

# THE **F1RST**S

A Lecture Series

**YAQREEN**<sup>™</sup>  
INSTITUTE FOR ISLAMIC RESEARCH

# Ali Ibn Abi Talib

## Courageous & Steadfast

His father was Abu Talib (Abd Manaf), and his brothers were Talib, Akeel, Jaffar, and Ali, each of them 10 years apart from each other.

Ali's mother was Fatima, Bint Assad. She is the first Hashmi woman (the tribe of Prophet Mohammad ﷺ), and 10th or 11th person to accept Islam, and she did so without hesitation. She is someone Prophet Mohammad ﷺ affectionately referred to as “mother”, because she served him in that role. She raised him from the age of 6 to 25, when he married Khadija. One of the Prophet's ﷺ nicknames was ‘the orphan of Abi Talib’. The family was in extreme poverty most of the time. Fatima sacrificed her own food for her children and for the Prophet ﷺ. She loved Jaffar particularly because of his physical resemblance to the Prophet ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ would visit her often and enjoyed her company. When she was dying, he removed his own shirt and wrapped her in it. She died while looking at him ﷺ making dua for her. She was buried in Baki'. The Prophet Mohammad cleared the dirt for her, received her body and placed it himself in the grave, and led her janaza. 46 Hadith were narrated by her.

## His Early Years

Born about 10 years before the Prophet Mohammad ﷺ received revelation. When he was born, his mother named him “Assad”, lion, but when Abu Talib came back from his journey he disliked the name and renamed him Ali, meaning someone of great nobility. The Prophet ﷺ would later sometimes refer to him as “Assad of Allah”, because of the way he carried himself in battle.

Some say he was born in the Kaaba. When they were young, Quraish was hit by a famine and large families suffered. Prophet Mohammad ﷺ asked his uncle Abbas, that he take 2 of Abi Talib's children to care for to relieve some of the family's financial burden. Ali was still an infant, they went to Abi Talib, who said

they can take them as long as he keeps Akeel. Prophet Mohammad ﷺ picked up Ali, and took him home, to be raised by himself and Khadija. Jaffar was raised in the house of Abbas. Allah willed that the Prophet Mohammad ﷺ didn't adopt him and Khadija didn't breastfeed him (he wouldn't have been able to later marry Fatima, (Prophet Mohammad's ﷺ daughter).

He witnessed everything in the household from the perspective of a child. Before the Prophet Mohammad ﷺ talked to him about Islam, he watched them pray the first night when "Al Mudathir" was revealed. He said he waited till they finished, walked up to the Prophet Mohammad ﷺ and asked him "what is this". Prophet Mohammad ﷺ replied to him, "this is the religion of Allah, which He chose for Himself and He sent messengers in accordance with that, so I call you to Allah, that you worship Him, without associating any partners, but at the same time, you reject the idols". He imparted on him the seriousness of it, and didn't treat him like a child. Ali said "this is something I haven't heard about till today and I want to talk to my father about first. This showed his maturity and his respect for his father. The Prophet Mohammad ﷺ smiled and said, "if you don't accept Islam, don't tell anyone about it". He continued to watch them pray. That was Monday. Ali became Muslim the following day, on Tuesday. He kept thinking about it all night, and in the morning he asked Prophet Mohammad ﷺ to repeat what he said the night before. Ali accepted Islam without asking his father about it because he felt it in his heart. He was the first one to pray behind the Prophet Mohammad ﷺ and the third person to pray as a Muslim.

The Prophet Mohammad ﷺ began to focus on his tribe in small groups. He would go to family gatherings where he would privately speak to them about Islam. Ali would sometimes go with him, along with Abu Bakr (two years younger than the Prophet Mohammad ﷺ). On the Safa Mount, the Prophet Mohammad ﷺ made the public call to Islam for the first time. He asked "who will follow me"? Ali looked and saw no one saying anything. They loved him too much to insult him and respected him as the "sadiq", the trustworthy. So Ali raised his hand and said "I will believe in you", showing his support. However, this further alienated Prophet Mohammad ﷺ from the crowd. Abi Lahab insulted the Prophet Mohammad ﷺ and the Prophet was shocked. Ali walked home with the Prophet ﷺ after this rejection. Ali said later, people turned their faces away from him. Living through all these stages with the Prophet ﷺ built Ali's character, as he observed all this.

Prophet Mohammad ﷺ asked Ali to be attentive of anyone who looked like they were looking for him and the message. Abu Thar is one of these people, who Ali met in the market, recognized as someone searching for something and was one of the people who would later accept Islam because of Ali.

Affif Al Kindi narrates his story of a visit to Mecca. He passed the Kaaba and the sun was at its peak, He saw a man facing it with his hands raised with a young boy and a woman doing the same. He watched them bowing, then prostrating. He said he went to his friend, Abbas to ask him about what he saw, Abbas replied, “that’s my nephew, his wife, and his cousin. He says that his Lord is the Lord of the Heavens and the Earth and that He’s given him a new religion but no one follows that religion except those three people.” Later Affif became a Muslim and would say, “ I wish I was the fourth on that day.”

## The Night of Hijra - Raising of his Rank

The Prophet Mohammad ﷺ asked Ali to sleep in his bed, while he fled on the eve of the hijra, knowing there was a plot to kill him. The 7 tribes agreed to go together so none of them could be blamed for his murder. Ali had no hesitation to carry out the plan, knowing there was a great risk. Prophet Mohammad ﷺ and Abu Bakr spent the night in the cave. He said he slept like he had never slept, he was in complete tawakul (submission) to Allah. Ibn Abbas said, he freed every part of his body from Hellfire for doing that for the Prophet Mohammad ﷺ that night.

They uncovered him to find that it was Ali, not Prophet Mohammad ﷺ in the bed, and they didn’t hurt him. This is how Allah (swt) raised his rank.

Prophet Mohammad ﷺ had told Ali to return all the items that belonged to others before departing on the Hijra, even though they were against him and just tried to kill him.

Ali started on the Hijra without anyone and without a camel. He made the journey by foot in the desert all the way to Medina. He said it was so hot in the day time that he slept during the day and travelled at night. He was the last one to arrive, by himself. Prophet Mohammad ﷺ waited for him anxiously, making dua and eventually met Ali at Quba upon his arrival.

## His Supporting Role in Medina

Prophet Mohammad ﷺ paired Ali with Sahl Ibn Hunaif, an archer, who supported Prophet Mohammad ﷺ in battle.

Ali worked different jobs to help the household. Once he was paid in 12 dates, he knew the Prophet Mohammad ﷺ was hungry so he gave him 6 and kept 6. When the sahaba walked in, he gave Prophet Mohammad ﷺ his 6 and joked, “look at the Messenger, he eats 12 dates, and leaves me hungry, the Prophet ﷺ jokingly replied, “look at Ali, when he eats his dates, he swallows the seeds.” The Prophet Mohammad ﷺ nicknamed him “the father of dust”. Ali frequently asked him for advice and they had a very close relationship despite the age difference.

Even though they were 30 years apart, he treated him more like a brother than a son. Imam Ahmad said there are more narrations about Ali than anyone else. One of the Hadith is “Whoever takes me as a “maula”, then Ali is his maula”.

During Tabuk, Prophet Mohammad ﷺ left Ali behind in Medina to look after the women and children. People began to use this to make fun of him, and it bothered him that perhaps he was being demoted by Prophet Mohammad ﷺ. When Prophet Mohammad ﷺ came back he told him, “aren’t you satisfied that you are like Haroon to Musa, except that there is no Messenger after me?”.

He said the Prophet Mohammad ﷺ told him that no one except a mumin (believer) would love him and no one but a hypocrite would hate him. So, later hypocrites would be identified immediately as those who hated Ali.

Prophet Mohammad ﷺ said before the Battle of Khaybar, “tomorrow I am giving the banner to someone who loves Allah and His Messenger and who is beloved by Allah and His Messenger.” The next morning he called Ali to lead, but he had a problem with his eyes and he couldn’t see. Prophet Mohammad ﷺ put some of his saliva on Ali’s eyes, and they healed. Ali led the army to victory.

Narrated by Imam Ahmad, Prophet Mohammad ﷺ looked at Abu Bakr and Ali on the day of the Battle of Badr and said “one of you is accompanied by angel Jibreel and the other by angel Mikail during the battle”.

### Lessons Learned

- It's ok to love Ali, as a Sunni Muslim, without getting entangled in politics of Shiite vs Sunni Muslims.
- He loved the Prophet ﷺ, believed him and supported him throughout his life.
- He was the first to pray behind the Prophet Mohammad ﷺ
- Allah raised his rank because of his devotion to Prophet Mohammad ﷺ and his willingness to risk his own life to protect him.

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