

# Road to Jannah

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## People and Society

Apart from speaking the same language and living in the same area, the Arabs shared the same deen of Shirk (idolatry). The Arabs were often found to isolate themselves from other cultures as they wanted to keep the deen of their forefathers relatively pure.

Because of the nature and terrain of the Arabian Peninsula, Arabs had to adopt a nomadic lifestyle which led them to have no taste for settled life. No kind of permanency in settlement was sought, rather perpetual movement in search of pasture was required. A tribe thus always on the move, did not see fit for any particular political order to adhere to.

The society that existed therefore was primitive in nature. There was no organised central rule with each tribe having its own code of conduct and honour. Loyalty to the tribe born into and fighting to secure its due rights was regarded as the main virtue of living. Tribal loyalties led to conflicts and disputes being commonplace amongst the Arabs. They thrived on raids, stealing and forcefully taking the property of others. The pillage of caravans and cold-blooded murder for paltry gains was the mainstay for the Bedouin Arabs to get what they wished. In order to gain protection from this, people often had to pay *Jizya*, a form of tax, to avert any severe consequences befalling themselves.

However, as the population grew, people began to gather around areas that were rich in natural resources and towns and cities began to emerge. These new communities affected the basic lifestyle of the Arabs, who prior to this had been nomads. The Arabs became divided broadly into two communities as they grew in number, those of the city and the Bedouins of the desert.

Bedouins generally resided either on the outskirts of cities or in the heart of the desert. As the cities were usually located on areas rich in resources vital for any form of life, the Bedouins had few livestock and possessions. In order for them to survive, they would have to raid the cities where the wealthy tradesmen used to live. They would also raid caravans that would pass between cities along numerous trade routes, often with other countries.

As you can imagine, life for the Bedouin Arabs would have been very hard with activities of daily living being of primary concern. However, they did not perceive it as such, commenting in their poetry as having "*complete freedom*". In contrast, the wealthier folk of the cities would have resided in the lap of luxury with slaves catering for their every demand.

## **The Social System**

Throughout the history of Mankind, man has always dominated over woman because they had been created possessing greater power and strength. Women, on the other hand, have been tortured, treated like animals (especially by the European during the Dark Ages), sidelined (by the Greeks and Romans) and even killed (Hindu wives are burnt alive on the funeral pyre with their deceased husbands). Even in this day and age, women are held as second-class citizens, being treated as sex objects whose very existence is to satisfy man's instincts.

If we look to the time of the Arab Jahiliyyah, we find a similar situation. The Arab men were busy in multiplying the number of wives they had, unrestricted by any form of Divine Text. Despite this love for women, a desire solely for male offspring existed. On the other hand, having a female daughter was perceived to be dishonouring and a humiliation to the family. The Arab fathers, in order to protect their honour, would go to such extreme lengths as to bury their own daughters alive.

Therefore, a brief study of the Arab social system, focusing particularly on the relationships between man and woman, will allow us to comprehend the depths of destruction the Arab society, in the presence of man-made law and the absence of Divine guidance had reached.

### **Abdul Muttalib and Abdullah**

It is reported by Ibn Hisham that Abdul Muttalib was sleeping under a tree in the courtyard of the Ka'bah, when he had a dream. Initially, he dismissed the dream, ignoring its contents. However, as the dream repeated itself for three successive nights, he decided to act upon the vision that he saw.

In the dream, a voice commanded him to dig for water at a particular location. After spending three days digging with his son, Al-Harith, he found the wall of a well and a large stone that was impeding its water flow. After removing the stone, water began to gush from the well and Zam-zam was found. This water would be the provision for the pilgrims that would attend the annual Tawaaf round the Ka'bah.

After establishing the flow of Zam-zam, Abdul Muttalib made Du'a to Allah (swt) saying that if he received ten sons, he would be willing to sacrifice one of them at the Ka'bah as an offering to the idol Hubal.

Abdul Muttalib's Du'a was granted. Fatimah, the wife of Abdul Muttalib, bore ten sons. The last son was named Abdullah, and he was his father's most adored. When all ten sons reached maturity, he explained to them the oath he made to Allah (swt) and they were willing to honour it and accept the fate that may befall them.

The names of Abdul Muttalib sons were inscribed on arrows of different lengths and were given to the idol, Hubal. The arrows were then shuffled, drawn and to the shock of Abdul Muttalib the name of Abdullah came to surface. As Abdullah was Abdul Muttalib's most beloved, he repeated the drawing of the lots. However, to the sorrow of his father, Abdullah's name had appeared twice more. Unwillingly, the Qurayshi leader took Abdullah to the courtyard of the Ka'bah with a knife. A small crowd began to gather. On seeing this, Abu Talib and some people from Quraysh attempted to dissuade Abdul Muttalib from proceeding. On their advice, he decided not to carry out the sacrifice; instead he was persuaded to visit a soothsayer of Khaybar for advice.

The soothsayer told Abdul Muttalib that lots should be drawn with Abdullah's name on one arrow and 10 camels inscribed on another. If Abdullah's name was drawn, then the number of camels to be sacrificed would be increased by ten and the lots would be repeated. This was undertaken by Abdul Muttalib and Abdullah's name repeatedly emerged until the number of camels to be sacrificed came to one hundred. To the relief of everyone, Abdullah's life was spared and instead 100 camels were slaughtered as Qurbani and distributed to the poor people.

Muhammad (saw), after the dawn of his Prophethood, used to say, *"I am the son of two slaughtered men,"* one of them being Abdullah, his father, and the other Isma'il ibn Ibrahim (as).

### **Abu Lahab's Persecution**

Abu Lahab was chosen in particular, to spearhead this new campaign against the Muslims after he had gained much respect for his public and vehement rejection of Muhammad (saw). At the time, he was the father-in-law of the daughters of Muhammad (saw) since his two sons Utbah and Udayyah were married to Rukayah, and Umm al-Khulthum, the daughters of Muhammad (saw) before he (saw) received revelation.

Abu Lahab wanted to inflict the greatest possible harm to Muhammad (saw) and he envisaged this to be possible through his sons. He ordered both of his sons to divorce the Prophet's daughters and for them to be dragged by their hair in humiliation through the streets of Makkah and thrown against the door of Muhammad (saw). Notwithstanding the harm caused by this, Abu Lahab continued to persecute Muhammad's (saw) in different ways. For example, when his (saw) second son Abdullah had passed away, Abu Lahab was ecstatic and began to spread the news that Muhammad (saw) had now become "Abtar" or without son. This was considered to be of a great insult at the time since the family's heritage was kept alive through the son and as mentioned previously, having daughters was considered to be a humiliation.