

Times of Sorrows and Hardships of Life: Lessons from Seerah

أوقات الأحزان والمحن في الحياة: دروس من السيرة النبوية

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☆ Dr. Hafsa Nasreen

Abstract

Life is full of hardships and sorrows, testing the resilience and faith of individuals. The life of Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) serves as a profound source of guidance in navigating these challenges. His life, marked by personal losses, societal opposition, and moments of profound grief, provides timeless lessons on patience, perseverance, and unwavering trust in Allah. From the loss of his beloved uncle Ḥaḍrat Ḥamzah (RA) and the passing of six of his children during his lifetime to the betrayal and suffering caused by adversaries, the Prophet's (ﷺ) response exemplified remarkable strength and submission to divine decree. He faced these trials with dignity, never expressing discontent or despair, and instead sought solace in prayer, compassion, and reliance on Allah's wisdom. The incidents of Bi'r Ma'ūnah, Rajī', and the martyrdom of companions reveal his deep sorrow but also his resilience in continuing his mission. His patience in personal tragedies, such as the death of his son Ibrāhīm (RA), demonstrates a balanced approach to grief, where tears flowed but no words displeasing to Allah were spoken. This study highlights the Prophet's (ﷺ) life as a model for enduring life's sorrows with grace, teaching lessons of faith, gratitude, and hope amidst adversity. His example encourages believers to face hardships as opportunities for spiritual growth, trust in divine wisdom, and maintain a positive outlook even in the darkest moments.

Keywords: Seerat, anxiety, trials, grief and stress management.

Introduction:

It is narrated that the strap of the shoe of 'Umar al-Farūq (may Allah be pleased with him) broke, and he recited *Innā lillāh wa innā ilayhi rāji'ūn* (To Allah we belong, and to Him we return). One of those present asked, "O Leader of the Faithful, do you say *Innā lillāh* for even such a small matter?" He replied, "Any matter that troubles you is a trial for you." According to this definition of "trial," we all face tribulations in life, which are an unavoidable aspect of existence. Thus, every individual endures some form of hardship. Some are distressed by the loss of a loved one, others by the behavior of those close to them. For some, financial worries loom large, while others are pained by societal issues. Some are saddened and anxious due to illness, while others are disheartened by the troubling words of others.

The verse, (الأحزاب 21:33) "*Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah you have an excellent example*", guides the believer to look to the life of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ as a model for finding solutions to every hardship and difficulty encountered in the journey of life. Looking at his noble life, we see that from his childhood to his passing, the Prophet ﷺ was surrounded by

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various trials, hardships, and worries. Yet, his approach to life was unparalleled. Despite enduring continuous waves of adversity, his temperament and his way of confronting these tribulations were extraordinary, providing invaluable lessons for our daily lives.

This paper presents several incidents from the blessed life of the Prophet ﷺ of his times of sorrow and grief, alongside the lessons derived from these events.

Section One: Some glimpses from the Life of Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ)

In this section some moments, from the blessed life of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ), when he was deeply sorrowful and grieved are being shared. Some incidents share a common nature, like the death of loved ones, but they have been presented in chronological order here to highlight each moment separately.

1. The Sorrow of Losing Relatives in Childhood

The Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) was only six years old when he lost the comforting presence of his mother. His father had already passed away, leaving him to find solace in his grandfather's loving embrace, trying to find in him the love of both father and mother. But fate had another plan, and just two years later, he was deprived of his grandfather's love as well. The heavens witnessed the young eight-year-old Muḥammad (ﷺ) weeping beside his grandfather's body. When the funeral procession began, he walked behind it and stayed close until his grandfather was lowered into the grave¹.

2. The Announcement of Prophethood and the Response of his People

When Allah Almighty commanded him to warn his closest relatives, the Prophet (ﷺ) climbed Mount Ṣafā and called upon the tribes of Quraysh, "O Banū 'Adī, O Banū Fihri..." until everyone gathered. Even those who could not come sent messengers to understand what was happening. When everyone had gathered, the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Tell me, if I were to tell you that a cavalry is advancing upon you from the valley intending to attack, would you believe me?" The people replied, "Yes, we have always found you truthful." Then he said, "I am a warner to you of a severe punishment." Upon this, Abū Lahab responded harshly, saying, "May you be ruined! Did you gather us for this?"² The very people who had spent forty years with him³, who knew him as truthful and trustworthy, now denied him with rudeness. His own uncle cursed him. Although the Prophet (ﷺ) remained silent, he was deeply grieved. Inevitably, he must have pondered, "If I am truly honest and trustworthy, then why are they reacting like this?"

3. From "Truthful and Trustworthy" to "Liar and Sorcerer"

Consider the reaction of the people of Mekka towards the call to abandon idol worship and to believe in Allah as the only Lord. The one they had always called "truthful" and "trustworthy" was now labeled a liar, madman, poet, and sorcerer. The Prophet (ﷺ), striving

1 Ibn Sa'd, Muḥammad ibn Manī', Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2005), 1: 126; Ibn Hishām, 'Abd al-Malik ibn Ayyūb al-Ḥimyarī, As-Sīra al-Nabawiyya (Cairo: Shirka al-Ṭaba'a al-Fanniyya al-Muttaḥida, 2000), 1: 55.

2 Al-Bukhārī, Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl, Al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ, in Mawsū'a al-Kutub al-Sitta (Riyadh: Dār al-Salām, 2000).

3 Al-Ṭabarī, Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr, Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1995), 2: 319–320; Ibn al-Athīr al-Jazarī, Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Abī al-Karam Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wāḥid, Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1997), 1: 66.

to convey the message of truth, would visit pilgrims coming for Ḥajj and Umrah, presenting them with the message of Islam. He would visit famous Arab markets, like Majannah, ‘Ukāz, and Dhū al-Majaz, which attracted not only people from across the Arabian Peninsula but also traders from around the world.⁴ The disbelievers, particularly his uncle Abū Lahab, would follow him, warning people not to listen, saying, “This Muḥammad [God forbid] is a heretic and a liar. He orders you to abandon the religion of your forefathers. Beware of his falsehoods!”⁵ A group was designated to follow the Prophet (ﷺ) wherever he went, loudly calling him a liar, poet, or madman so people wouldn’t listen to his words. This attitude and these provocations filled him with deep sadness and grief. That is why he said, “No one has been tried in the way of Allah as I have been.”

4. Persecution in Response to Preaching

Despite the mischief and conspiracies of the disbelievers, the Prophet (ﷺ) continued his mission of spreading the message. In response, they resorted to various new forms of harassment, including personal attacks. For instance, the Prophet’s daughters, Sayyida Umm Kulthūm (RA) and Sayyida Ruqayyah (RA), were married to Abū Lahab’s sons, Utbah and Utaybah, though the marriages had not yet been consummated. Due to the Prophet’s message, Abū Lahab ordered his sons to divorce the Prophet’s daughters, which they did. Utaybah even came to the Prophet (ﷺ) in a fit of insolence, taunting, “I have renounced your religion and divorced your daughter.” Not stopping there, he tore the Prophet’s (ﷺ) shirt in a fit of rage. This brazen act left the Prophet (ﷺ) in deep sorrow, leading him to invoke a curse upon Utaybah, who later met a tragic end.⁶

5. Mockery and Derision

The pagans, burning with hostility, started mocking the Prophet (ﷺ) and the Muslims, hoping that by disheartening them, the Prophet (ﷺ) might abandon his mission.⁷ The Holy Qur’ān vividly describes the mannerisms and attitudes of the pagans and their treatment of the Prophet (ﷺ) and his followers:

“Indeed, those who committed crimes used to laugh at those who believed. And when they passed by them, they would exchange derisive glances. And when they returned to their people, they would return jesting. And when they saw them, they would say, ‘Indeed, those are truly lost.’ But they had not been sent as guardians over them.”⁸

The Prophet (ﷺ) was mocked as "Mudhammam" (one who is condemned), and abū Lahab’s wife, Umm Jamil, notorious for her foul language, would go out of her way to slander him. Upon hearing that a Surah (Chapter Al-Masad) was revealed condemning her and her husband, she went looking for the Prophet (ﷺ) at the Ka’aba, carrying stones in her hands, but by Allah’s command, she was unable to see him despite him being present. Instead, she asked Abū Bakr (RA) about the Prophet, saying, “I have heard he is insulting me. By God, if I find him, I will strike him with these stones.”

4 Al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk, 3: 33.

5 Ibn Hishām, As-Sīra al-Nabawiyya, 1: 289.

6 al-Ḥalbi, as-Sīra, 1: 468.

7 Al-An‘ām, 6:53.

8 Al-Muṭaffifīn, 83:29–33.

Then, boasting about herself, she added, "Look, I am a poetess," and recited:

*Mudhammaman (the condemned one), we disobeyed him, His command we rejected, and his religion we despised with hatred.*⁹

When the Prophet's second son passed away, Abū Lahab, in his hatred, rejoiced, running to his wicked companions with what he thought was "good news," exclaiming that Muḥammad (ﷺ) was now "cut off," with no offspring to carry on his legacy. This was a painful moment for the Prophet (ﷺ), who felt great sorrow and grief. Allah, in His grace, comforted His beloved Prophet (ﷺ) by revealing Surah Al-Kawthar, dispelling this sadness by assuring him that it was, in fact, the disbelievers who would be "cut off."¹⁰

6. Oppression and Violence

After failing to deter the steadfastness of Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) through mockery and ridicule, the disbelievers decided to escalate their tactics by resorting to violence. A committee of twenty-five chiefs, led by abū Lahab, was formed to persecute him. Despite being from a noble family and possessing an unparalleled dignified personality, the Prophet (ﷺ) became the target of their tyranny. Initially, harassment in the streets was common, but matters escalated to the extent that even the sanctity of his home was violated.

'Abu Lahab's house was adjacent to the Prophet's (ﷺ), making it a hub for plotting hostilities against him. On many occasions, as he (ﷺ) prayed, someone would throw the entrails of a goat directly onto him. This harassment became so frequent that the Prophet (ﷺ) had to create a small shelter within his home to pray peacefully. Even when food was being cooked, filth would be thrown into the pot. Every time such acts occurred, the Prophet (ﷺ) would remove the filth, stand at his door, and say, "O Banū 'Abd Manāf! What kind of neighborhood is this?"¹¹

Even the Sacred Mosque, which the disbelievers themselves considered a sanctuary for all, was not safe for the Prophet (ﷺ). Abdullah ibn Mas'ūd (RA) narrates that while the Prophet (ﷺ) was praying at the Ka'aba, Abū Jahl and his companions sat nearby. One of them suggested, "Who will bring the entrails of so-and-so's camel and place them on Muḥammad's back while he is in prostration?" The most wretched among them, Uqbah bin Abī Mu'īt, complied, and as soon as the Prophet (ﷺ) went into prostration, he threw the filth on his back. The disbelievers laughed so hard that they fell over one another. The Prophet (ﷺ) remained in prostration until his daughter Fatimah (RA) came, removed the filth, and cleaned him.

The Prophet (ﷺ) then raised his head and prayed thrice:

"O Allah! Seize the Quraysh!" The disbelievers, knowing the power of his supplications, were struck with fear. He (ﷺ) specifically named individuals, saying, "O Allah, seize Abū Jahl, Utbah bin Rabī'ah, Shaybah bin Rabī'ah, Umayyah bin Khalaf, and Uqbah bin Abī Mu'īt." Abdullah ibn Mas'ūd (RA) later testified, "By the One in whose hand is my soul, I saw all those named lying dead in the well at Badr."12

9 as- Suyūṭī, ad-Durrul Manthūr, under: al-Isrā': 45-48.

10 Al-Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr, Ad-Durr al-Manthūr fī al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr, under Al-Kawthar:3 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2000); Al-Marāghī, Aḥmad ibn Muṣṭafā, Tafsīr al-Marāghī, under Al-Kawthar:3 (Cairo: Maktaba Muṣṭafā al-Bābī, 1998).

11 Ibn al-Athūr, Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh, 1: 673.

12 Muslim ibn Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī, Al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ, in Mawsū'a al-Kutub al-Sitta (Riyadh: Dār al-Salām,

Ubayy once picked up a decayed bone from somewhere, stood before, stood before the Prophet ﷺ, crushed it, and blew its fragments into the air so that they would fall on the blessed face of the Prophet ﷺ.¹³

7. The Siege of Sha‘b Abī Ṭālib

Despite the relentless efforts of the disbelievers, Islam continued to spread rapidly. Influential figures like ‘Umar (RA) and Ḥanzah (RA) had embraced the faith. The Quraysh even offered wealth, leadership, and women to tempt the Prophet (ﷺ), but he rejected all. Frustrated, they devised a cruel plan to isolate him and his clan. A pact was written to sever all ties with Banū Hāshim and Banū Muṭṭalib, prohibiting trade, marriage, and communication until they handed over the Prophet (ﷺ) for execution.

This document was hung inside the Ka‘aba, initiating a three-year-long social and economic boycott known as the Muqatā‘ah of Quraysh. The clans were confined to a narrow valley, where access to food and supplies was blocked. Starvation became so severe that they resorted to eating leaves and wild plants. The cries of hungry children reached the ears of the Quraysh, causing some to feel pity, while others mocked their plight.

8. The Death of abū Ṭālib and Khadījah (RA)

Six months after emerging from the boycott, the Prophet (ﷺ) faced a profound personal loss: the death of his beloved uncle and protector, Abū Ṭālib. Deeply grieved, the Prophet (ﷺ) withdrew from public life for several days.¹⁴ Abū Ṭālib had been his shield against the Quraysh's aggression, and his death emboldened them to increase their persecution.¹⁵

Soon after, the Prophet (ﷺ) suffered another heartbreaking loss—the death of his wife, Khadījah (RA), his confidant and supporter through all trials. Her demise left him with no one at home to console him. For nearly three months, the Prophet (ﷺ) was rarely seen smiling, spending most of his time in seclusion.¹⁶

9. The Journey to Ṭā‘if

Amidst the escalating hostility in Mekka and the loss of his protectors¹⁷, the Prophet (ﷺ) sought refuge and support outside Mekka. Accompanied by his servant Zayd bin Ḥārithah (RA), he journeyed to Ṭā‘if, hoping its leaders would embrace Islam and provide sanctuary. However, the prominent leaders—Abd Yālīl, Mas‘ūd, and Ḥabīb—mocked and rejected him. Fearing the youth might be influenced, the people of Ṭā‘if incited mobs against him. These ruffians followed him, hurling stones and abuses. His feet bled profusely, and his sandals became soaked with blood. Despite Zayd's (RA) efforts to shield him, he too was severely injured. Seeking refuge, they entered the orchard of Utbah and Shaybah, where the Prophet (ﷺ) rested under a grape vine. Overcome with grief, he raised his hands in supplication, uttering the well-known Du‘ā of the Oppressed:

اللَّهُمَّ إِلَيْكَ أَشْكُو ضَعْفَ قُوَّتِي، وَقَلَّةَ حِيلَتِي، وَهَوَانِي عَلَى النَّاسِ، يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ، أَنْتَ رَبُّ
الْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ، وَأَنْتَ رَزَى، إِلَى مَنْ تَكَلَّمِي؟ إِلَى بَعِيدٍ يَنْجِهْمُنِي؟ أَمْ إِلَى عَدُوِّ مَلِكْتَهُ أَمْرِي؟ إِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ
بِكَ عَلَيَّ غَضَبٌ فَلَا أَبَالِي، وَلَكِنَّ عَافِيَتَكَ هِيَ أَوْسَعُ لِي، أَعُوذُ بِنُورِ وَجْهِكَ الَّذِي أَشْرَقَتْ لَهُ الظُّلُمَاتُ،

2000), ḥadīth 1794.

13 Ibn Hishām, *As-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, 2: 361–362.

14 Al-Jawzī, *Jamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Faraj ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Alī, Al-Muntaẓam fī Tārīkh al-Umam* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2000), 3: 13.

15 Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *‘Uyūn al-Athar* (Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 2005), 1: 155.

16 Al-Jawzī, *Al-Muntaẓam fī Tārīkh al-Umam*, 3: 13.

17 Al-Ḥalbī, *‘Alī ibn Burhān al-Dīn, As-Sīra al-Ḥalabiyya* (Cairo: Maṭba‘a Muṣṭafā al-Bābī, 1932), 1: 502.

وَصَلَحَ عَلَيْهِ أَمْرُ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ، أَنْ يَنْزِلَ بِي غَضَبِكَ، أَوْ يَجَلَّ عَلَيَّ سَخَطُكَ، لَكَ الْعُتْبَى حَتَّى تَرْضَى،
وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِكَ.¹⁸

This Journey is narrated by Hadrat ‘Ā’isha Siddiqā (RA). She said: “I asked the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) “Has there ever been a day more difficult for you than the day of Uhud? He replied: Yes, among the tribulations I faced from your people, the most severe was when I presented myself to ‘Abd Yālīl ibn ‘Abd Kalal, but he did not accept my message. I left there, overwhelmed with grief and sorrow, and I did not recover until I reacted Qarn al-Th‘alib”.¹⁹ Once the (ﷺ) said “I endured many hardships from your people (the Quraysh), but the most difficult of them was the time when I presented my self to (leader of Tā’if) but he rejected my da‘wah. I returned from there deeply grieved.²⁰

10. Migration to Medina

With Mekka proving barren for the message of Islam, the Prophet (ﷺ) and his followers were granted divine permission to migrate to Medina. Aware of the Quraysh’s plot to assassinate him, the Prophet (ﷺ) instructed ‘Alī (RA) to return the people’s trusts and then join him later. Under the cover of night, the Prophet (ﷺ) left Mecca, casting a longing gaze upon his beloved city and declaring:

"O Mekka, by Allah, you are the most beloved land of Allah and the most beloved to me. Had your people not forced me out, I would never have left you."²¹

The extent of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) love for Makka and the pain of leaving it can be gauged from his address to the bodies of the disbelievers slain at the Battle of Badr. He said: "No prophet’s kin could prove to be as vile as you have been to your prophet. You denied me, while others bore witness to my truthfulness. You expelled me from my homeland, while others gave me refuge. You rose to fight against me, while others extended their support to me."²²

11. The Loss of Close Companions

Parting permanently from loved ones, relatives, and close companions is a deeply painful experience for everyone. The Prophet (ﷺ) had to endure this sorrow multiple times. In such moments, the disbelievers in Makka and the Jews in Madina would often fabricate excuses to mock and intensify his grief.

For instance, in the first year of Hijrah, Ḥadrat As‘ad ibn Zurārah (RA) passed away. He was one of the six who pledged allegiance during the First Pledge of ‘Aqaba and the first person to establish the Jumu‘ah (Friday) prayer in Madinah. The Prophet (ﷺ) had a special affection for him, and his demise was a great and severe loss.

Seizing this opportunity, the Jews and hypocrites began mocking, saying that if Muḥammad (ﷺ) were truly a prophet, his companion would not have died, and he would not have faced

18 Ibn Hishām, As-Sīra al-Nabawiyya, 2: 68.

19 Muslim ibn Ḥajjāj, Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ, ḥadīth 1795.

20 Al-Bukhārī, Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ, ḥadīth 3231.

21 Al-Jawzī, Al-Muntazam fī Tārīkh al-Umam, 3: 58; Ibn Kathīr, Abū al-Fidā’ Ismā‘īl ibn ‘Umar, Al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya (Beirut: Maktabat al-Ma‘ārif, 1990), 3: 255–256.

22 Al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk, 2: 258.

such grief. When this came to the Prophet's ﷺ knowledge, he was deeply saddened and said:

*"I have no power over anything for myself or my companions before Allah."*²³

When the Prophet ﷺ saw the condition of his uncle Ḥaḍrat Ḥamzah (RA), he was deeply grieved. Upon arriving in Madinah, he found every household in mourning, with sounds of lamentation emanating from every corner. Tears streamed from the Prophet's ﷺ eyes, and in his sorrow, he said:

*"But there is no one to weep for Ḥamzah."*²⁴

Ḥaḍrat Ibn Mas'ūd (RA) reported, "We never saw the Prophet ﷺ weep for anyone as much as he wept for Ḥaḍrat Ḥamzah (RA)." The Prophet ﷺ placed his body facing the Qiblah, stood for the funeral prayer, and wept so intensely that his voice became audible.

This incident remained a source of immense grief for the Prophet ﷺ throughout his life. This is evident from his interaction with Waḥshī, the killer of Ḥaḍrat Ḥamzah (RA). Waḥshī first sought refuge in Makka and later in Ṭā'if before eventually accepting Islam in the presence of the Prophet ﷺ. However, the Prophet ﷺ instructed him, "Do not appear before me, for seeing you reminds me of my uncle."²⁵

Likewise, the incidents of Rajī' and Bi'r Ma'ūnah, where companions of the Prophet ﷺ were deceitfully invited as teachers and then martyred, caused him profound grief. After the tragedy of Bi'r Ma'ūnah, the Prophet ﷺ recited Qunūt al-Nāzilāh against the disbelievers for a month.²⁶

12. The Grief of the Prophet ﷺ Over the Loss of His Children

The Prophet ﷺ was blessed by Allah with seven children, six of whom he saw depart from this world during his lifetime. Five were laid to rest by his own hands, including Sayyidah Zaynab (RA) and Sayyidah Umm Kulthūm (RA). After their burials, the Prophet ﷺ sat by their graves for an extended time, tears flowing from his eyes, yet no word of complaint ever escaped his lips.

The Prophet's ﷺ youngest son, Sayyidunā Ibrāhīm (RA), was born in Madinah to Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah Māriyah Qibṭiyyah (RA). Still in his infancy, he passed away. When Sayyidunā Ibrāhīm (RA) was in the throes of death, the Prophet ﷺ was summoned. Holding his son in his arms, he watched him take his final breaths.

23 Ibn al-Athīr al-Jazarī, Usud al-Ghāba fī Ma'rīfat al-Ṣaḥāba (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2003), 7: 210; Al-Dhahabī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad, Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā' (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 2001), 1: 89.

24 Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, 2: 538.

25 Al-Jawzī, Al-Muntaẓam fī Tārīkh al-Umam, 3: 685.

26 Al-Diyār Bakrī, Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad, Tārīkh al-Khamīs fī Aḥwāl Anfus Nafīsa (Beirut: Mu'assāsa Sha'bān, 1995), 1: 460-485.

It was naturally a deeply painful moment for a father who had already lost two sons, now witnessing his third and last male child take his final breaths. Despite the sorrow, the Prophet ﷺ, embodying patience and submission, said while holding his son:

"O Ibrāhīm, we can avail you nothing before Allah's decree."

He then added:

"We know that death is an inevitable truth and a binding promise. We know that those who remain behind will join those who have gone ahead. Were it not so, we would grieve for you far more than this. The eyes weep, the heart grieves, but we will not say anything displeasing to our Lord."²⁷

When Sayyidunā Ibrāhīm (RA) was being laid in his grave, tears continuously flowed from the Prophet's ﷺ eyes.²⁸

Each passage portrays profound moments of grief in the life of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ), from childhood losses to persecution, culminating in divine support and assurances in his trials.

Section Two: Some Lessons Derived from the Prophet's Example in Times of Pain and Suffering

In the preceding pages, we discussed events from the Prophet Muḥammad's (ﷺ) life that caused him profound sorrow and grief. Moments were described in which he was deeply affected, yet his exemplary conduct during these times remains a beacon for Muslims, especially in today's world filled with trials and challenges. Below are some invaluable lessons drawn from his noble character:

1. The First Response in Times of Hardship and Distress Should Be Prayer:

As soon as, in Ṭāi'f, the Prophet (ﷺ) sought refuge in the grape orchard, he prayed. Prayer is the believer's weapon, and in times of difficulty, it should be the first step. From Prophet's prayer several key lessons can be drawn as:

Complaints about one's troubles should only be directed to Allah. This was the way of the Prophets. For example, Prophet Ya'qūb (AS) complained only to Allah regarding his separation from his son, Yūsūf (AS): "I only complain of my grief and sorrow to Allah."²⁹ Similarly, despite his wounds, insults, and mistreatment by the people of Ṭāi'f, the Prophet (ﷺ) turned to Allah, saying, "O Allah, I complain to You of my weakness, my lack of resources, and the humiliation I have received from people. To whom have You entrusted me? To a stranger who shows me hostility? Or to an enemy to whom You have given power over my fate?"

2. One of the reasons for trials and tribulations in life can be the wrath and displeasure of Allah; therefore, one must remain cautious of it. In the supplication of Ṭā'if, the Prophet (said):

"If You are not angry with me, then I do not care about these hardships."

He further supplicated:

"I seek refuge in the light of Your Countenance, which illuminates all darkness and sets aright the affairs of this world and the Hereafter, from Your wrath descending upon me or Your displeasure befalling me."

27 Al-Jawzī, Al-Muntaẓam fī Tārīkh al-Umam, 4: 17.

28 Al-Bukhārī, Al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ, ḥadīth 1303.

29 Yūsuf, 12:86.

This clearly indicates that hardships and difficulties can sometimes be a result of Allah's displeasure. Hence, one should always be fearful of the dreadful consequences of one's misdeeds. It is a universal principle that afflictions lead to hardships. This concept also existed in ancient civilizations. For instance, the ancient Babylonians believed that whatever a person did—good or bad—immediately led to divine pleasure or displeasure, resulting in reward or punishment in this very life. They held the belief that if any act of disrespect occurred at a sacred time or place, or if sacrifices were not offered, the gods would become angry, and calamities would follow.³⁰

The Holy Qur'an presents this concept in the best manner. Several verses convey this meaning, such as:

"And those who commit evil deeds—the recompense of an evil deed is its equivalent, and disgrace will cover their faces."³¹

And:

"Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of people have earned, so that He may make them taste some of what they have done, so that they might return to righteousness."³²

The Prophet's (ﷺ) supplication reflects this belief and serves as a golden principle for us: if one desires ease and well-being in life, one must avoid all actions that incur Allah's wrath or invite His punishment.³³

History bears witness that the Companions, the Tābi'īn, and the pious predecessors were extremely cautious in this regard. They always attributed any hardship or difficulty in their lives to their own mistakes or shortcomings. For instance, Ibn al-Jawzī narrates that Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyād (رحمه الله) used to say:

"Whenever I commit a sin, I sense its effect in the behavior of my mount and my servant. Therefore, whenever you feel a change in your state, reflect on whether you have been ungrateful for a blessing or have committed a mistake. Fear the loss of blessings and the sudden arrival of disgrace. Do not be deceived by the vastness of Allah's forbearance."³⁴

A profound lesson is hidden here: a believer's greatest concern and worry should be whether Allah is displeased with them. The ultimate fear should be the fear of Allah's anger. The Prophet (clearly) stated that if the suffering he faced was not due to Allah's displeasure, then all was well.

This is further reinforced by his supplication:

"O Allah, do not make this world our greatest concern."³⁵

3. Divine Assistance Follows Testing:

Allah says, *"And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger, and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient."³⁶* (Surah Al-Baqarah: 155).

30 Mālik Rām, Ḥammurābī aur Bābilī Tahzīb wa Tammaddun (Lahore: Apnā Idāra, 2000), 197–198.

31 Yūnus, 10:27.

32 Ar-Rūm, 30:41.

33 Al-Ṣaba'ī, Muṣṭafā, As-Sīra al-Nabawīyya (Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1958), 58.

34 Al-Jawzī, Jamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Faraj 'Abd al-Raḥmān, Dil kī Dunyā (Urdu trans. of Ṣaid al-Khāṭir), trans. Muftī Muḥammad Ḥanīf (Lahore: Idāra Nashr-i-Islām, 2005), 1: 45.

35 Tirmidhi, Sunan (Riyāddz) Dār-as-Salām, 2000), H: 3502.

36 Al-Baqarah: 155.

Every hardship is a test, and those who endure with patience receive glad tidings from Allah. History testifies that all the prophets, including Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ), were tested with adversity before they received divine support.

4. Great Works Are Not Achieved Without Resistance:

Great endeavors are often met with opposition. Thus, one should not be disheartened by challenges. Waiting for ideal conditions is futile. One of the remarkable aspects of the Prophet's (ﷺ) Seerah is to create a path amid obstacles and keep progressing.

5. With Sincere Effort Comes Unexpected Blessings:

The Prophet (ﷺ) taught that sincere effort never goes unrewarded. For instance, during the Prophet's (ﷺ) journey to Ṭāi'f, the Christian servant 'Addās accepted Islam. Additionally, as he recited the Qur'ān in prayer on his way back, a group of jinn overheard it and embraced Islam, spreading the message further.

6. A Purpose in Life Provides Strength to Bear Hardships:

The life of the Prophet (ﷺ), filled with hardships, shows us that having a purpose makes it possible to endure even the greatest trials. Nietzsche's statement, "He who has a WHY to live for can bear almost every HOW,"³⁷ finds its true representation in the Prophet's (ﷺ) life. He had a purpose that made every hardship insignificant. This purpose teaches wisdom, patience, and speaking only as necessary.³⁸ A purposeful life is unafraid of death,³⁹ as demonstrated by the Prophet (ﷺ), who stood resilient even after enduring the loss of his beloved wife and protector, Khadijah (RA), and his supportive uncle, Abū Ṭālib.

To make life meaningful, it is essential for a person to have a well-thought-out goal, one whose validity satisfies their mind, aligns fully with their conscience, and flows through them like blood in their veins. A purposeful individual keeps their eyes fixed on their destination.⁴⁰ Thus, regardless of the circumstances, no matter how heavy the clouds of sorrow and grief, their purpose dominates their heart and mind, giving them the strength to overcome adversity. Every Muslim has been given a purpose in life by Allah Himself — to dedicate the abilities granted by Allah to the very cause for which the Prophet (ﷺ) devoted his life.⁴¹ This purpose is to bring Allah's servants, especially those heedless and indifferent, closer to Him, to spread His word, and to sacrifice one's life for this cause. The history of the world, and particularly Islamic history, bears testimony to how individuals who pursued great objectives, especially the elevation of Allah's word, triumphed over their hardships.

For instance, Sulṭān Ṣalaḥuddīn Ayyūbī: During the course of a battle, received a letter with the news of the death of his young son, Prince Ismā'īl. To protect the Muslim forces from panic and to ensure the enemy saw no sign of weakness, he displayed patience. Similarly, during the battle at Ramla against the Crusaders, news of Taqiuddin's death reached him. He called Malik 'Adil, Alamuddin Sulaimān, Ṣaifuddīn, and 'Izzuddīn to his side and ordered everyone else to leave. After reading the letter in their presence, tears began streaming from Sulṭān's eyes, and those present also began to weep. With immense sorrow and grief, he

37 Victor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, (New York: Washington Square press, 1969), p: ix

38 Wāṣif 'Alī Wāṣif, *Qaṭra Qaṭra Qulzam* (Lahore: Kashif Publications, 1999), 57.

39 Waḥīd al-Dīn Khān, *Rāz-i-Ḥayāt* (Lahore: Fiction House, 2009), 8–9.

40 Waḥīd al-Dīn Khān, *Rāz-i-Ḥayāt*, 8–9.

41 Nadwī, Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī, *Ḥaḍrat Mawlānā Muḥammad Ilyās aur Unkī Dīnī Da'wat* (Lahore: Maktaba Islāmī, 2019), 219.

shared the news of Taqīuddin's demise. After a brief moment of grief and repentance, they recited prayers for forgiveness and became silent. Sultān washed his eyes with rosewater and ate his meal. The army remained completely unaware of the news, and the enemy retreated in failure. Even the love of his family never caused Sultān Ṣalaḥuddīn to falter in his duties.⁴²

At Marj 'Akkā, he was severely ill. Painful boils and sores covered him from his waist to his knees, making it unbearable to sit or lie down properly. He could only sit or sleep on one side with the support of cushions. Despite his condition, his tent was pitched near the enemy forces. He organized the army himself, patrolled the ranks on horseback from morning till evening, and remarked, "Staying on horseback eases my pain, but as soon as I dismount, it returns."⁴³

A similar example can be found in Shiblī Nu'mānī's life. When his elder brother passed away, he was deeply grieved. Yet, during this period of sorrow, his letters from that time reveal how vigorously he remained engaged in his work. His priorities included reforming Nadwa, managing Sarāi Mīr, constructing the National School, establishing Dārūl Muṣannifīn, and completing his work on the biography of the Prophet ﷺ. Despite his grief, he continued striving toward these objectives.⁴⁴

Conclusion

The life of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) offers timeless lessons in navigating sorrow and hardship with grace, resilience, and unwavering faith. His trials—from personal losses to societal rejection—were not merely historical events but divinely guided moments of strength and spiritual growth. These episodes remind us that every hardship carries within it divine wisdom, and that patience, perseverance, and reliance upon Allah are the keys to overcoming life's challenges. The Seerah teaches that a life rooted in purpose—seeking the pleasure of Allah and serving humanity—becomes easier to endure, no matter the difficulties. Through the Prophet's example, we learn that a believer's heart remains firm even in turmoil, because it draws strength from trust in the Creator. Ultimately, the life of the Prophet (ﷺ) is a radiant source of hope and guidance for all, helping us transform our sorrows into stepping stones toward spiritual elevation and inner peace.



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42 Sirāj al-Dīn Aḥmad, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Ayyūbī (Lahore: Kitāb Mela, 2005), 223.

43 Sirāj al-Dīn Aḥmad, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Ayyūbī, 221.

44 Nadwī, Sayyid Sulaymān, Ḥayāt-i-Shiblī (A'zamgarh: Dār al-Muṣannifīn, Shiblī Academy, 2008), 516–519.

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