**The Arrival of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and His Prophethood: A Divine Mission of Guidance and Mercy**

**The Historical Context of His Birth and Early Life**

Before the birth of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the Arabian Peninsula was plunged into a period known as "Jahiliyyah" (the Age of Ignorance). Paganism, idol worship, tribal warfare, social injustice, and moral corruption dominated society. The Kaaba, which had been built by Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) and his son Ismail as a house of monotheistic worship, was surrounded by idols, and polytheism had become entrenched in the lives of the Arabs. The society's values had deteriorated, with practices such as female infanticide, exploitation of the weak, and unchecked hedonism.

However, Allah had already ordained a change, and it came through the birth of a man who would later be known as the final Prophet of Islam, Muhammad ibn Abdullah (peace be upon him). Born in Makkah in 570 CE to the noble Quraysh tribe, Prophet Muhammad’s early life was marked by loss and humility. Orphaned at a young age—losing his father Abdullah before his birth and his mother Amina when he was six—he was raised by his grandfather Abdul Muttalib and later by his uncle Abu Talib. Despite the hardships of orphanhood, Muhammad (peace be upon him) was known for his noble character, honesty, and truthfulness, earning the title "Al-Amin" (the trustworthy) among his people.

**Reflections from Scholars on His Early Life**

Scholars of Islam, like Imam Ibn Kathir and Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah, have highlighted that the difficulties faced by the Prophet during his childhood were part of Allah's divine wisdom in preparing him for his future role. These experiences shaped his profound empathy for the poor, the oppressed, and the orphaned. Shaykh Saalih al-Fawzan explains that the Prophet’s upbringing in a noble yet humble environment helped him to appreciate both the challenges of life and the virtues of resilience, qualities that would later define his leadership as the last and final messenger of Allah.

**The First Revelation and the Commencement of Prophethood**

At the age of 40, while meditating in the Cave of Hira, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) received the first divine revelation. Angel Jibreel (Gabriel) appeared to him with the command to "Read!" (Surah Al-Alaq, 96:1). This was the beginning of the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the start of a 23-year mission of conveying Allah’s message to humanity.

Quranic Verse:

Surah Al-Alaq, 96:1-5

*"Read in the name of your Lord who created, created man from a clot. Read, and your Lord is the most Generous—who taught by the pen, taught man what he did not know."*

This was a profound moment in human history, for it marked the last time divine revelation would be sent to humankind. As the final messenger, Muhammad (peace be upon him) was tasked with a universal message that was to transcend race, nationality, and class.

**Examples from the First Revelation**

1. **The Prophet’s Fear After the First Revelation:** After receiving the first revelation in the cave of Hira, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was overwhelmed with fear. He returned to his wife Khadijah, shivering and saying, “Cover me! Cover me!” This illustrates the gravity of the moment and the Prophet’s human reaction to receiving divine communication.

**Hadith Reference:**
Narrated by Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her):
"The commencement of the Divine Inspiration to Allah's Messenger was in the form of good dreams which came true like bright daylight. Then the love of seclusion was bestowed upon him. He used to go in seclusion in the cave of Hira, where he used to worship (Allah alone) continuously for many days... until suddenly the Truth descended upon him while he was in the cave of Hira. The angel came to him and asked him to read."
*(Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith 3)*

**Scholarly Commentary:**
Shaykh Ibn Uthaymeen notes that the Prophet’s initial fear and return to his family reflect his human nature. He was not accustomed to such supernatural experiences, and his reaction shows his humility and reliance on his loved ones, especially Khadijah, who provided him with support and comfort. Khadijah’s role in affirming the truth of his experience was crucial, as she sought advice from her cousin, Waraqah ibn Nawfal, who confirmed that it was indeed divine revelation.

**Reflections from Ulema on the First Revelation**

Imam Al-Ghazali highlights the significance of the first revelation as being not just a moment of spiritual awakening but also an intellectual revolution. The command to "read" emphasized the importance of knowledge and learning in Islam. It also established the Quran as the ultimate source of divine knowledge, sent to guide humanity until the end of time. Shaykh Ibn Uthaymeen further explains that the emphasis on knowledge from the very first verse indicates the necessity of learning in understanding and living by the message of Islam.

**The Miraculous Nature of His Prophethood**

The Prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him) was unlike that of any other prophet before him. His greatest miracle, as he himself attested, was the Quran—a living, eternal miracle. Unlike other prophets who performed physical miracles, such as the splitting of the sea by Prophet Musa (Moses) or the healing of the sick by Prophet Isa (Jesus), Muhammad’s miracle was the Quran, an intellectual and spiritual guide that stands the test of time.

**Hadith:**

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

"There is no Prophet among the Prophets but was given miracles because of which people had belief. But what I have been given is the Divine Revelation, which Allah has revealed to me. So I hope that my followers will be more than those of any other Prophet on the Day of Resurrection."

(Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith 379)

The Quran, with its unparalleled linguistic beauty, scientific insights, and deep wisdom, continues to inspire and guide billions. The miracles of other prophets were temporary, specific to their people, but the miracle of the Quran is for all times and for all peoples.

**Miraculous Nature of the Quran**

1. **The Quran as a Literary Miracle:** The Quraysh, known for their mastery of Arabic poetry and rhetoric, were challenged by the Quran, which they could neither replicate nor surpass. Despite their best efforts, the linguistic beauty and depth of the Quran remained unmatched. Even today, the Quran’s eloquence is considered a proof of its divine origin.

**Quranic Challenge:**
"And if you are in doubt about what We have sent down upon Our Servant [Muhammad], then produce a surah the like thereof and call upon your witnesses besides Allah, if you should be truthful."
*(Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:23)*

**Scholarly Commentary:**
Imam Al-Baqillani, in his work on the miraculous nature of the Quran, points out that the Quran’s structure, style, and content are unique in human history. Unlike typical speech patterns, the Quran presents an extraordinary mix of eloquence, wisdom, and revelation that no poet or philosopher could replicate, even though the Arabs of that time were masters of language.

1. **Scientific Accuracy of the Quran:** One of the Quran’s miracles lies in its scientific accuracy, especially in areas that were unknown to the world at the time. For example, its description of the stages of embryonic development has been confirmed by modern science.

**Quranic Reference:**
"We created man from a quintessence of clay. Then We placed him as a drop of fluid in a safe place. Then We made that drop into a clot of congealed blood, and then that clot We made into a lump. Then We made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh."
*(Surah Al-Mu’minun, 23:12-14)*

**Scientific Commentary:**
Dr. Keith Moore, a renowned embryologist, noted that the description of embryonic development in the Quran is remarkably accurate and predates the discoveries made in modern embryology. This stands as evidence that the Quran could not have been authored by someone from the 7th century, but is instead the word of Allah.

**Ulema’s Commentary on His Prophethood**

The scholars of Islam, such as Ibn Taymiyyah, have commented that the universal nature of Prophet Muhammad’s message distinguishes him as the "Seal of the Prophets." His prophethood was not limited to one nation or one era but was intended to guide humanity as a whole. His character and his message represent the pinnacle of divine guidance.

The ulema further highlight the two key roles of the Prophet as both a warner and a giver of glad tidings. As mentioned in Surah Al-Ahzab (33:45-46), "O Prophet, indeed We have sent you as a witness, a bringer of good tidings, and a warner."

**The Features and Qualities of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)**

The personal attributes of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) were divinely crafted to reflect the qualities needed for his monumental task. Described in the Quran as a "Mercy to all the worlds" (Surah Al-Anbiya, 21:107), the Prophet embodied the best of human qualities: kindness, humility, patience, and an unwavering commitment to justice.

1**. His Physical Appearance:**

 The Prophet is described in hadith as having a radiant complexion, with a gentle demeanor that reflected his inner peace. His presence was dignified, and his smile was warm, attracting people to him. His companions often remarked on his beauty, with Ali ibn Abi Talib stating: "I have never seen the likes of him before or after."

2. **His Kindness and Mercy:**

 The Prophet’s treatment of others, whether they were his family, his followers, or even his enemies, was marked by mercy. One of the most famous incidents illustrating his mercy is when he pardoned the people of Makkah after its conquest, even though they had persecuted him and his followers for years. He said, "Go, for you are free," embodying the principle of forgiveness over revenge.

**The Prophet’s Mercy and Forgiveness**

1. **The Conquest of Makkah:** One of the most famous examples of the Prophet’s mercy is during the conquest of Makkah. After years of persecution and battles with the Quraysh, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) entered Makkah as a victorious leader. However, instead of seeking revenge on those who had wronged him, he declared, “Go, for you are free.”

**Hadith Reference:**
Narrated by Abu Huraira:
"The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, ‘He who forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is with Allah.’”
*(Sahih Muslim, Hadith 2583)*

**Scholarly Reflection:**
Imam Al-Ghazali reflects on the Prophet’s forgiveness during the conquest as a demonstration of his character as *Rahmatul-lil-Alamin* (Mercy to all the worlds). Despite having the power to punish those who had committed atrocities against him and his followers, he chose to forgive, establishing that Islam is a religion of mercy and peace.

1. **Forgiving Ta'if:** Another powerful example is when the Prophet visited Ta’if to invite its people to Islam. He was met with hostility, stoned, and chased out of the city. Despite the physical and emotional pain, when the angel of mountains offered to crush the city between two mountains, the Prophet declined, saying he hoped that their descendants would one day embrace Islam.

**Hadith Reference:**
Narrated by Aisha:
"The Prophet said, ‘If they do not accept Islam, I hope Allah will bring out of their loins people who will worship Allah alone.’”
*(Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith 3231)*

**Scholarly Commentary:**
Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah emphasizes that this event shows the Prophet’s foresight and patience. His mission was not to punish but to invite and guide people to the truth. His refusal to destroy Ta’if, despite their cruelty, reflects his commitment to mercy.

3. **His Humility:**

 Despite being the leader of a growing community and the recipient of divine revelation, the Prophet lived a simple life. He would repair his own shoes, help with household chores, and sit on the ground with his companions, never seeking to elevate himself above others. This humility endeared him to all who knew him.

**Scholars’ Insights into the Prophet’s Qualities**

The renowned scholar Imam An-Nawawi explains that the Prophet’s character was the epitome of the Quranic ideal. In fact, his wife Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) once said, "His character was the Quran." This means that he lived and exemplified the teachings of the Quran in every aspect of his life. He was a living model for all Muslims to follow.

Imam Al-Shafi’i noted that the Prophet’s life serves as a practical guide to understanding the Quran. His decisions, actions, and sayings (the Sunnah) are a lens through which the Quran can be applied to daily life.

**The Universal Message of the Prophet**

One of the most remarkable aspects of Prophet Muhammad’s message is its universality. Unlike previous prophets, who were sent to specific nations, Muhammad (peace be upon him) was sent to all of humanity. As Allah states in the Quran:

Quranic Verse:

Surah Al-Ahzab, 33:45-46

"O Prophet, indeed We have sent you as a witness, a bringer of good tidings, and a warner."

The Prophet’s mission was to unite humanity under the banner of Tawhid (the oneness of Allah). His message was not only spiritual but also social, as it sought to establish justice, eliminate oppression, and bring peace to the world.

**A Call to Action: Following in the Prophet’s Footsteps**

The life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is a testament to the transformative power of divine guidance. His mission continues through the actions of his followers. As Muslims, we are called to emulate his character, live by his teachings, and spread his message with wisdom and compassion.

**Interactive Session:**

- How can we embody the mercy and humility of the Prophet in our daily lives?

- In what ways can we take inspiration from the Prophet’s perseverance in the face of hardship?

**Conclusion:**

Prophet Muhammad’s arrival into the world and his prophethood were divinely ordained to bring humanity back to the path of truth. His life serves as the ultimate guide for living a life of faith, justice, and mercy. It is through following his example that we can hope to achieve success in this life and the hereafter.

**Closing Du’a:**

"O Allah, send Your peace and blessings upon our Prophet Muhammad, the seal of the prophets, and guide us to live by his example in