, my lord!" Some time later, when 'Umar went to the mosque to lead a prayer, a Magian named Abu Lulu Feroze, who had a grudge against 'Umar on a personal matter, attacked him with a dagger and stabbed him several times. Umar reeled and fell to the ground. When he learned that the assassin was a Magian, he said, "Thank God he is not a Muslim."

'Umar died in the first week of Muharram, 24 A.H., and was buried by the side of the Holy Prophet (peace be on him).

## **The Third Caliph, Uthman (644-656 A.C.)**

*"Every Prophet has an assistant, and my assistant will be Uthman."(Hadith)*

### **Uthman's Election**

When 'Umar fell under the assassin's dagger, before he died the people asked him to nominate his successor. 'Umar appointed a committee consisting of six of the ten companions of the Prophet (peace be on him) about whom the Prophet had said, "They are the people of Heaven" - Ali, Uthman, Abdul Rahman, Sa'ad, Al-Zubayr and Talha - to select the next Caliph from among themselves. He also outlined the procedure to be followed if any differences of opinion should arise. Abdul Rahman withdrew his name. He was then authorized by the committee to nominate the Caliph. After two days of discussion among the candidates and after the opinions of the Muslims in Medina had been ascertained, the choice was finally limited to Uthman and Ali. Abdul Rahman came to the mosque together with other Muslims, and after a brief speech and questioning of the two men, swore allegiance to Uthman. All those present did the same, and Uthman became the third Caliph of Islam in the month of Muharram, 24 A.H.

### **Uthman's Life**

Uthman bin Affan was born seven years after the Holy Prophet (peace be on him). He belonged to the Omayyad branch of the Quraish tribe. He learned to read and write at an early age, and as a young man became a successful merchant. Even before Islam Uthman had been noted for his truthfulness and integrity. He and Abu Bakr were close friends, and it was Abu Bakr who brought him to Islam when he was thirty-four years of age. Some years later he married the Prophet's second daughter, Ruqayya. In spite of his wealth and position, his relatives subjected him to torture because he had embraced Islam, and he was forced to emigrate to Abyssinia. Some time later he returned to Mecca but soon migrated to Medina with the other Muslims. In Medina his business again began to flourish and he regained his former prosperity. Uthman's generosity had no limits. On various occasions he spent a great portion of his wealth for the welfare of the Muslims, for charity and for equipping the Muslim armies. That is why he came to be known as 'Ghani' meaning 'Generous.'

Uthman's wife, Ruqayya was seriously ill just before the Battle of Badr and he was excused by the Prophet (peace be on him) from participating in the battle. The illness Ruqayya proved fatal, leaving Uthman deeply grieved. The Prophet was moved and offered Uthman the hand of

another of his daughters, Kulthum. Because he had the high privilege of having two daughters of the Prophet as wives Uthman was known as 'The Possessor of the Two Lights. '

Uthman participated in the Battles of Uhud and the Trench. After the encounter of the Trench, the Prophet (peace be on him) determined to perform Hajj and sent Uthman as his emissary to the Quraish in Mecca, who detained him. The episode ended in a treaty with the Meccans known as the Treaty of Hudaibiya.

The portrait we have of Uthman is of an unassuming, honest, mild, generous and very kindly man, noted especially for his modesty and his piety. He often spent part of the night in prayer, fasted every second or third day, performed hajj every year, and looked after the needy of the whole community. In spite of his wealth, he lived very simply and slept on bare sand in the courtyard of the Prophet's mosque. Uthman knew the Qur'an from memory and had an intimate knowledge of the context and circumstances relating to each verse.

### **Uthman's Caliphate**

During Uthman's rule the characteristics of Abu Bakr's and Umar's caliphates - impartial justice for all, mild and humane policies, striving in the path of God, and the expansion of Islam - continued. Uthman's realm extended in the west to Morocco, in the east to Afghanistan, and in the north to Armenia and Azerbaijan. During his caliphate a navy was organized, administrative divisions of the state were revised, and many public projects were expanded and completed. Uthman sent prominent Companions of the Prophet (peace be on him) as his personal deputies to various provinces to scrutinize the conduct of officials and the condition of the people.

Uthman's most notable contribution to the religion of God was the compilation of a complete and authoritative text of the Qur'an. A large number of copies of this text were made and distributed all over the Muslim world.

Uthman ruled for twelve years. The first six years were marked by internal peace and tranquility, but during the second half of his caliphate a rebellion arose. The Jews and the Magians, taking advantage of dissatisfaction among the people, began conspiring against Uthman, and by publicly airing their complaints and grievances, gained so much sympathy that it became difficult to distinguish friend from foe.

It may seem surprising that a ruler of such vast territories, whose armies were matchless, was unable to deal with these rebels. If Uthman had wished, the rebellion could have been crushed at the very moment it began. But he was reluctant to be the first to shed the blood of Muslims, however rebellious they might be. He preferred to reason with them, to persuade them with kindness and generosity. He well remembered hearing the Prophet (peace be on him) say, "Once the sword is unsheathed among my followers, it will not be sheathed until the Last Day."

The rebels demanded that he abdicate and some of the Companions advised him to do so. He would gladly have followed this course of action, but again he was bound by a solemn pledge he had given to the Prophet. "Perhaps God will clothe you with a shirt, Uthman" the Prophet had told him once, "and if the people want you to take it off, do not take it off for them." Uthman

said to a well-wisher on a day when his house was surrounded by the rebels, "God's Messenger made a covenant with me and I shall show endurance in adhering to it."

After a long siege, the rebels broke into Uthman's house and murdered him. When the first assassin's sword struck Uthman, he was reciting the verse,

*"Verily, God sufficeth thee; He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing" [\[2:137\]](#)*

Uthman breathed his last on the afternoon of Friday, 17 Dhul Hijja, 35 A.H. (June. (656 A.C.). He was eighty-four years old. The power of the rebels was so great that Uthman's body lay unburied until Saturday night when he was buried in his blood-stained clothes, the shroud which befits all martyrs in the cause of God.

## **The Fourth Caliph, Ali (656-661 A.C.)**

*"You [Ali] are my brother in this world and the next." (Hadith)*

### **Ali's Election**

After Uthman's martyrdom, the office of the caliphate remained unfilled for two or three days. Many people insisted that Ali should take up the office, but he was embarrassed by the fact that the people who pressed him hardest were the rebels, and he therefore declined at first. When the notable Companions of the Prophet (peace be on him) urged him, however, he finally agreed.

### **Ali's Life**

Ali bin Abi Talib was the first cousin of the Prophet (peace be on him). More than that, he had grown up in the Prophet's own household, later married his youngest daughter, Fatima, and remained in closest association with him for nearly thirty years.

Ali was ten years old when the Divine Message came to Muhammad (peace be on him). One night he saw the Prophet and his wife Khadijah bowing and prostrating. He asked the Prophet about the meaning of their actions. The Prophet told him that they were praying to God Most High and that Ali too should accept Islam. Ali said that he would first like to ask his father about it. He spent a sleepless night, and in the morning he went to the Prophet and said, "When God created me He did not consult my father, so why should I consult my father in order to serve God?" and he accepted the truth of Muhammad's message.

When the Divine command came, "And warn thy nearest relatives" [\[26:214\]](#), Muhammad (peace be on him) invited his relatives for a meal. After it was finished, he addressed them and asked, "Who will join me in the cause of God?" There was utter silence for a while, and then Ali stood up. "I am the youngest of all present here," he said, "My eyes trouble me because they are sore and my legs are thin and weak, but I shall join you and help you in whatever way I can." The assembly broke up in derisive laughter. But during the difficult wars in Mecca, Ali stood by these words and faced all the hardships to which the Muslims were subjected. He slept in the bed of the Prophet when the Quraish planned to murder Muhammad. It was he to whom the Prophet

entrusted, when he left Mecca, the valuables which had been given to him for safekeeping, to be returned to their owners.

Apart from the expedition of Tabuk, Ali fought in all the early battles of Islam with great distinction, particularly in the expedition of Khaybar. It is said that in the Battle of Uhud he received more than sixteen wounds.

The Prophet (peace be on him) loved Ali dearly and called him by many fond names. Once the Prophet found him sleeping in the dust. He brushed off Ali's clothes and said fondly, "Wake up, Abu Turab (Father of Dust)." The Prophet also gave him the title of 'Asadullah' ('Lion of God').

Ali's humility, austerity, piety, deep knowledge of the Qur'an and his sagacity gave him great distinction among the Prophet's Companions. Abu Bakr, 'Umar and Uthman consulted him frequently during their caliphates. Many times 'Umar had made him his vice-regent at Medina when he was away. Ali was also a great scholar of Arabic literature and pioneered in the field of grammar and rhetoric. His speeches, sermons and letters served for generations afterward as models of literary expression. Many of his wise and epigrammatic sayings have been preserved. Ali thus had a rich and versatile personality. In spite of these attainments he remained a modest and humble man. Once during his caliphate when he was going about the marketplace, a man stood up in respect and followed him. "Do not do it," said Ali. "Such manners are a temptation for a ruler and a disgrace for the ruled."

Ali and his household lived extremely simple and austere lives. Sometimes they even went hungry themselves because of Ali's great generosity, and none who asked for help was ever turned away from his door. His plain, austere style of living did not change even when he was ruler over a vast domain.

## **Ali's Caliphate**

As mentioned previously, Ali accepted the caliphate very reluctantly. Uthman's murder and the events surrounding it were a symptom, and also became a cause, of civil strife on a large scale. Ali felt that the tragic situation was mainly due to inept governors. He therefore dismissed all the governors who had been appointed by Uthman and appointed new ones. All the governors excepting Muawiya, the governor of Syria, submitted to his orders. Muawiya declined to obey until Uthman's blood was avenged. The Prophet's widow Aisha also took the position that Ali should first bring the murderers to trial. Due to the chaotic conditions during the last days of Uthman it was very difficult to establish the identity of the murderers, and Ali refused to punish anyone whose guilt was not lawfully proved. Thus a battle between the army of Ali and the supporters of Aisha took place. Aisha later realized her error of judgment and never forgave herself for it.

The situation in Hijaz (the part of Arabia in which Mecca and Medina are located) became so troubled that Ali moved his capital to Iraq. Muawiya now openly rebelled against Ali and a fierce battle was fought between their armies. This battle was inconclusive, and Ali had to accept the de facto government of Muawiya in Syria.

However, even though the era of Ali's caliphate was marred by civil strife, he nevertheless introduced a number of reforms, particularly in the levying and collecting of revenues.

It was the fortieth year of Hijra. A fanatical group called Kharijites, consisting of people who had broken away from Ali due to his compromise with Muawiya, claimed that neither Ali, the Caliph, nor Muawiya, the ruler of Syria, nor Amr bin al-Aas, the ruler of Egypt, were worthy of rule. In fact, they went so far as to say that the true caliphate came to an end with 'Umar and that Muslims should live without any ruler over them except God. They vowed to kill all three rulers, and assassins were dispatched in three directions.

The assassins who were deputed to kill Muawiya and Amr did not succeed and were captured and executed, but Ibn-e-Muljim, the assassin who was commissioned to kill Ali, accomplished his task. One morning when Ali was absorbed in prayer in a mosque, Ibn-e-Muljim stabbed him with a poisoned sword. On the 20th of Ramadan, 40 A.H., died the last of the Rightly Guided Caliphs of Islam. May God Most High be pleased with them and grant to them His eternal reward.

## **End of the Rightly Guided Caliphs**

With the death of Ali, the first and most notable phase in the history of Muslim peoples came to an end. All through this period it had been the Book of God and the practices of His Messenger - that is, the Qur'an and the Sunnah - which had guided the leaders and the led, set the standards of their moral conduct and inspired their actions. It was the time when the ruler and the ruled, the rich and the poor, the powerful and the weak, were uniformly subject to the Divine Law. It was an epoch of freedom and equality, of God-consciousness and humility, of social justice which recognized no privileges, and of an impartial law which accepted no pressure groups or vested interests.

After Ali, Muawiya assumed the caliphate and thereafter the caliphate became hereditary, passing from one king to another.

## **Aishah bint Abi Bakr**

The life of Aishah is proof that a woman can be far more learned than men and that she can be the teacher of scholars and experts. Her life is also proof that a woman can exert influence over men and women and provide them with inspiration and leadership. Her life is also proof that the same woman can be totally feminine and be a source of pleasure, joy and comfort to her husband.

She did not graduate from any university there were no universities as such in her day. But still her utterances are studied in faculties of literature, her legal pronouncements are studied in colleges of law and her life and works are studied and researched by students and teachers of Muslim history as they have been for over a thousand years.

The bulk of her vast treasure of knowledge was obtained while she was still quite young. In her early childhood she was brought up by her father who was greatly liked and respected for he was a man of wide knowledge, gentle manners and an agreeable presence. Moreover he was the closest friend of the noble Prophet who was a frequent visitor to their home since the very early days of his mission.

In her youth, already known for her striking beauty and her formidable memory, she came under the loving care and attention of the Prophet himself. As his wife and close companion she acquired from him knowledge and insight such as no woman has ever acquired.

Aishah became the Prophet's wife in Makkah when she was most likely in the tenth year of her life but her wedding did not take place until the second year after the Hijrah when she was about fourteen or fifteen years old. Before and after her wedding she maintained a natural jollity and innocence and did not seem at all overawed by the thought of being wedded to him who was the Messenger of God whom all his companions, including her own mother and father, treated with such love and reverence as they gave to no one else.

About her wedding, she related that shortly before she was to leave her parent's house, she slipped out into the courtyard to play with a passing friend:

"I was playing on a see-saw and my long streaming hair was dishevelled," she said. "They came and took me from my play and made me ready."

They dressed her in a wedding-dress made from fine red-striped cloth from Bahrain and then her mother took her to the newly-built house where some women of the Ansar were waiting outside the door. They greeted her with the words "For good and for happiness may all be well!" Then, in the presence of the smiling Prophet, a bowl of milk was brought. The Prophet drank from it himself and offered it to Aishah. She shyly declined it but when he insisted she did so and then offered the bowl to her sister Asma who was sitting beside her. Others also drank of it and that was as much as there was of the simple and solemn occasion of their wedding. There was no wedding feast.

Marriage to the Prophet did not change her playful ways. Her young friends came regularly to visit her in her own apartment.

"I would be playing with my dolls," she said, "with the girls who were my friends, and the Prophet would come in and they would slip out of the house and he would go out after them and bring them back, for he was pleased for my sake to have them there." Sometimes he would say "Stay where you are" before they had time to leave, and would also join in their games. Aishah said: "One day, the Prophet came in when I was playing with the dolls and he said: 'O Aishah, whatever game is this?' 'It is Solomon's horses,' I said and he laughed." Sometimes as he came in he would screen himself with his cloak so as not to disturb Aishah and her friends.

Aishah's early life in Madinah also had its more serious and anxious times. Once her father and two companions who were staying with him fell ill with a dangerous fever which was common in Madinah at certain seasons. One morning Aishah went to visit him and was dismayed to find

the three men lying completely weak and exhausted. She asked her father how he was and he answered her in verse but she did not understand what he was saying. The two others also answered her with lines of poetry which seemed to her to be nothing but unintelligible babbling. She was deeply troubled and went home to the Prophet saying:

"They are raving, out of their minds, through the heat of the fever." The Prophet asked what they had said and was somewhat reassured when she repeated almost word for word the lines they had uttered and which made sense although she did not fully understand them then. This was a demonstration of the great retentive power of her memory which as the years went by were to preserve so many of the priceless sayings of the Prophet.

Of the Prophet's wives in Madinah, it was clear that it was Aishah that he loved most. From time to time, one or the other of his companions would ask:

"O Messenger of God, whom do you love most in the world?" He did not always give the same answer to this question for he felt great love for many for his daughters and their children, for Abu Bakr, for Ali, for Zayd and his son Usamah. But of his wives the only one he named in this connection was Aishah. She too loved him greatly in return and often would seek reassurance from him that he loved her. Once she asked him: "How is your love for me?"

"Like the rope's knot," he replied meaning that it was strong and secure. And time after time thereafter, she would ask him: "How is the knot?" and he would reply: "Ala haaliha in the same condition."

As she loved the Prophet so was her love a jealous love and she could not bear the thought that the Prophet's attentions should be given to others more than seemed enough to her. She asked him:

"O Messenger of God, tell me of yourself. If you were between the two slopes of a valley, one of which had not been grazed whereas the other had been grazed, on which would you pasture your flocks?"

"On that which had not been grazed," replied the Prophet. "Even so," she said, "and I am not as any other of your wives. "Everyone of them had a husband before you, except myself." The Prophet smiled and said nothing. Of her jealousy, Aishah would say in later years:

"I was not, jealous of any other wife of the Prophet as I was jealous of Khadijah, because of his constant mentioning of her and because God had commanded him to give her good tidings of a mansion in Paradise of precious stones. And whenever he sacrificed a sheep he would send a fair portion of it to those who had been her intimate friends. Many a time I said to him: "It is as if there had never been any other woman in the world except Khadijah."

Once, when Aishah complained and asked why he spoke so highly of "an old Quraysh woman", the Prophet was hurt and said: "She was the wife who believed in me when others rejected me. When people gave me the lie, she affirmed my truthfulness. When I stood forsaken, she spent her wealth to lighten the burden of my sorrow.."

Despite her feelings of jealousy which nonetheless were not of a destructive kind, Aishah was really a generous soul and a patient one. She bore with the rest of the Prophet's household poverty and hunger which often lasted for long periods. For days on end no fire would be lit in the sparsely furnished house of the Prophet for cooking or baking bread and they would live merely on dates and water. Poverty did not cause her distress or humiliation; self-sufficiency when it did come did not corrupt her style of life.

Once the Prophet stayed away from his wives for a month because they had distressed him by asking of him that which he did not have. This was after the Khaybar expedition when an increase of riches whetted the appetite for presents. Returning from his self-imposed retreat, he went first to Aishah's apartment. She was delighted to see him but he said he had received Revelation which required him to put two options before her. He then recited the verses:

"O Prophet! Say to your wives: If you desire the life of this world and its adornments, then come and I will bestow its goods upon you, and I will release you with a fair release. But if you desire God and His Messenger and the abode of the Hereafter, then verily God has laid in store for you an immense reward for such as you who do good."

Aishah's reply was:

"Indeed I desire God and His Messenger and the abode of the Hereafter," and her response was followed by all the others.

She stuck to her choice both during the lifetime of the Prophet and afterwards. Later when the Muslims were favored with enormous riches, she was given a gift of one hundred thousand dirhams. She was fasting when she received the money and she distributed the entire amount to the poor and the needy even though she had no provisions in her house. Shortly after, a maidservant said to her: "Could you buy meat for a dirham with which to break your fast?"

"If I had remembered, I would have done so," she said. The Prophet's affection for Aishah remained to the last. During his final illness, it was to Aishah's apartment that he went at the suggestion of his wives. For much of the time he lay there on a couch with his head resting on her breast or on her lap. She it was who took a toothstick from her brother, chewed upon it to soften it and gave it to the Prophet. Despite his weakness, he rubbed his teeth with it vigorously. Not long afterwards, he lost consciousness and Aishah thought it was the onset of death, but after an hour he opened his eyes.

Aishah it is who has preserved for us these dying moments of the most honoured of God's creation, His beloved Messenger may He shower His choicest blessings on him.

When he opened his eyes again, Aishah remembered Iris having said to her: "No Prophet is taken by death until he has been shown his place in Paradise and then offered the choice, to live or die."

"He will not now choose us," she said to herself. Then she heard him murmur: "With the supreme communion in Paradise, with those upon whom God has showered His favor, the

Prophets, the martyrs and the righteous..." Again she heard him murmur: "O Lord, with the supreme communion," and these were the last words she heard him speak. Gradually his head grew heavier upon her breast, until others in the room began to lament, and Aishah laid his head on a pillow and joined them in lamentation.

In the floor of Aishah's room near the couch where he was lying, a grave was dug in which was buried the Seal of the Prophets amid much bewilderment and great sorrow.

Aishah lived on almost fifty years after the passing away of the Prophet. She had been his wife for a decade. Much of this time was spent in learning and acquiring knowledge of the two most important sources of God's guidance, the Quran and the Sunnah of His Prophet. Aishah was one of three wives (the other two being Hafsa and Umm Salamah) who memorized the Revelation. Like Hafsa, she had her own script of the Quran written after the Prophet had died.

So far as the Ahadith or sayings of the Prophet is concerned, Aishah is one of four persons (the others being Abu Hurayrah, Abdullah ibn Umar, and Anas ibn Malik) who transmitted more than two thousand sayings. Many of these pertain to some of the most intimate aspects of personal behavior which only someone in Aishah's position could have learnt. What is most important is that her knowledge of hadith was passed on in written form by at least three persons including her nephew Urwah who became one of the greatest scholars among the generation after the Companions.

Many of the learned companions of the Prophet and their followers benefitted from Aishah's knowledge. Abu Musa al-Ashari once said: "If we companions of the Messenger of God had any difficulty on a matter, we asked Aishah about it."

Her nephew Urwah asserts that she was proficient not only in fiqh but also in medicine (tibb) and poetry. Many of the senior companions of the Prophet came to her to ask for advice concerning questions of inheritance which required a highly skilled mathematical mind. Scholars regard her as one of the earliest fuqaha of Islam along with persons like Umar ibn al-Khattab, Ali and Abdullah ibn Abbas. The Prophet referring to her extensive knowledge of Islam is reported to have said: "Learn a portion of your religion (din) from this red colored lady." "Humayra" meaning "Red-coloured" was an epithet given to Aishah by the Prophet.

Aishah not only possessed great knowledge but took an active part in education and social reform. As a teacher she had a clear and persuasive manner of speech and her power of oratory has been described in superlative terms by al-Ahnaf who said: "I have heard speeches of Abu Bakr and Umar, Uthman and Ali and the Khulafa up to this day, but I have not heard speech more persuasive and more beautiful from the mouth of any person than from the mouth of Aishah."

Men and women came from far and wide to benefit from her knowledge. The number of women is said to have been greater than that of men. Besides answering enquiries, she took boys and girls, some of them orphans, into her custody and trained them under her care and guidance. This was in addition to her relatives who received instruction from her. Her house thus became a school and an academy.

Some of her students were outstanding. We have already mentioned her nephew Urwah as a distinguished reporter of hadith. Among her women pupils is the name of Umrah bint Abdur Rahman. She is regarded by scholars as one of the trustworthy narrators of hadith and is said to have acted as Aishah's secretary receiving and replying to letters addressed to her. The example of Aishah in promoting education and in particular the education of Muslim women in the laws and teachings of Islam is one which needs to be followed.

After Khadijah al-Kubra (the Great) and Fatimah az-Zahra (the Resplendent), Aishah as-Siddiqah (the one who affirms the Truth) is regarded as the best woman in Islam. Because of the strength of her personality, she was a leader in every field in knowledge, in society, in politics and in war. She often regretted her involvement in war but lived long enough to regain position as the most respected woman of her time. She died in the year 58 AH in the month of Ramadan and as she instructed, was buried in the Jannat al-Baqi in the City of Light, beside other companions of the Prophet.

## **Fatimah bint Muhammad**

Fatimah was the fifth child of Muhammad and Khadijah. She was born at a time when her noble father had begun to spend long periods in the solitude of mountains around Makkah, meditating and reflecting on the great mysteries of creation.

This was the time, before the Bithah, when her eldest sister Zaynab was married to her cousin, al-Aas ibn ar Rabi'ah. Then followed the marriage of her two other sisters, Ruqayyah and Umm Kulthum, to the sons of Abu Lahab, a paternal uncle of the Prophet. Both Abu Lahab and his wife Umm Jamil turned out to be flaming enemies of the Prophet from the very beginning of his public mission.

The little Fatimah thus saw her sisters leave home one after the other to live with their husbands. She was too young to understand the meaning of marriage and the reasons why her sisters had to leave home. She loved them dearly and was sad and lonely when they left. It is said that a certain silence and painful sadness came over her then.

Of course, even after the marriage of her sisters, she was not alone in the house of her parents. Barakah, the maid-servant of Aminah, the Prophet's mother, who had been with the Prophet since his birth, Zayd ibn Harithah, and Ali, the young son of Abu Talib were all part of Muhammad's household at this time. And of course there was her loving mother, the lady Khadijah.

In her mother and in Barakah, Fatimah found a great deal of solace and comfort in Ali, who was about two years older than she, she found a "brother" and a friend who somehow took the place of her own brother al-Qasim who had died in his infancy. Her other brother Abdullah, known as the Good and the Pure, who was born after her, also died in his infancy. However in none of the people in her father's household did Fatimah find the carefree joy and happiness which she enjoyed with her sisters. She was an unusually sensitive child for her age.

When she was five, she heard that her father had become Rasul Allah, the Messenger of God. His first task was to convey the good news of Islam to his family and close relations. They were to worship God Almighty alone. Her mother, who was a tower of strength and support, explained to Fatimah what her father had to do. From this time on, she became more closely attached to him and felt a deep and abiding love for him. Often she would be at his side walking through the narrow streets and alleys of Makkah, visiting the Kabah or attending secret gatherings of the early Muslims who had accepted Islam and pledged allegiance to the Prophet.

One day, when she was not yet ten, she accompanied her father to the Masjid al-Haram. He stood in the place known as al-Hijr facing the Kabah and began to pray. Fatimah stood at his side. A group of Quraysh, by no means well-disposed to the Prophet, gathered about him. They included Abu Jahl ibn Hisham, the Prophet's uncle, Uqbah ibn Abi Muayt, Umayyah ibn Khalaf, and Shaybah and Utbah, sons of Rabi'ah. Menacingly, the group went up to the Prophet and Abu Jahl, the ringleader, asked:

"Which of you can bring the entrails of a slaughtered animal and throw it on Muhammad?"

Uqbah ibn Abi Muayt, one of the vilest of the lot, volunteered and hurried off. He returned with the obnoxious filth and threw it on the shoulders of the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, while he was still prostrating. Abdullah ibn Masud, a companion of the Prophet, was present but he was powerless to do or say anything.

Imagine the feelings of Fatimah as she saw her father being treated in this fashion. What could she, a girl not ten years old, do? She went up to her father and removed the offensive matter and then stood firmly and angrily before the group of Quraysh thugs and lashed out against them. Not a single word did they say to her. The noble Prophet raised his head on completion of the prostration and went on to complete the Salat. He then said: "O Lord, may you punish the Quraysh!" and repeated this imprecation three times. Then he continued:

"May You punish Utbah, Uqbah, Abu Jahl and Shaybah." (These whom he named were all killed many years later at the Battle of Badr)

On another occasion, Fatimah was with the Prophet as he made tawaf around the Kabah. A Quraysh mob gathered around him. They seized him and tried to strangle him with his own clothes. Fatimah screamed and shouted for help. Abu Bakr rushed to the scene and managed to free the Prophet. While he was doing so, he pleaded: "Would you kill a man who says, 'My Lord is God?'" Far from giving up, the mob turned on Abu Bakr and began beating him until blood flowed from his head and face.

Such scenes of vicious opposition and harassment against her father and the early Muslims were witnessed by the young Fatimah. She did not meekly stand aside but joined in the struggle in defence of her father and his noble mission. She was still a young girl and instead of the cheerful romping, the gaiety and liveliness which children of her age are and should normally be accustomed to, Fatimah had to witness and participate in such ordeals.

Of course, she was not alone in this. The whole of the Prophet's family suffered from the violent and mindless Quraysh. Her sisters, Ruqayyah and Umm Kulthum also suffered. They were living at this time in the very nest of hatred and intrigue against the Prophet. Their husbands were Utbah and Utaybah, sons of Abu Lahab and Umm Jamil. Umm Jamil was known to be a hard and harsh woman who had a sharp and evil tongue. It was mainly because of her that Khadijah was not pleased with the marriages of her daughters to Umm Jamil's sons in the first place. It must have been painful for Ruqayyah and Umm Kulthum to be living in the household of such inveterate enemies who not only joined but led the campaign against their father.

As a mark of disgrace to Muhammad and his family, Utbah and Utaybah were prevailed upon by their parents to divorce their wives. This was part of the process of ostracizing the Prophet totally. The Prophet in fact welcomed his daughters back to his home with joy, happiness and relief.

Fatimah, no doubt, must have been happy to be with her sisters once again. They all wished that their eldest sister, Zaynab, would also be divorced by her husband. In fact, the Quraysh brought pressure on Abu-l Aas to do so but he refused. When the Quraysh leaders came up to him and promised him the richest and most beautiful woman as a wife should he divorce Zaynab, he replied:

"I love my wife deeply and passionately and I have a great and high esteem for her father even though I have not entered the religion of Islam."

Both Ruqayyah and Umm Kulthum were happy to be back with their loving parents and to be rid of the unbearable mental torture to which they had been subjected in the house of Umm Jamil. Shortly afterwards, Ruqayyah married again, to the young and shy Uthman ibn Allan who was among the first to have accepted Islam. They both left for Abyssinia among the first muhajirin who sought refuge in that land and stayed there for several years. Fatimah was not to see Ruqayyah again until after their mother had died.

The persecution of the Prophet, his family and his followers continued and even became worse after the migration of the first Muslims to Abyssinia. In about the seventh year of his mission, the Prophet and his family were forced to leave their homes and seek refuge in a rugged little valley enclosed by hills on all sides and defile, which could only be entered from Makkah by a narrow path.

To this arid valley, Muhammad and the clans of Banu Hashim and al-Muttalib were forced to retire with limited supplies of food. Fatimah was one of the youngest members of the clans -just about twelve years old - and had to undergo months of hardship and suffering. The wailing of hungry children and women in the valley could be heard from Makkah. The Quraysh allowed no food and contact with the Muslims whose hardship was only relieved somewhat during the season of pilgrimage. The boycott lasted for three years. When it was lifted, the Prophet had to face even more trials and difficulties. Khadijah, the faithful and loving, died shortly afterwards. With her death, the Prophet and his family lost one of the greatest sources of comfort and strength which had sustained them through the difficult period. The year in which the noble Khadijah, and later Abu Talib, died is known as the Year of Sadness. Fatimah, now a young

lady, was greatly distressed by her mother's death. She wept bitterly and for some time was so grief-stricken that her health deteriorated. It was even feared she might die of grief.

Although her older sister, Umm Kulthum, stayed in the same household, Fatimah realized that she now had a greater responsibility with the passing away of her mother. She felt that she had to give even greater support to her father. With loving tenderness, she devoted herself to looking after his needs. So concerned was she for his welfare that she came to be called "Umm Abi-ha the mother of her father". She also provided him with solace and comfort during times of trial, difficulty and crisis.

Often the trials were too much for her. Once, about this time, an insolent mob heaped dust and earth upon his gracious head. As he entered his home, Fatimah wept profusely as she wiped the dust from her father's head.

"Do not cry, my daughter," he said, "for God shall protect your father." The Prophet had a special love for Fatimah. He once said: "Whoever pleased Fatimah has indeed pleased God and whoever has caused her to be angry has indeed angered God. Fatimah is a part of me. Whatever pleases her pleases me and whatever angers her angers me."

He also said: "The best women in all the world are four: the Virgin Mary, Aasiyaa the wife of Pharaoh, Khadijah Mother of the Believers, and Fatimah, daughter of Muhammad." Fatimah thus acquired a place of love and esteem in the Prophet's heart that was only occupied by his wife Khadijah.

Fatimah, may God be pleased with her, was given the title of "az-Zahraa" which means "the Resplendent One". That was because of her beaming face which seemed to radiate light. It is said that when she stood for Prayer, the mihrab would reflect the light of her countenance. She was also called "al-Batul" because of her asceticism. Instead of spending her time in the company of women, much of her time would be spent in Salat, in reading the Quran and in other acts of ibadah.

Fatimah had a strong resemblance to her father, the Messenger of God. Aishah, the wife of the Prophet, said of her: "I have not seen any one of God's creation resemble the Messenger of God more in speech, conversation and manner of sitting than Fatimah, may God be pleased with her. When the Prophet saw her approaching, he would welcome her, stand up and kiss her, take her by the hand and sit her down in the place where he was sitting." She would do the same when the Prophet came to her. She would stand up and welcome him with joy and kiss him.

Fatimah's fine manners and gentle speech were part of her lovely and endearing personality. She was especially kind to poor and indigent folk and would often give all the food she had to those in need even if she herself remained hungry. She had no craving for the ornaments of this world nor the luxury and comforts of life. She lived simply, although on occasion as we shall see circumstances seemed to be too much and too difficult for her.

She inherited from her father a persuasive eloquence that was rooted in wisdom. When she spoke, people would often be moved to tears. She had the ability and the sincerity to stir the

emotions, move people to tears and fill their hearts with praise and gratitude to God for His grace and His inestimable bounties.

Fatimah migrated to Madinah a few weeks after the Prophet did. She went with Zayd ibn Harithah who was sent by the Prophet back to Makkah to bring the rest of his family. The party included Fatimah and Umm Kulthum, Sawdah, the Prophet's wife, Zayd's wife Barakah and her son Usamah. Travelling with the group also were Abdullah the son of Abu Bakr who accompanied his mother and his sisters, Aishah and Asma.

In Madinah, Fatimah lived with her father in the simple dwelling he had built adjoining the mosque. In the second year after the Hijrah, she received proposals of marriage through her father, two of which were turned down. Then Ali, the son of Abu Talib, plucked up courage and went to the Prophet to ask for her hand in marriage. In the presence of the Prophet, however, Ali became over-awed and tongue-tied. He stared at the ground and could not say anything. The Prophet then asked: "Why have you come? Do you need something?" Ali still could not speak and then the Prophet suggested: "Perhaps you have come to propose marriage to Fatimah."

"Yes," replied Ali. At this, according to one report, the Prophet said simply: "Marhaban wa ahlan - Welcome into the family," and this was taken by Ali and a group of Ansar who were waiting outside for him as indicating the Prophet's approval. Another report indicated that the Prophet approved and went on to ask Ali if he had anything to give as mahr. Ali replied that he didn't. The Prophet reminded him that he had a shield which could be sold.

Ali sold the shield to Uthman for four hundred dirhams and as he was hurrying back to the Prophet to hand over the sum as mahr, Uthman stopped him and said:

"I am returning your shield to you as a present from me on your marriage to Fatimah." Fatimah and Ali were thus married most probably at the beginning of the second year after the Hijrah. She was about nineteen years old at the time and Ali was about twenty one. The Prophet himself performed the marriage ceremony. At the walimah, the guests were served with dates, figs and hais ( a mixture of dates and butter fat). A leading member of the Ansar donated a ram and others made offerings of grain. All Madinah rejoiced.

On her marriage, the Prophet is said to have presented Fatimah and Ali with a wooden bed intertwined with palm leaves, a velvet coverlet, a leather cushion filled with palm fibre, a sheepskin, a pot, a waterskin and a quern for grinding grain.

Fatimah left the home of her beloved father for the first time to begin life with her husband. The Prophet was clearly anxious on her account and sent Barakah with her should she be in need of any help. And no doubt Barakah was a source of comfort and solace to her. The Prophet prayed for them:

"O Lord, bless them both, bless their house and bless their offspring." In Ali's humble dwelling, there was only a sheepskin for a bed. In the morning after the wedding night, the Prophet went to Ali's house and knocked on the door.

Barakah came out and the Prophet said to her: "O Umm Ayman, call my brother for me."

"Your brother? That's the one who married your daughter?" asked Barakah somewhat incredulously as if to say: Why should the Prophet call Ali his "brother"? (He referred to Ali as his brother because just as pairs of Muslims were joined in brotherhood after the Hijrah, so the Prophet and Ali were linked as "brothers".)

The Prophet repeated what he had said in a louder voice. Ali came and the Prophet made a du'a, invoking the blessings of God on him. Then he asked for Fatimah. She came almost cringing with a mixture of awe and shyness and the Prophet said to her:

"I have married you to the dearest of my family to me." In this way, he sought to reassure her. She was not starting life with a complete stranger but with one who had grown up in the same household, who was among the first to become a Muslim at a tender age, who was known for his courage, bravery and virtue, and whom the Prophet described as his "brother in this world and the hereafter".

Fatimah's life with Ali was as simple and frugal as it was in her father's household. In fact, so far as material comforts were concerned, it was a life of hardship and deprivation. Throughout their life together, Ali remained poor because he did not set great store by material wealth. Fatimah was the only one of her sisters who was not married to a wealthy man.

In fact, it could be said that Fatimah's life with Ali was even more rigorous than life in her father's home. At least before marriage, there were always a number of ready helping hands in the Prophet's household. But now she had to cope virtually on her own. To relieve their extreme poverty, Ali worked as a drawer and carrier of water and she as a grinder of corn. One day she said to Ali: "I have ground until my hands are blistered."

"I have drawn water until I have pains in my chest," said Ali and went on to suggest to Fatimah: "God has given your father some captives of war, so go and ask him to give you a servant."

Reluctantly, she went to the Prophet who said: "What has brought you here, my little daughter?" "I came to give you greetings of peace," she said, for in awe of him she could not bring herself to ask what she had intended.

"What did you do?" asked Ali when she returned alone.

"I was ashamed to ask him," she said. So the two of them went together but the Prophet felt they were less in need than others.

"I will not give to you," he said, "and let the Ahl as-Suffah (poor Muslims who stayed in the mosque) be tormented with hunger. I have not enough for their keep..."

Ali and Fatimah returned home feeling somewhat dejected but that night, after they had gone to bed, they heard the voice of the Prophet asking permission to enter. Welcoming him, they both rose to their feet, but he told them:

"Stay where you are," and sat down beside them. "Shall I not tell you of something better than that which you asked of me?" he asked and when they said yes he said: "Words which Jibril taught me, that you should say "Subhaan Allah- Glory be to God" ten times after every Prayer, and ten times "Al hamdu lillah - Praise be to God," and ten times "Allahu Akbar - God is Great." And that when you go to bed you should say them thirty-three times each."

Ali used to say in later years: "I have never once failed to say them since the Messenger of God taught them to us."

There are many reports of the hard and difficult times which Fatimah had to face. Often there was no food in her house. Once the Prophet was hungry. He went to one after another of his wives' apartments but there was no food. He then went to Fatimah's house and she had no food either. When he eventually got some food, he sent two loaves and a piece of meat to Fatimah. At another time, he went to the house of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari and from the food he was given, he saved some for her. Fatimah also knew that the Prophet was without food for long periods and she in turn would take food to him when she could. Once she took a piece of barley bread and he, said to her: "This is the first food your father has eaten for three days."

Through these acts of kindness she showed how much she loved her father; and he loved her, really loved her in return.

Once he returned from a journey outside Madinah. He went to the mosque first of all and prayed two rakats as was his custom. Then, as he often did, he went to Fatimah's house before going to his wives. Fatimah welcomed him and kissed his face, his mouth and his eyes and cried. "Why do you cry?" the Prophet asked. "I see you, O Rasul Allah," she said, "Your color is pale and sallow and your clothes have become worn and shabby." "O Fatimah," the Prophet replied tenderly, "don't cry for Allah has sent your father with a mission which He would cause to affect every house on the face of the earth whether it be in towns, villages or tents (in the desert) bringing either glory or humiliation until this mission is fulfilled just as night (inevitably) comes." With such comments Fatimah was often taken from the harsh realities of daily life to get a glimpse of the vast and far-reaching vistas opened up by the mission entrusted to her noble father.

Fatimah eventually returned to live in a house close to that of the Prophet. The place was donated by an Ansari who knew that the Prophet would rejoice in having his daughter as his neighbor. Together they shared in the joys and the triumphs, the sorrows and the hardships of the crowded and momentous Madinah days and years.

In the middle of the second year after the Hijrah, her sister Ruqayyah fell ill with fever and measles. This was shortly before the great campaign of Badr. Uthman, her husband, stayed by her bedside and missed the campaign. Ruqayyah died just before her father returned. On his return to Madinah, one of the first acts of the Prophet was to visit her grave.

Fatimah went with him. This was the first bereavement they had suffered within their closest family since the death of Khadijah. Fatimah was greatly distressed by the loss of her sister. The

tears poured from her eyes as she sat beside her father at the edge of the grave, and he comforted her and sought to dry her tears with the corner of his cloak.

The Prophet had previously spoken against lamentations for the dead, but this had led to a misunderstanding, and when they returned from the cemetery the voice of Umar was heard raised in anger against the women who were weeping for the martyrs of Badr and for Ruqayyah.

"Umar, let them weep," he said and then added: "What comes from the heart and from the eye, that is from God and His mercy, but what comes from the hand and from the tongue, that is from Satan." By the hand he meant the beating of breasts and the smiting of cheeks, and by the tongue he meant the loud clamor in which women often joined as a mark of public sympathy.

Uthman later married the other daughter of the Prophet, Umm Kulthum, and on this account came to be known as Dhu-n Nurayn - Possessor of the Two Lights.

The bereavement which the family suffered by the death of Ruqayyah was followed by happiness when to the great joy of all the believers Fatimah gave birth to a boy in Ramadan of the third year after the Hijrah. The Prophet spoke the words of the Adhan into the ear of the newborn babe and called him al-Hasan which means the Beautiful One.

One year later, she gave birth to another son who was called al-Husayn, which means "little Hasan" or the little beautiful one. Fatimah would often bring her two sons to see their grandfather who was exceedingly fond of them. Later he would take them to the Mosque and they would climb onto his back when he prostrated. He did the same with his little granddaughter Umamah, the daughter of Zaynab.

In the eighth year after the Hijrah, Fatimah gave birth to a third child, a girl whom she named after her eldest sister Zaynab who had died shortly before her birth. This Zaynab was to grow up and become famous as the "Heroine of Karbala". Fatimah's fourth child was born in the year after the Hijrah. The child was also a girl and Fatimah named her Umm Kulthum after her sister who had died the year before after an illness.

It was only through Fatimah that the progeny of the Prophet was perpetuated. All the Prophet's male children had died in their infancy and the two children of Zaynab named Ali and Umamah died young. Ruqayyah's child Abdullah also died when he was not yet two years old. This is an added reason for the reverence which is accorded to Fatimah.

Although Fatimah was so often busy with pregnancies and giving birth and rearing children, she took as much part as she could in the affairs of the growing Muslim community of Madinah. Before her marriage, she acted as a sort of hostess to the poor and destitute Ahl as-Suffah. As soon as the Battle of Uhud was over, she went with other women to the battlefield and wept over the dead martyrs and took time to dress her father's wounds. At the Battle of the Ditch, she played a major supportive role together with other women in preparing food during the long and difficult siege. In her camp, she led the Muslim women in prayer and on that place there stands a mosque named Masjid Fatimah, one of seven mosques where the Muslims stood guard and performed their devotions.

Fatimah also accompanied the Prophet when he made Umrah in the sixth year after the Hijrah after the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah. In the following year, she and her sister Umm Kulthum, were among the mighty throng of Muslims who took part with the Prophet in the liberation of Makkah. It is said that on this occasion, both Fatimah and Umm Kulthum visited the home of their mother Khadijah and recalled memories of their childhood and memories of jihad, of long struggles in the early years of the Prophet's mission.

In Ramadan of the tenth year just before he went on his Farewell Pilgrimage, the Prophet confided to Fatimah, as a secret not yet to be told to others:

"Jibril recited the Quran to me and I to him once every year, but this year he has recited it with me twice. I cannot but think that my time has come."

On his return from the Farewell Pilgrimage, the Prophet did become seriously ill. His final days were spent in the apartment of his wife Aishah. When Fatimah came to visit him, Aishah would leave father and daughter together.

One day he summoned Fatimah. When she came, he kissed her and whispered some words in her ear. She wept. Then again he whispered in her ear and she smiled. Aishah saw and asked:

"You cry and you laugh at the same time, Fatimah? What did the Messenger of God say to you?" Fatimah replied:

"He first told me that he would meet his Lord after a short while and so I cried. Then he said to me: 'Don't cry for you will be the first of my household to join me.' So I laughed."

Not long afterwards the noble Prophet passed away. Fatimah was grief-stricken and she would often be seen weeping profusely. One of the companions noted that he did not see Fatimah, may God be pleased with her, laugh after the death of her father.

One morning, early in the month of Ramadan, just less than five month after her noble father had passed away, Fatimah woke up looking unusually happy and full of mirth. In the afternoon of that day, it is said that she called Salma bint Umays who was looking after her. She asked for some water and had a bath. She then put on new clothes and perfumed herself. She then asked Salma to put her bed in the courtyard of the house. With her face looking to the heavens above, she asked for her husband Ali.

He was taken aback when he saw her lying in the middle of the courtyard and asked her what was wrong. She smiled and said: "I have an appointment today with the Messenger of God."

Ali cried and she tried to console him. She told him to look after their sons al-Hasan and al-Husayn and advised that she should be buried without ceremony. She gazed upwards again, then closed her eyes and surrendered her soul to the Mighty Creator.

She, Fatimah the Resplendent One, was just twenty nine years old.