

Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources Study Guide

Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources by Martin Lings

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Plot Summary

In *Muhammad: His life Based on the Earliest Sources*, Martin Lings traces the life of Muhammad, the founder of Islam. Using ancient sources, Lings discusses Muhammad's life from his birth to his death, including the revelations that Muhammad receives from God and the opposition to Islam with which Muhammad and his followers had to contend. Lings paints an image of life in ancient Mecca and how Islam changes the relationships and daily life of the individuals in the region.

From before his birth, Muhammad is set apart as special and different. His mother hears a voice proclaiming that his name should be Muhammad and that he would be protected by God. He grows up loved by those around him, although his mother and grandfather die before Muhammad reaches the age of ten. Muhammad is taken in by his uncle's family, helps earn money for them, and marries. Then, one day on a spiritual retreat, Muhammad is visited by an angel and then by the Archangel Gabriel. From that time on, Muhammad receives revelations from God, forming the basis for the Islamic religion. He receives God's instructions on how individuals should live and how they should practice their religion, including how they should pray and purify themselves.

As word spreads of Muhammad's revelations and gifts, individuals begin to convert to Islam. At first the Arab tribes and Jews are fairly tolerant, although they may not agree with Muhammad or his message. As more and more people choose to follow Muhammad, however, tensions begin to rise. The Quraysh who live in Mecca become increasingly intolerant, partly because they see relatives and tribesmen choosing Muhammad over their traditional religious practices. Individuals like Abu Jahl try to make life unpleasant for the converts, using tactics like ridicule and torture. Muhammad encourages his followers to emigrate to safer areas, including Abyssinia, Yathrib, and Medina. When the Quraysh plot against his life is revealed, Muhammad escapes Mecca and emigrates to Medina. He makes a covenant with the Jews at Medina, promising equality for both groups and help for each other in times of battle.

Although Muhammad is now out of Mecca, the Quraysh are still concerned about Muhammad's power in the region and they continue the oppression of Muslims. Muhammad receives a revelation that gives permission for the Muslims to fight. Muhammad recognizes that the Quraysh are most vulnerable in the caravans that pass between Mecca and the north. He plans to raid the caravans as they pass nearby, but the information isn't always accurate about the caravans' positions and they are missed sometimes. As Muhammad targets a wealthy caravan, word reaches the Quraysh about his plans and they gather an army to protect the caravan. The Muslim and Quraysh armies fight, even though the Quraysh have many more men. However, angels help the Muslims and they force the Quraysh to retreat.

After several more raids and skirmishes, the Quraysh decide to attack Medina. The Muslims go out to meet them but are forced to retreat to a safe spot. Knowing that the Muslims now hold an advantage because of their position, the Quraysh leader and Muhammad agree to meet the following year in Badr, the site of the first battle between



the two groups. The Quraysh, however, do not show up for this meeting and later decide to attack Medina. Muhammad hears about the plans and the people construct a trench around Medina to protect it. The Quraysh retreat and go back to Mecca.

Finally, a truce is arranged between the Muslims and the Quraysh. Muhammad and his followers are allowed into Mecca to perform a Lesser Pilgrimage. When the Quraysh break the agreement, Muhammad gathers his forces and conquers Mecca. His army also conquers a neighboring group as well. Muhammad receives revelations from God throughout this time and as his life draws to a close, he continues to impart this wisdom to his followers. Muhammad is given a choice by God to go to God or remain with his followers. Muhammad chooses God and dies. He is buried in the spot that he died.



Chapters 1-10

Chapters 1-10 Summary and Analysis

In *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources*, Martin Lings traces the life of Muhammad, the founder of Islam. Using ancient sources, Lings discusses Muhammad's life from his birth to his death, including the revelations that Muhammad receives from God and the opposition to Islam with which Muhammad and his followers had to contend. Lings paints an image of life in ancient Mecca and how Islam changes the relationships and daily life of the individuals in the region.

In chapter one, God tells Abraham that his descendants will be many. His wife, Sarah, gives Abraham her maid as a second wife. Hagar, the maid, gives birth to a boy named Ishmael. Thirteen years later, Sarah gives birth to Isaac. Sarah becomes jealous of Hagar and makes her former maid and Ishmael leave the household. God guides Hagar and Ishmael to a valley named Becca. They are overcome with thirst. Hagar walks seven times between two points, trying to see someone who can help. At the end of the seventh time, an angel speaks to her and a spring wells up. The place comes to be known as Mecca.

In chapter two, people make the Great Pilgrimage to Mecca once a year and some come more often. As the years pass, Ishmael's descendants spread out, leaving the area. Neighboring pagans bring idols to the area and Jews stop coming to the temple of Abraham. Eventually, an Arab tribe which has descended from Ishmael takes over Mecca. However, this tribe does not try to find the Holy Well and it becomes a memory.

In chapter three, Hashim creates two caravan journeys from the valley where Mecca is located. Hashim asks one of the women from the oasis at Yathrib to marry him. The couple has a son. When Hashim dies, his brother Muttalib takes over. Muttalib hears about Hashim's son and his gifts of leadership. He asks that the boy, Shaybah, be entrusted to him. Salma finally agrees and Muttalib takes his nephew back to Mecca. When Muttalib dies, power is given to Shaybah, his nephew.

In chapter four, Abd al-Muttalib, as Shaybah comes to be known, has several visions at night near the Ka'bah. The visions tell him to look for the well that sprang up for Hagar but which has been lost. He is given some clues to help him find the well and told to pray. He gets up the morning following the last vision and walks the same path that Hagar took, going round seven times. He hears birds and sees blood, dung and an ants' nest, all signs he was told to look for. He uses an axe to begin digging at the site and a crowd gathers, but no one stops him. Finally, he hits the well's covering and finds the treasure that was buried there. The treasure is divided up and the clan of Hashim is given charge of the well.

In chapter five, Abd al-Muttalib is concerned that he only has one son and he prays to God to bless him with ten sons. He vows that he will sacrifice one of them to God. As



the years pass, God does indeed bless him with the ten sons that he has asked for. Abd al-Muttalib loves his son Abd Allah most of all and is worried that God will want this son as the sacrifice. The sons cast lots and Abd Allah is designated as the son to be sacrificed. A crowd gathers to prevent the sacrifice. Abd al-Muttalib and several sons consult with a wise woman in the region who tells them that Abd Allah can be placed beside camels. The arrow falls against Abd Allah several times until there are one hundred camels. The camels are then sacrificed in the place of the son.

In chapter six, many people in the region worship idols, although some people continue with the Abrahamic tradition. Those who continue with the Jewish traditions wait for a Prophet. Many believe that a Prophet is coming soon. Abd al-Muttalib decides to find a wife for Abd Allah. It is arranged for him to marry a woman named Aminah.

In chapter seven, a neighboring ruler decides to destroy the Ka'bah. Taking with him a large army, he make his way to Mecca, plundering on the way. The tribes around Mecca decide that it is futile to resist. The tribes from around Mecca retreat to the hills and Abd al-Muttalib prays to God to protect the Ka'bah. The next morning the enemy advances on the Ka'bah but the elephant that they have brought with them to destroy the Ka'bah only kneels in front of it. The enemy tries once more, but a flock of birds fills the air and drops stones on the men, killing many.

Abd Allah is not present when this takes place as he is on a trading journey. On his way home, he falls ill and dies. Aminah is pregnant with his son and she takes solace in this. She hears a voice telling her that her son will be great and that his name should be Muhammad. The boy is born and Abd al-Muttalib takes the infant to the Sanctuary to pray for him.

In chapter eight, Muhammad is given to a Bedouin tribe nurse for to be watched; the woman is named Halimah and her family is blessed by the presence of Muhammad. One day, Halimah's son runs to her saying that two men have opened up Muhammad's chest. Halimah and her husband run out, but they do not see the men or any wound on Muhammad. The two boys, however, do not change their story, insisting that it really happened. Later, Muhammad remembers that the men, dressed in white, took out his heart and removed a black clot. They washed the heart and Muhammad with snow. One of the men had said to Muhammad that Satan had touched every son on Adam on the day of his birth.

In chapter nine, Halimah and her husband are shaken by the events. They fear that Muhammad has been cursed by an evil spell or possessed. They decide to take him back to Aminah in Mecca. Muhammad lives happily with his mother, becoming a favorite of the adults. When he is six, his mother dies. Abd al-Muttalib takes over as the child's grandparent, but he dies several years later. Abu Talib, Muhammad's uncle, becomes his guardian.

In chapter ten, Muhammad and some of his tribe are on a trading caravan. They stop at a site where a Christian monk lives. The monk witnesses several odd occurrences and realizes that the expected Prophet must have arrived. He calls the men to him, but

Muhammad is left with the camels. The monk asks again for all men of the caravan to be brought to him and when Muhammad arrives, the monk realizes who he is.



Chapters 11-20

Chapters 11-20 Summary and Analysis

In chapter eleven, Muhammad receives training in weapons and is reputed to have excellent eyesight. Although the Quraysh had not been involved in many wars, they are dragged into a conflict by one of their allies. Muhammad is deemed too young to fight, but he is brought to war and does fight in one battle. The group later decides to put together a code of chivalry, promising to stand on the side of the oppressed.

In chapter twelve, Muhammad begins to travel more as he gets older. With the money he receives, he is able to begin thinking about marriage. Muhammad decides not to marry and undertakes a trading journey for a wealthy woman named Khadijah. Khadijah notices Muhammad and after he returns, arranges to ask if Muhammad would marry her. Their families agree to the marriage.

In chapter thirteen, Muhammad goes to live with his bride. The marriage is blessed. Khadijah bears Muhammad six children. On their wedding day, Khadijah gives Muhammad a slave named Zayd, who had been carried off by raiders and sold into slavery years before. Zayd's family finds him on a pilgrimage to Mecca, and they beg Muhammad to let them ransom Zayd. Muhammad gives Zayd the choice to leave, but Zayd chooses Muhammad.

In chapter fourteen, the Quraysh make the decision to rebuild the Ka'bah. The first stone lifted, however, returns to its space. The men pray and one begins to take down the wall. The men take down the walls, but the foundation shakes the whole town when they touch it so the men decide to leave it alone. They rebuild the Ka'bah, giving it higher walls so the Black Stone can be kept inside. After several years, they complete the task and Muhammad is the first person to enter.

In chapter fifteen, Muhammad's leadership continues to grow. He reports "true visions" and spends time alone, going on spiritual retreats. When he is forty, Muhammad is visited by an angel on a retreat during Ramadan. The angel gets Muhammad to recite a verse before leaving. Muhammad fears that the angel may not have been a real angel and he heads down the mountain. However, the angel Gabriel stops him and Muhammad believes. A second revelation comes a short time later. It begins with one letter and then a divine oath.

In chapter sixteen, Muhammad begins to tell others about his experiences. Muhammad is again visited by Gabriel, who shows Muhammad how to purify himself and the postures of prayer. Based on these things, the religion is formed. People begin to embrace the religion. Some people have dreams and visions urging them to practice the religion with Muhammad.



In chapter seventeen, more people continue to practice Islam, even though a public call has not been made. Many in Muhammad's family practice, but his uncles do not follow his example, staying true to the religion of their fathers. He receives a revelation to warn his family. One night, they eat dinner together and a cup is passed, never becoming empty although many drink from it. The second night, Muhammad address his kin and tells them what God has shown him. Some believe, but others continue to go their own way.

In chapter eighteen, the Companions of the Prophet go outside Mecca to pray from time to time. During one of these occasions, they are seen by some idolaters. The groups fight and the first bloodshed in Islam takes place. However, the people decide to forgo violence from then on. The people of Quraysh were normally tolerant of new religions, but they see Islam as an attack on their traditions since it targets their idols. The tension becomes increasingly important as the time for the Pilgrimages approach. Mecca has a reputation for hospitality and the groups worry about this. Some decide to spread the word that Muhammad is a dangerous sorcerer and that people need to stay away from him.

In chapter nineteen, some of the Arab tribes have alliances with some Jewish tribes, but their relationships are not always easy ones. The groups have different reactions to Muhammad. Many Arabs like the man, but not his message and many Jews like the message but not the man. Some Jews question why God would send a prophet who is not Jewish.

In chapter twenty, hostility grows in the disbelievers even as the number of believers grows. Abu Jahl is one of the worst enemies of Islam. He persecutes believers and denounces Muhammad. One day, Muhammad is sitting outside when Abu Jahl passes by. Abu Jahl tries to revile Muhammad but the prophet doesn't say anything. Others are upset by this and confront Abu Jahl about his actions.



Chapters 21-30

Chapters 21-30 Summary and Analysis

In chapter twenty-one, Utbah goes to Muhammad one day and tells the Prophet that a rift has formed in the tribe over his teaching. Utbah offers Muhammad a fortune and to make him an overlord and king, but he refuses. The Quraysh repeat their offers to Muhammad, but Muhammad refuses their offers. He tells them that they should believe the messages he brings from God. They challenge Muhammad to do something that will prove to them that he is from God. Muhammad refuses, saying that it is not up to him to ask these things of God. The men declare that they will never follow Muhammad or believe what he has to say. They threaten to continue to make his life difficult.

In chapter twenty-two, the number of followers of Muhammad increase, but many of them are slaves or young men and women whose parents oppose Muhammad. Muhammad wishes to have some of the chiefs believe his words. Some of the chiefs question why they are not sent revelations from God since they are more powerful. Some are more accepting of Muhammad as a person, but they all reject his message.

In chapter twenty-three, many feel that Muhammad is full of wisdom and truth. Disbelievers continue to ask Muhammad to give them a sign. One night, some of them ask Muhammad to split the moon in two in order to show them that he is from God. To their amazement, half of the moon appears on each side of the mountain. While the believers see this as further proof, the disbelievers claim that it is magic or a spell.

In chapter twenty-four, Muhammad is sad that his teachings cause rifts within his family and others. The believers are disappointed in their relatives who choose not to follow Muhammad. The disbelievers are worried that Muhammad and his teachings are taking over Mecca, disrupting their way of life. Some parents disown their children when they follow Muhammad.

In chapter twenty-five, disbelievers argue that if God wants to send a message, he would just send an angel. The Koran argues that an angel would be placed on earth, not merely descend a few times. The effect of the Revelation is that the good excel, but the bad become more evil. The Koran shows how even the message to Noah created rifts between him and his people.

In chapter twenty-six, the Quraysh debate about what to do with Muhammad at almost every gathering. They decide to consult Jewish rabbis to see whether Muhammad is really sent from God or not. The rabbis give the envoys three questions to ask Muhammad to see if he is speaking the truth. The Quraysh call Muhammad and ask him the questions. Muhammad waits for a revelation and the people of Mecca harass and taunt him. Finally, Gabriel brings him a revelation and reproaches Muhammad for not saying "if God will" when he promised the answers. Muhammad answers the three questions. The Quraysh, however, continue not to recognize Muhammad. Abu Jahl



persecutes many people, insulting those that he could not do anything worse to. Muhammad encourages his followers to go to the country of the Abyssinians where they will be safe from persecution. This is the first emigration of Islam.

In chapter twenty-seven, the emigrants go to Abyssinia, where they have freedom to worship. About eighty people make the journey, but done in small groups to avoid more persecution. Two Quraysh men are chosen to go to the leaders of Abyssinia and discredit Muhammad and his followers. The Negus, however, is angry and refuses to give up the emigrants until he has questioned them himself. He asks them about their religion. They tell the Negus about the persecution that they faced in Mecca. The envoys from Mecca try one more tactic, saying that the Prophet lies about Jesus. The Negus promises safety to the Prophet's followers.

In chapter twenty-eight, the envoys return to Mecca with the news that the Negus did not listen to them. The Quraysh intensify their persecution and oppression in response to the news. Abu Jahl's nephew, Umar, becomes one of the harshest in this regard. He believes that getting rid of Muhammad will solve the problem. One day he decides to kill Muhammad and takes up his sword. On the way, he meets a clansman, who has secretly converted. The clansman convinces Umar to put his house in order first so that if anything happens to Umar, his family will be fine. Umar converts with his family.

In chapter twenty-nine, the Quraysh decide to create a document that said that no one should marry a member of the Hashim tribe, in order to discourage Islam. However, the ban isn't always enforced and has many loopholes. Abu Jahl tries to make sure that it is followed, but he can't always get people to agree with him. The ban on the Hashim tribe and others that align with it continues for several years. However, it does not produce the effects that the Quraysh want. People begin to ignore the ban. Finally, it is revoked. After this, hostilities between the groups decreases and some exiles decide to return to Mecca. Quraysh leaders want Muhammad to compromise with them, saying that both religions could be practiced. However, God answers saying that it is not acceptable.

In chapter thirty, some of the emigrants need help when they return to Mecca. Relatives safeguard those who return to persecution. Muhammad continues to receive revelations, including on judgment. Muhammad tells his followers about the Revelation. The Koran speaks of two paradises: meeting the Lord and Paradise.



Chapters 31-40

Chapters 31-40 Summary and Analysis

In chapter thirty-one, the Quraysh continue to persecute and harass followers of Muhammad. Yet, wherever he goes, the Prophet continues to convert people. Muhammad decides to ask his mother's family for protection so he can continue to spread Islam. The response is negative. Muhammad takes refuge in a cave near where he had received his first revelation. He sends a message to the chief of Nawfal, Mut'im, who agrees to protect the Prophet.

In chapter thirty-two, during the night, Muhammad goes to the Mosque and falls asleep. Gabriel comes to Muhammad three times and they travel to Jerusalem where other Prophets, such as Abraham, Moses and Jesus, wait. Muhammad is taken up to Heaven and reaches the Lote Tree of Uttermost End. Everything beyond is known only to God. Muhammad receives the command for fifty prayers a day and the Revelation that is the creed of Islam. He descends back to earth, but Moses says that the Prophet's people may not be able to do fifty prayers a day. Muhammad returns to heaven to ask for fewer prayers and God reduces the number by ten. This pattern continues until the number has been reduced to five prayers a day. The Prophet returns to Mecca and tells the people of his journey.

In chapter thirty-three, Muhammad meets a man carrying a six-year-old girl wrapped in silk. The man says that the girl is to be Muhammad's wife. Muhammad is around fifty at the time and he says to himself that if this is God's will, he will make it known. Several nights later, Muhammad dreams about an angel carrying the silk. One of Muhammad's followers suggests that he should take another wife and gives him two suggestions. Muhammad sends individuals to both of the families to broker the marriages. The two women are A'ishah and Sawdah.

In chapter thirty-four, the tribes around Yathrib are in conflict with each other. Six men from the area are converted to Islam, and they spread the word to as many as they can. The Prophet has seen the area around Yathrib in a vision and knows this is the area where they will emigrate. Some of the Muslims of Yathrib come to Mecca on pilgrimage. They meet with Muhammad and offer protection. The men pledge their oath to Muhammad.

In chapter thirty-five, the Prophet advises those who follow him to emigrate to Yathrib. One person is already there: Abu Salamah, Abu Talib's nephew. His family had been separated as their relatives claimed his wife and child when they tried to move. The Muslims of Mecca begin to move to Yathrib. The Quraysh try to stop the emigration in different ways.

In chapter thirty-six, as the emigrants leave, Mecca changes from the prosperous place that it was ten years ago. The people left in the town feel they are in danger from the



growing numbers in Yathrib. Abu Jahl proposes have each clan choose one man who will join with the others to attack Muhammad. Gabriel comes to Muhammad and tells him what to do. Muhammad tells those around him that God has told him to emigrate. While the men wait to ambush Muhammad, he arranges to escape.

In chapter thirty-seven, Muhammad and Abu Bakr go to a cave toward the south. The Quraysh have placed a reward for Muhammad. Muhammad and Abu Bakr hear voices near their cave. After the voices go away, they see that an acacia tree is hiding their cave entrance and a spider web was covering an open spot. Both the tree and the spider were new to the entrance. Muhammad and Abu Bakr prepare to leave. Twelve days after leaving, they reach the place of which Muhammad had dreamed. The people of the place are expecting Muhammad, having heard of his departure from those in Mecca. Muhammad is welcomed there.

In chapter thirty-eight, the Prophet stays in Medina for three days and helps lay the foundation for the first mosque. Continuing on, Muhammad stops in the valley of Ranuna and prays there. This is the first Friday Prayer in his new country. His camel leads him to a courtyard and the owners give it to Muhammad.

In chapter thirty-nine, Muhammad makes a covenant between his followers and the Jews who live in the oasis. The Jews and Muslims are equal under the covenant. The Jews accept the terms because of political reasons. They know that the Prophet is gaining power in the region and feel they don't have a choice but to accept him. Muhammad receives a revelation about discord in the area. Yet, the oasis, in general, embraces Islam.

In chapter forty, the Prophet has two small dwellings attached to the mosque once it nears completion. Muhammad goes to live with Sawdah, and it is decided that the wedding with A'ishah will take place. The girl is now nine years old and is used to the presence of Muhammad in her life. A'ishah goes to live in the Prophet's house and her friends come to see her every day.



Chapters 41-50

Chapters 41-50 Summary and Analysis

In chapter forty-one, Muhammad receives a revelation giving permission to fight the Quraysh. The Quraysh are most vulnerable in their caravans so the decision is made to use raids. The Quraysh are aware of the growing threat, but feel that they are safe in caravans to the south. However, Muhammad hears about one and he sends a small group to scout it. The group realizes that the Quraysh are unaware of their presence and decide to fight as two of the men in the caravan are opponents of Islam. The group of Emigrants takes over the caravan and brings the prisoners and camels back to Medina.

In chapter forty-two, Muhammad prepares to attack another wealthy caravan that is expected to travel back to Mecca from Syria. However, someone in Medina sends word to the Quraysh about Muhammad's plans. Muhammad leaves Medina with about three hundred men. The people of Mecca are concerned about the impending attack on the caravan once they hear of the news. They gather about one thousand men. In the meantime, the caravan learns about two strangers recently in the area. With investigation, they learn that the men are from Medina. In Muhammad's camp, word has reached him that the Quraysh have put together an army. Muhammad consults with his men, who debate whether to attack or retreat. They finally decide to go on, trusting in God. Muhammad decides to head to Badr, hoping to reach the waters there before the enemy. On March 17, 623 AD, the Quraysh descend into the valley.

In chapter forty-three, the Quraysh advance. The men challenge each other and several are wounded. The Prophet's men charge, aided by angels that had been promised to Muhammad in a revelation. The Quraysh are defeated. Many Quraysh escape, but some are killed, wounded, or captured. Muhammad receives a revelation to save the captured men, but knows that Abu Jahl cannot be spared. The men search for him and finding him wounded, cut off his head to take to Muhammad. The men argue about the spoils of the battle, but Muhammad orders that the spoils are for God and not for any one individual. Once Muhammad is sure the enemy isn't going to attack again, he sends a message to Medina about the victory.

In chapter forty-four, the Quraysh army goes back to Mecca in small groups. The Quraysh decide to fund an army so large that it will crush the Muslims. They also decide that the women will go with the men to encourage them in battle. They send messengers to their allies in Arabia.

In chapter forty-five, the captives arrive in Medina. Some are quickly ransomed. A few of the people sent to ransom them come to Islam while in Medina. Several men in Mecca decide to kill the Prophet, as they are too heavily in debt to afford the ransom. When one of the men arrives in Medina, however, Muhammad knows of his plot and the man converts to Islam, knowing that God must have told Muhammad.



In chapter forty-six, Muhammad receives revelations warning him about the loyalty of the Jews with whom he had aligned himself. Muhammad's movements are reported to Mecca and he knows the Jews want to destroy Islam and return Yathrib to what it was. Muhammad is reluctant to confront his so-called allies, however, wanting to maintain peace.

In chapter forty-seven, when Muhammad returns from Badr, he visits the grave of his daughter. His daughter Fatimah goes with him and is overcome with grief. Later, Muhammad approaches Aki about marrying Fatimah. The couple marries and Muhammad gives a wedding feast. In the following year, more marriages take place and several deaths occur among the followers of Muhammad.

In chapter forty-eight, part of the Mosque is reserved for people who have nowhere to live or go. Muhammad feels responsible for the refugees, often poor, who show up at the Mosque, having heard of Islam. He often goes hungry to feed others.

In chapter forty-nine, several tribes try to raid Medina, but the Prophet is warned about each and prevents it from happening. In one raid, the chief of Muharib finds Muhammad alone, sleeping, and raises his sword to kill the prophet. However, Gabriel appears and saves Muhammad. The chief converts to Islam after this.

In chapter fifty, the Quraysh begin planning an attack on Medina, in revenge of the lost battles that they have faced. Muhammad receives a warning about the attack and the people of Medina prepare. When the Quraysh arrive, Muhammad meets with his people and asks whether they should march out or wait in the city. Although the views are mixed, it is decided to march out and attack. That day, they leave the city with about one thousand men.



Chapters 51-60

Chapters 51-60 Summary and Analysis

In chapter fifty-one, Muhammad tries to find a position that will give his army an advantage in the fight against the Quraysh. He finds a guide from one of the tribes in the area to help him. They find a place where Muhammad and his army will have the benefit of the ground slope in the fight. Muhammad asks his archers to keep the Quraysh cavalry from attacking. The men prepare to fight.

In chapter fifty-two, the order is given for the Quraysh to advance. Muhammad's archers shoot at the cavalry and the fight begins. Muhammad's army pushes back the Quraysh. The cavalry tries another advance on the archers and the archers are killed. The Quraysh rally, but Muhammad's army fights on. The Muslims seek refuge above the plain upon which they had been fighting, withdrawing from the fight. The Prophet is injured in the fight but leads his men toward a point of safety after he regains consciousness. One of the Quraysh hears that the Prophet is near and rushes in to try to kill Muhammad. The Prophet injures the man and he rides away.

In chapter fifty-three, the Quraysh mutilate some of the Muslim bodies they find. They make camp, knowing that they cannot attack the Prophet on the mountain. The leader calls out that the two sides should meet in Badr for battle the following year and the Prophet calls down an agreement. The Quraysh leave the area.

In chapter fifty-four, Muhammad leads the men down the mountain. He is angered by the mutilated bodies of his men. The dead are prepared for burial and the Prophet prays for the men. He asks that their heads and feet be covered before they are buried. Afterward, Muhammad and the people face Mecca and pray to God.

In chapter fifty-five, Muhammad decides to pursue the enemy, and the men take care of their wounds as best they can and prepare to go. That night, the men are not far away from the Quraysh. They gather firewood and make five hundred fires to make it look like they have many more men than what they do. The Prophet receives revelations about the battle.

In chapter fifty-six, those at Medina learn of a planned raid on the oasis. Muhammad sends out over one hundred men to take the enemy by surprise. They attack the camp and succeed, with the enemy scattering in different directions. Muhammad hears of another raid and decides that the leader of that group must be killed. Abd Allah kills the leader and escapes. A neighboring tribe asks Muhammad to provide teaching in Islam to the village. Muhammad doesn't want to risk the lives of his followers, but the leader promises safety. About forty of Muhammad's followers go. However, the nephew of the leader arranges for another tribe to attack the Muslims in their camp. One of the Muslims is carried up into the air when he is killed.



In chapter, fifty-seven, Muhammad believes that a blood-wite should be paid for two innocent people killed by a Muslim who believed they were the enemy. He goes to a Jewish tribe to ask for help in doing this. While there, Gabriel comes to Muhammad and tells him that the Jews plan to kill him. He leaves without telling anyone and returns to Medina. He sends word to the Jews to leave the area, but they do not. The Prophet declares war and lays siege to the enemy fortress. When the enemy realizes that their allies are not coming to help, they agree to leave their land.

In chapter fifty-eight, it is also getting closer to the time of the second encounter at Badr. The Quraysh hope that Muhammad breaks the promise to meet and they bribe a man to convince the Muslims to break the promise. The man makes some headway with the Jews and others. Muhammad, however, vows to go, even if he has to go alone. In the end, fifteen hundred men go with him. The Quraysh do not go to Badr, and the word is spread that the Muslims were there but the Quraysh were not. This fuels the hatred of the Quraysh. Muhammad returns to Medina and learns of another plot against him. The enemy gets away before the battle, however.

In chapter fifty-nine, the Jews that Muhammad had exiled are determined to recover their lost land. The Jews and the Quraysh ally themselves with one another. They gather four thousand men and plan to take the west route to Medina. A second army would go in from the east. Together, they would have three times the number that they had during the first encounter. Muhammad is warned about the impending attack. He gathers together his followers and they decide to dig a trench around the oasis.

In chapter sixty, the trench is just finished when the news arrives that the Quraysh army is near. Muhammad's men are about three thousand strong. The Quraysh advance but are dismayed to find a trench between them and the enemy. Muhammad learns that the Jews are thinking about switching sides and he sends men to find out what is going on. When they learn that the pact with the Jews has been broken, Muhammad sends men to patrol and seize the fortress there. Time passes as the Quraysh continue to try to get over the trenches and the Muslims continue to protect them. Food begins to run short and the men have to be on constant alert. After several weeks, Muhammad prays that God will make the enemy retreat. The weather changes, bringing a strong wind and rain. The Quraysh decide to leave and return home.



Chapters 61-70

Chapters 61-70 Summary and Analysis

In chapter sixty-one, Gabriel comes to Muhammad and says that he should go after the Qurayzah. Muhammad orders the men to head to the Qurayzah territory. Some of the people of Bani Qurayzah repent and convert to Islam. The others finally surrender and the men are killed. The women and children are divided among the men taking part in the siege.

In chapter sixty-two, Muhammad hears about a rich caravan from the Quraysh about five months after the battle. Zayd is sent to intercept the caravan and all the goods are captured. However, the goods turn out to be brokered by the Prophet's son-in-law and Muhammad asks that the property be given back. The son-in-law returns to Mecca with the goods but comes back to Medina after and converts to Islam. Zaynab is reunited with her husband.

In chapter sixty-three, the Quraysh continue to try to stir up trouble, but Muhammad's power has increased and he is able to defuse the situations. During one excursion, a fight breaks out between two tribesmen. Tensions mount between the Arabs in the region and Muhammad. In the midst of Muhammad's people are hypocrites.

In chapter sixty-four, A'ishah and Umm Salamah are with Muhammad on an expedition when A'ishah loses a necklace that her mother had given her. The group stops and makes camp, although it is too dark to look for the necklace. In the morning, they look for the necklace and it is finally found under A'ishah's camel. After they start again, the necklace comes loose once more and A'ishah goes back to look for it. She returns to camp, but no one is there. She sits down and falls asleep. A man named Safwan finds her without her veil as he tries to catch up to Muhammad's group.

In chapter sixty-five, A'ishah becomes ill and gossip rages about her in Medina. People wonder what happened between her and Safwan. Muhammad's other wives defend A'ishah whenever they hear the slander against her. Muhammad defends her in public, but A'ishah is not aware of this. Muhammad receives a revelation that A'ishah is innocent and what the punishment for slandering an innocent woman should be.

In chapter sixty-six, Muhammad dreams of entering the Ka'bah. He tells his Companions of the dream and prepares to go to Mecca. Muhammad consecrates himself. The Quraysh have mixed feelings about Muhammad's Pilgrimage, not sure whether to allow him into the city or to violate the laws and prohibit him. The Quraysh decide not to let Muhammad come and set up a blockade. The Quraysh send messengers to Muhammad, who tells them that he comes in peace and just wants to complete his Pilgrimage.



In chapter sixty-seven, Muhammad orders his men to sacrifice their animals and shave their heads. The hair that they cut is blown into Mecca and into the sacred territory. Muhammad and his group turn back to Medina, prevented from completing the Pilgrimage as they had intended. Muhammad receives a revelation that the expedition was a victorious one.

In chapter sixty-eight, a young man who has converted to Islam comes to the Mosque. The Prophet, however, has to give him back to his tribesmen because of the treaty. Muhammad tells the young man that God will help him find a way out. The young man kills the envoy and returns again to Medina. The other envoy refuses to take the young man back and Muhammad tells the young man to go where he wants.

In chapter sixty-nine, Muhammad turns his attention to the dangers in the north once the truce with Mecca is in place. Khaybar, a Jewish settlement, is the most dangerous. The people there had encouraged the Quraysh to attack Medina before the truce. The Khaybar people believe their fortress cannot be conquered and they can't believe that Muhammad will come so they don't look to their allies. On the first day, Muhammad attacks a fortress, but no one comes out of the other fortresses to help their allies. Muhammad and his men turn their attention to one of the other fortresses, conquering it and finding weapons inside. Muhammad conquers the strongholds one by one.

In chapter seventy, Muhammad marries two more women. A'ishah is jealous of Muhammad's other wives. One day she asks him who his wives are in Paradise and he tells her that she will be one of them. The other wives feel that Muhammad loves A'ishah the most.



Chapters 71-80

Chapters 71-80 Summary and Analysis

In chapter seventy-one, Muhammad's wives ask him for things that they wouldn't have before. They are also jealous of a woman sent from the ruler of Egypt to Muhammad. The Prophet receives a revelation about his wives, and some think that he has divorced them. Muhammad denies this but says that he needs some time away from them. He returns to them after a month.

In chapter, seventy-two, Muhammad and his followers leave for Mecca to perform the Lesser Pilgrimage. The Quraysh leave the city and go to the surrounding hills. They watch the Muslims enter Mecca and go to the Holy House. Muhammad touches the Black Stone with his staff and goes around the House seven times. Muhammad wants to enter the Holy House but it is locked. He asks for a key, but the Quraysh do not want him to enter. Muhammad and his people stay three days in Mecca. The Quraysh tell the Muslims to leave once the three days are up.

In chapter seventy-three, several messengers are killed by Syrians so Muhammad musters an army. The Muslims are outnumbered by the enemy and many die. The tribes in the north take this as a sign and they prepare to move south. When confronted, however, the enemy retreats. Muslim influences grow all around Medina as the tribes fear Muhammad and his power.

In chapter seventy-four, the Quraysh breach the treaty they have with Muhammad by helping a group in a fight within the sacred territory. They worry about Muhammad's reaction. Muhammad begins to prepare for war. He sends messages to his allies for help. When they reach the area around Mecca, Muhammad has the men spread out and light fires, making the army look larger.

In chapter seventy-five, Muhammad prepares to enter Mecca. He touches the Black Stone with his staff and when he points his staff at the idols, they fall forward. Muhammad declares that all idols be destroyed and receives the homage of those who want to convert. Most of the Meccans pledge allegiance to Muhammad.

In chapter seventy-six, the Hawazin amass troops to fight Muhammad, even after his easy victory in Mecca. Muhammad marches out with most of his men. In the morning, the Hawazin descend and the Muslims retreat. Muhammad prays to God and the battle turns in his favor. The Hawazin women and children are taken captive and the spoils are divided among the men.

In chapter seventy-seven, the captured women and children number about six thousand and many are poorly clothed. Muhammad has a new garment bought for each one. He distributes the spoils, but a delegation of the defeated arrive. They ask for their women and children back and many of Muhammad's men agree to return them.



In chapter seventy-eight, Muhammad makes a Lesser Pilgrimage and leaves for Medina. Mariyah gives birth to the Prophet's son, Ibrahim. Muhammad continues to send out small expeditions into the neighboring areas.

In chapter seventy-nine, Muhammad believes that God will open up the north to Islam. He announces a campaign against the Byzantines. He asks for men to join the expedition. Some tribes come with excuses for why they cannot join in, but others join willingly. Muhammad and his men approach Tabuk. He orders no one to touch the water there until Muhammad arrives. When he does, the water rushes out where there had just been a trickle. They stay at Tabuk for twenty days and Muhammad makes peace with several groups around the area. While there, he realizes that the danger from the Byzantines has been exaggerated and he does not feel it is time to attack. He returns to Medina with some of the army.

In chapter eighty, the leader of the Hawazin sends a delegation saying that they will accept Islam, as they are surrounded on all fronts by Muslims. Other envoys also come, accepting Islam. The idolaters are given several months and then asked to go their own way. After that time, war is declared on them, except for the individuals with whom Muhammad has a special treaty.



Chapters 81-85

Chapters 81-85 Summary and Analysis

In chapter eighty-one, Muhammad receives more revelations, which set up the hierarchy of Islam. Submission of faith is the lowest. Others show men divided into three groups: those of the right or the saved, those of the left or the damned, and those of the foremost or the slaves of God.

In chapter eighty-two, Muhammad gives the promise of Paradise to some of his followers. He promises his people that God will not abandon them. He also tells them of an Antichrist who would come and urges them to be ready to fight against this. He speaks to them of the signs to come that will tell that people that the end is near.

In chapter eighty-three, Gabriel comes to Muhammad during Ramadan. In other years, Gabriel recites the Koran once and Muhammad recites it once, but this year, Gabriel recites it twice. Muhammad takes this as a sign that his time is near. He leads a pilgrimage to Mecca.

In chapter eighty-four, Muhammad's head begins to ache. Becoming more ill, Muhammad goes to A'ishah. He knows that he is dying and confides this to Fatimah, his daughter. Muhammad dies in A'ishah's apartment.

In chapter eighty-five, Abu Bakr takes over as the leader of Islam after Muhammad. The people feel that Muhammad should be buried where he died so his grave is dug in A'ishah's apartment.



Characters

Muhammad

Muhammad, also known as the Prophet, is the founder of Islam. From his birth, Muhammad is blessed by God. When he is an adult, Muhammad receives a visit from the angel Gabriel. From that time on, Muhammad receives guidance and revelations from God. These revelations include the Koran and other instructions for the practice of Islam. At first, Muhammad does not share what he learns beyond a few close friends and family. However, gradually, more and more people come to Islam through dreams and recognizing the light within Muhammad.

Muhammad is of medium stature and his beard and hair are black. Most accounts say that his eyes are also black, although some say brown. He had broad shoulders and tanned skin. He has a natural beauty and light that shines through to those who meet him. He cares for others and is generous with what he has. He and his family sacrifice in order to provide for the refugees who come to him, often poor and hungry. Muhammad sometimes goes hungry in order to provide for others. He has a number of wives, although A'ishah is perhaps loved most by Muhammad.

Not everyone is thrilled with Muhammad or his message, however. When the situation becomes dangerous for Muslims in Mecca, Muhammad encourages them to move to a safer spot. He is shown the area of Medina in the dream and it is there that he and his followers settle. He creates a Mosque in Medina and welcomes all who come to live in the area. However, the Quraysh fear Muhammad's influence and they continue to cause problems. Muhammad begins a series of raids on Quraysh caravans, which leads to some violent conflicts between the two groups.

As Muhammad consolidates his power in the areas around Medina, he also forms alliances with some groups, including some of the Jewish settlements. Muslims conquer the groups that attempt to challenge them. Through these battles, Muhammad listens to God and follows the revelations that he is given. After several battles with the Quraysh, he creates a truce with them as well. However, when the pact is broken, Muhammad conquers the Quraysh in Mecca as well.

Throughout his life, Muhammad continues to receive revelations from God and visits from Gabriel. He remains true to the revelations and brings to his followers the prayers and practices that are revealed to him. On June 8, 632, Muhammad dies and is buried at the spot where he took his last breath.

Quraysh

The Quraysh are one of the most powerful Arab tribes. They live in Mecca and are in charge of taking care of the Pilgrims and the Ka'bah. Muhammad and many of his followers come from this tribe, although many of their family members do not agree with



Islam. When Muhammad first begins receiving his revelations, the Quraysh are mostly tolerant of the new religion and the converts. However, they begin to be more disapproving when they realize that the religion is directed against their gods, practices, and beliefs. They spread lies about Muhammad, claiming he is a sorcerer, and warn Pilgrims to the city to stay away from Muhammad and his followers.

The Quraysh become increasingly vocal about their disapproval of Islam and Muhammad. At times, they become violent with followers of Muhammad and also threaten them with various kinds of harm. Abu Jahl is one of the worst opponents of Islam, and he wields a strong influence with other tribes as well, complicating the situation for Muslims. Muhammad finally encourages his followers to emigrate out of Mecca to safer areas, first Abyssinia and then Medina. However, the Quraysh still fear Muhammad. They try on several occasions to assassinate Muhammad, raid Medina, and defeat Muslims in battle. They are not successful in any of these attempts.

After several battles, the Quraysh and Muhammad agree to a truce. The region becomes more peaceful for a while, until the Quraysh break the truce. Muhammad gathers an army and marches on Mecca. He takes over the city and destroys the idols within. The Meccans pledge allegiance to Muhammad and peace is restored again.

Abu Jahl

Abu Jahl is a powerful man in Mecca who does whatever he can to take down Muhammad and his followers. His uncle was the chief of the Quraysh and Abu Jahl had positioned himself to succeed his uncle when he died. Abu Jahl uses his reputation for ostentatious hospitality and ruthlessness to intimidate others. He is also known for seeking revenge when he believes that someone has wronged him. He is one of the most outspoken individuals in Mecca against Muhammad and Islam.

When Muhammad begins to share his message with others and Islam begins to catch on in the region, Abu Jahl begins doing whatever he can to create discord and stop individuals from converting. He threatens to ruin reputations for those that have powerful allies or to ruin businesses when the individual is a merchant. For those individuals with no power or help, Abu Jahl tortures them. His influence spreads beyond the Quraysh because he has many powerful allies in other tribes and clans as well. He uses these connections to threaten and harm more individuals in an attempt to stop Muhammad and anyone thinking of converting.

Abu Jahl is in favor of attacking Muhammad and his followers at every opportunity. He is a part of the army that is created to intercept Muhammad's planned attack on Meccan caravan. Abu Jahl is injured in the battle at Badr. Muhammad gives orders for Abu Jahl to be found and killed. His head is cut off and brought to Muhammad.



Jews

The Jews lived in the region of Mecca along with Arab tribes and eventually, Muslims. They are the descendants of Isaac, Abraham's son. When Muhammad begins spreading his message, the Jews in the area are generally accepting of the message, but not of Muhammad himself. Though they wait for a Prophet, they cannot understand why God would send a Prophet who is not of the chosen people. They believe the Prophet will be a Jew and not an Arab, which makes them somewhat distrustful of Muhammad.

The Quraysh consult with Jewish rabbis about Muhammad and his message. Many Jewish individuals in the area are interested in how Muhammad will answer the questions put to him, but there are still the questions about his legitimacy. When Muhammad arrives in Medina after escaping from Mecca, the Jews welcome him to the area. They enter into a covenant with the Muslims, giving them equality in Medina and creating a responsibility to fight for each other if needed. The Jews agree to this not because they believe Muhammad is a prophet but for political reasons. They recognize that Muhammad's power is growing, and it is in their best interest to align themselves with him.

As time passes, however, the Jews begin to turn their allegiance to Muhammad's enemies. Some report on Muhammad's actions and intentions to the Quraysh. The Jews at Nadir plot to kill him, but Muhammad escapes before they can carry out their plan. Muhammad exiles the Jews from Nadir, although the Jews conspire with the Quraysh, hoping to get their land and possessions back. Some of the Jews join in battle with the Quraysh but are also defeated.

Abd al-Muttalib

Abd al-Muttalib is Muhammad's grandfather. He is a righteous man, always praying to God rather than the idols in Mecca. He is also known for his generosity and wisdom. Abd al-Muttalib is born in Yathrib but moves to Mecca with his uncle when he is in his teens. When his uncle dies, he takes over the responsibility of feeding and watering the pilgrims. He is also given divine instructions on how to uncover the sacred well that God had created for Hagar and Ishmael. When God grants him his request of ten sons, Abd al-Muttalib is willing to fulfill his promise of sacrificing one of them, but God accepts another sacrifice instead. When Muhammad's mother dies, Abd al-Muttalib takes the boy in and cares for him. He loves his grandson but dies about two years later.

Khadijah

Khadijah is Muhammad's first wife. She has been married twice and widowed twice by the time she employs Muhammad to do some trading for her. On meeting Muhammad, Khadijah has a member of her family approach him about marrying her. Khadijah and Muhammad have a happy marriage and she is his friend as well as his



wife. She believes Muhammad is the Prophet spoken of and supports him as he spreads the revelations that he has been given. They have six children together, two sons and four daughters. She dies in AD 619 when she is about sixty-five years old. She and Muhammad have been married twenty-five years at the time of her death.

Abu Bakr

Abu Bakr is a close friend and confidant of Muhammad. He is also the father of A'ishah, one of Muhammad's wives. Muhammad goes to see Abu Bakr almost every afternoon. Some say that the Prophet's message is written on Abu Bakr's face because of his faithfulness and Muhammad's trust in him. When Muhammad is ready to emigrate from Mecca, it is with Abu Bakr that he hides in a cave for several days in order to escape the Quraysh who want to kill the Prophet. They travel together and settle in Medina.

Abu Bakr remains an important friend and companion for the Prophet throughout his life. He goes into battle with the other Muslim followers of Muhammad. Before Muhammad's death, he speaks to Abu Bakr about his belief that death is coming. Abu Bakr is grieved at this and at the death of Muhammad when it comes to pass.

A'ishah

A'ishah is one of Muhammad's wives and the daughter of Abu Bakr. When she is just six years old, Muhammad dreams that A'ishah is to be his wife. He waits, telling no one of his dream, and receives several more signs of this. The marriage is arranged. When Muhammad moves to Medina, he has a small dwelling constructed on the eastern wall of the Mosque for A'ishah. Her wedding to Muhammad takes place when A'ishah is nine years old. She moves to the Prophet's house, although her life continues much as it had before the wedding.

As A'ishah ages, she is sometimes jealous of Muhammad's other wives, particularly the ones that he takes after her. The Prophet loves A'ishah and the other wives believe that he loves her most of all. People often come to Muhammad to make requests of him when he is with A'ishah because he seems happiest with her.

Muslims

The Muslims are followers of Muhammad and Islam. When Muhammad begins spreading the word of his revelations, many people from across Arabia convert to Islam. Many come to Mecca and then move to places like Abyssinia, Yathrib, and Medina. The Muslims of Medina are known as Helpers, and the Muslims who emigrated from Mecca are called Emigrants. Muhammad's followers listen to his revelations and follow his lead in developing the religion and its practices.

The Muslims are committed to Muhammad and Islam. They follow Muhammad into battle on many occasions and in some cases, sacrifice their lives in the fight. They help



Muhammad build the Mosque in Medina and are enthusiastic about spreading word of Islam to others. They carry out God's commands and are faithful in practicing Islam, including praying several times a day.

Zayd

Zayd is a slave who Khadijah gives to Muhammad as a wedding gift. When some of his relatives travel to Mecca, they see Zayd and ask to ransom him. Muhammad says he will give Zayd the choice of returning to his family free of ransom or to remain with Muhammad. Zayd chooses to remain with Muhammad. Muhammad places great trust in Zayd, and his former slave is often chosen to lead raids on caravans and other targets once the Muslims have moved to Medina.

Zayd marries Zaynab, the daughter of Abu Bakr. However, the marriage is not a happy one and when Zayd realizes that Zaynab and the Prophet love each other, he offers to divorce her. Muhammad tells him not to, but Zayd eventually does anyway and Zaynab later becomes one of the Prophet's wives.

Abu Talib

Abu Talib is Muhammad's uncle. When Abd al-Muttalib dies, Muhammad is entrusted to the care of Abu Talib. He is very fond of Muhammad and tries to give the boy what he can, although he is poor. He sees to it that Muhammad is trained in the art of weapons. Once Muhammad begins sharing his revelations, Abu Talib is often caught in the middle between the Quraysh and his nephew. He dies in AD 619, not long after the death of Khadijah.

The Negus

The Negus is the ruler of Abyssinia. When some of Muhammad's followers seek shelter in Abyssinia, the Quraysh go to the Negus in an attempt to discredit the Muslims. The Negus, however, calls the Muslims to him and asks to hear their story. He believes them rather than the Quraysh's claims and offers the Muslims protection in his country.

Gabriel

Gabriel is an angel sent from God to protect and educate Muhammad about God's will. Gabriel first appears on the night of Muhammad's first revelation in order to convince him that the revelation is from God. Gabriel also protects Muhammad on several occasions from individuals who want to harm the Prophet.

Zaynab

Zaynab is the sister of Abd Allah. Muhammad arranges for Zaynab to marry Umm Ayman Zayd, although Zaynab is reluctant to do so. Some years later, Zaynab and Muhammad realize they love each other. As Zayd is not happy in his marriage with Zaynab, he divorces her. When Muhammad receives God's blessing for a marriage to Zaynab, he arranges to marry her.

Aminah

Aminah is Muhammad's mother. She is widowed while she is pregnant. She is conscious of a light within her while she is pregnant and hears a voice say that her child will be protected by God. She dies when Muhammad is about seven years old.



Objects/Places

Mecca

Also known as Becca, Mecca is a destination for Pilgrimages. Muhammad lives in Mecca for part of his life. The tribe that controlled Mecca engaged in several armed conflicts with Muhammad and his followers after he left the city.

Ka'bah

The Ka'bah is a sacred sanctuary in Mecca. It houses the Black Stone.

Zimzam

Located in Mecca, Zimzam is the holy well that God reveals to Hagar and Ishmael.

Bahira

A monk lives in Bahira who recognizes Muhammad as the Prophet. Muhammad is traveling in a caravan with his uncle at the time.

Yathrib

Yathrib is an oasis in the desert. Some of Muhammad's family come from Yathrib. As tensions increase in Mecca, Muhammad encourages his followers to emigrate to Yathrib.

Mount Hira

Mount Hira is close to the outskirts of Mecca. Muhammad often goes to a cave in Mount Hira for his spiritual retreats and he receives his first revelation there. An angel visits him in the cave, but Muhammad is not convinced the angel is not a demon. On the way down Mount Hira, Muhammad receives a visit from the angel, Gabriel.

Abyssinia

Muhammad urges his followers to emigrate to Abyssinia when the situation in Mecca becomes dangerous for them. The first emigration in Islam is to Abyssinia. The ruler in Abyssinia offers his protection to the Muslims who seek shelter there despite attempts by the Quraysh to sully Muhammad's name.



The Lote Tree of the Uttermost End

Muhammad is brought to this spot in heaven by Gabriel. What is beyond the Lote Tree of the Uttermost End is known only to God. Muhammad receives the commands about prayers in Islam at this spot.

Medina

Muhammad immigrates to Medina after leaving Mecca. The area is well-watered and green, with palm groves and orchards. The Quraysh try to conquer Medina during the conflict with the Muslims, but Muhammad has his followers dig a trench around the area to protect it.

Badr

The Quraysh and Muslims meet in battle at Badr. The Quraysh outnumber the Muslims, but the Muslims are helped by angels.

Uhud

The Muslims and the Quraysh battle at Uhud. The Quraysh are able to make the Muslims retreat, but Quraysh cannot attack on the mountain to which the Muslims retreat. The leader of the Quraysh and Muhammad call to each other and agree to meet the next year at Badr.

The Trench

Muhammad and his followers dig a trench around Medina in AD 627 to protect themselves from a Quraysh attack. The Quraysh are not able to figure out how to get over the trench, which is heavily guarded by the Muslims.

Hunayn

Muhammad defeats the Hawazin in battle at Hunayn. The Hawazin are forced to retreat and the Muslims pursue them.

Ta'if

After the battle at Hunayn, the Hawazin retreat to Ta'if, where they take refuge in the walled city. The Hawazin women and children are captured by the Muslims.

A'ishah's Apartment

Muhammad dies in A'ishah's apartment after becoming ill. She remains with him until the end.

Themes

Fear

The theme of fear weaves its way through the book. When Muhammad begins to receive revelations from God and people begin to follow him, the balance of power and religion in the area of Mecca is disturbed. Suddenly, families are torn apart as some cling to the old ways and others embrace the message that Muhammad brings to them. The Quraysh begin to persecute those who follow Muhammad and drive many out of Mecca. The underlying reason for this persecution is fear of Muhammad's message and the changing way of life.

Muhammad challenges many of the traditions that the Quraysh have, and as more people decide to follow him, his influence in the region grows. The Quraysh are afraid of what Muhammad represents and the power he has. They react out of fear, hoping to retain their place in Mecca and in the region. While their actions are full of hate and prejudice, the desperation beneath them illustrates the lengths the Quraysh will go to in order to preserve their way of life.

Although the Quraysh often have superior numbers in the battles that they have with Muhammad and his followers, the encounters reinforce the fear they feel. The Muslims are able to defeat the Quraysh on several occasions. During the battle at Badr, some of the Quraysh witness the angels that fight on the side of the Muslims. They also witness other divine signs which make them uneasy. The Quraysh seem to be aware that the Muslims possess more power than they do, and this adds to the fear the Quraysh feel.

Perhaps the event that most clearly symbolizes the fear that the Quraysh feel toward Muhammad and his followers is when Muhammad decides to complete a pilgrimage to Mecca after the truce, and the Quraysh do not remain in town but retreat to the hills around Mecca. They are fearful of remaining in Mecca while Muhammad and his followers are there and seek shelter in what they feel is a safer area. The Quraysh only return to Mecca when Muhammad has left.

Revelation

Martin Lings describes the revelations that Muhammad receives from God as well as the revealing of Muhammad as the Prophet to his people. Muhammad begins receiving revelations from God when he is an adult. These revelations establish the religion of Islam and answer questions that Muhammad has about his life and the events around him. For example, Muhammad receives a revelation that it is acceptable to God for him to fight back against the Quraysh, giving Muhammad the green light to begin raiding caravans. He also receives revelations on what to do with captives and on the guilt of particular individuals. In regards to Islam, Muhammad receives revelations that form the foundation of the religion, including how to pray and how to purify oneself.



There is also a revelation of Muhammad as the Prophet of God within the work. When Muhammad first begins receiving the revelations, he does not tell many people. Gradually, however, word of Muhammad and his specialness spread. Time after time, Muhammad is revealed to others to be the Prophet. As they witness his acts and hear the message he brings, many people accept Muhammad as sent from God. The revelation of this leads to transformed lives for many as they accept Muhammad's message and live accordingly.

God's Favor

Martin Lings discusses the theme of God's favor in the narrative and events he presents. For the people living in Muhammad's time, their belief in Muhammad rests on their belief that he has God's favor. Muhammad is chosen by God to be a Prophet to his people. Although others in the region claim to be prophets, Muhammad alone receives revelations from God. He is designated as special and in God's favor from the time that he is in his mother's womb.

The favor of God on Muhammad is seen through various events in Muhammad's life. Not only does he receive the revelations from God, but God also sends angels to protect Muhammad and his followers. During the battle of Badr, angels fight on the side of the Muslims, defeating the Quraysh army. An angel also saves Muhammad from being killed in a later battle when an enemy finds Muhammad alone and vulnerable. In the battles against their enemies, the Muslims have God's favor and are able to defeat armies that far outnumber them.

The followers of Muhammad retain God's favor through their actions. Muhammad and his followers wait for God's message in the revelations before making important decisions, and they trust the revelations they are given. They follow the practices faithfully that Muhammad is told to use in Islam, and they care for those individuals who convert to Islam, but who do not have resources. Although there are disagreements and jealousy from time to time, Muhammad and his followers always bow to what they have been told by God and what they know is the right thing to do.

Style

Perspective

Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources is written by Martin Lings. Lings has degrees in English and Arabic from Oxford University and London University. He spent twelve years as a lecturer at Cairo University. Lings has also served as a consultant to the World of Islam Festival Trust, as well as the British Museum's Keeper of Oriental Manuscripts. He has published several works on the topic of Islamic mysticism as well as two volumes of poetry. He is also the author of *The Secret of Shakespeare*, *Ancient Beliefs and Modern Superstitions*. In addition, Lings has been published in a number of scholarly journals and encyclopaedia.

Lings writes this work from the perspective of an academic, using an authoritative third-person point of view. His other work in this area indicates that Islam is an area that Lings is interested in, but the reader is not given any of Lings' private views or opinions on the topic. Rather, Lings uses sources from the eighth and ninth centuries to create a picture of Muhammad, early Islam, and life in the area of Mecca and Medina.

Tone

Lings uses an authoritative, third person point of view. The events and sources are presented as truthful and accurate from the perspective of an authority. Lings does not discuss alternative views or positions on any of the events. His narrative stands as the only interpretation of the people and events in the work. This leaves the narrative of the events to flow in a smooth manner throughout the work.

Lings includes quotations from eighth and ninth century works in the book. In some cases, these sources recount events from the perspective of a particular person at the time. For example, A'ishah's thoughts and perspectives are brought into the work in several parts to add a personal view on the events in the narrative. Likewise, Lings includes the revelations that Muhammad receives throughout the work. This highlights the messages that Muhammad receives as well as how he and his followers interpreted and used the revelations in their lives and religion.

Structure

The book is broken up into eighty-five chapters. The chapters follow in chronological order, with each chapter concentrating on particular events and revelations during a particular time. The chronological order of the work makes the narrative flow more easily and makes the events of Muhammad's life easier to follow. Lings has used short chapters as well, which helps to keep the narrative moving quickly throughout the book.

In addition to the main narrative, Lings has included a map of Arabia, and genealogical tree of Muhammad's family, a note on the pronunciation of Arabic names, a key to references, and an index. These items can help readers put Muhammad's life and the events of the work into a greater context. For example, the map of Arabia can help readers who may not be familiar with the area to follow the narrative more fully.



Quotes

"Not one but two great nations were to look back to Abraham as their father—two great nations, that is, two guided powers, two instruments to work the Will of Heaven, for God does not promise as a blessing that which is profane, nor is there any greatness before God except greatness in the Spirit." Chapter 1, pg. 1

"Among the most relentless of the persecutors was Abu Jahl. If a convert had a powerful family to defend him, Abu Jahl would merely insult him and promise to ruin his reputation and make him a laughing-stock. If he were a merchant he would threaten to stop his trade by organising a general boycott of his goods so that he would be ruined. If he were weak and unprotected and of his own clan he would have him tortured; and he had powerful allies in many other clans whom he could persuade to do the same with their own weak and unprotected converts." Chapter 26, pg. 79

"During the sacred months, when they could leave their retreat and go about freely without fear of being molested, the Prophet frequently went to the Sanctuary, and the leaders of the Quraysh took advantage of his presence there to insult him and to satirize him." Chapter 29, pg. 89

"The Prophet then told how he mounted Buraq, for so the beast was named; and with the Archangel at his side, pointing the way and measuring his pace to that of the heavenly steed, they sped northwards beyond Yathrib and beyond Khaybar, until they reached Jerusalem. Then they were met by a company of Prophets—Abraham, Moses, Jesus and others—and when he prayed on the site of the Temple, they gathered together behind him in prayer." Chapter 32, pg. 101

"Others had brief glimpses of the Angels riding on horses whose hooves never touched the ground, led by Gabriel wearing a yellow turban, whereas the turbans of the other Angels were white, with one end left streaming behind them. Quraysh were soon utterly routed and put to flight, except in small groups where the Angels had not passed." Chapter 43, pg. 148

"Those who were with him were always loath to leave him. Nor could they have been blamed if they stayed, for when he spoke to anyone he would turn to him so fully and make him so amply the object of his attention that the man might well imagine himself to be privileged enough for liberties which others dared not take; and when he took a man's hand he was never the first to relinquish the hold." Chapter 58, pg. 214

"The first cry for help came from Jabir, who had dug down to a rock which none of their implements could loosen. The Prophet called for some water and spat into it; then having prayed, he sprinkled the water over the rock, and they were able to shovel it out like a heap of sand." Chapter 59, pg. 218

"The earth of the camp was strewn with the hair of the pilgrims. But suddenly there came a powerful gust of wind which lifted the hair from the ground and blew it towards



Mecca, into the sacred territory; and everyone rejoiced, taking it as a sign that their pilgrimage had been accepted by God in virtue of their intentions, and they now understood why the Prophet had told them to perform their sacrifices." Chapter 67, pg. 255

"The Prophet now turned away from the Ka'bah towards the idols which surrounded it in a wide circle, three hundred and sixty in all. Between these and the House he now rode, repeating the verse of the Revelation: 'The Truth hath come and the false hath vanished. Verily the false is ever a vanisher,' and pointing at the idols, one by one, with his staff; and each idol, as he pointed at it, fell forward on its face." Chapter 75, pg. 300

"The Prophet continually spoke of Paradise, and when he did so it was as a man who sees what he describes." Chapter 84, pg. 337

"Having delivered his message in this world, he had gone to fulfill it in the Hereafter, where he would continue to be, for them and for others, but without the limitations of life on earth, the Key of Mercy, the Key of Paradise, the Spirit of Truth, the Happiness of God." Chapter 85, pg. 345



Topics for Discussion

What sets Muhammad apart from other people? Describe several examples of how Muhammad is different than those around him.

Describe the relationship between Muhammad and the Quraysh. Why do you think the Quraysh react the way that they do to Muhammad?

What revelations does Muhammad receive from God? How does he receive these revelations?

Muhammad and his followers fight a number of different groups. Why do you think they have so much success? Back up your answer with examples and information from the book.

Muhammad surrounds himself with trusted individuals. Who are some of these people? What does each offer Muhammad? Why are they important to his ministry?

Describe what characteristics a good leader should have. Do you think Muhammad was a good leader? Why or why not? Use examples from the book to back up your answer.

Why is Mecca such an important place for the Quraysh and Muslims? How do they view and use Mecca differently? Why do you think Muhammad was able to gain control of Mecca?

Why do you think people had such a strong reaction (either for or against) Muhammad's message? What effects did these reactions have for Islam, families, and individuals?