

The Story of How the Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad

Key Ideas: Islam, key events

Muhammad grew up in Makkah. The people of Makkah worshipped idols, but Muhammad was different: he believed in only one God, Allah. Muhammad was unhappy in Makkah and he often used to leave the busy city and go off up into the hills to be by himself to think and to pray. When it was the month of Ramadan, Muhammad decided to go and spend the whole month in the hills. He went to Mount Hira and lived in a cave, spending his time there praying and fasting. At this time, he was about 40 years old.

While Muhammad was in the cave, the angel of Jibril appeared to him and said to him: "Read!"

"I cannot read!" said the prophet for, like many people of the time, Muhammad could not read or write. Again the angel commanded "Read!", and again Muhammad replied, "I cannot!". For a third time, the angel commanded Muhammad to read, and spoke these words:

"Read: in the name of your Lord, who created all humanity from an original droplet, speak these words out loud! Your Lord is the Most Generous One - He who has taught the Pen, and taught humans what they did not know." (Surah 96:1 - 5)

Muhammad repeated these words until he knew them by heart. He knew that he would never forget them. However, he was very frightened. What was it that had happened? Was the cave haunted? He rushed out of the cave and towards the city. Then the voice came again. This time it boomed out: "Oh Muhammad, you are the Messenger of Allah, and I am Jibril".

Muhammad looked up and there, in front of him, he saw the angel towering above him in the sky. Muhammad ran home and, trembling all over, told his wife Khadijah what had happened. Khadijah believed all that Muhammad had told her. She went and told her cousin Waraqa, who was a wise and clever Christian. He told Khadijah that Muhammad had been chosen by Allah to be His messenger, and a prophet to the people. Waraqa warned Khadijah that Muhammad would have a great message for the world, but he had to be patient because not many people would listen to him.

The angel Jibril often came to Muhammad after that day, to teach Muhammad Allah's message for the world. In fact, it took 23 years for the angel to give Muhammad the whole message. Later Muhammad dictated the message to some of his followers, who wrote it down in Arabic in the order that Allah wanted.

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