



The Prophetic Character

22nd February, 2008

Ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisi*

The Messenger of Allāh, peace be upon him, was the mildest of people, and also the warmest and most generous of them. He would mend his own sandals, patch his own clothes and help his family with the daily errands. He was extremely shy; shy even than a virgin behind a veil.

He would respond to the invitation of slaves, visit the sick, walk alone [without guards or fanfair], allow others to saddle-up with him on his mount, accept gifts, eat food that was sent as a gift; though he never consumed anything that had been given as charity. He did not have enough dates with which to be sated, nor was he sated with barely-bread for more than three consecutive nights. He would eat whatever food was readily available and never did he criticise food. He never ate reclining, and ate from what was nearest to him.

He loved perfumes and disliked foul odours. He honoured people of virtue, and maintained affectionate ties with nobles and dignitaries. He never snubbed anyone and would accept the excuse of those who presented excuses.

He would joke, but never would he utter anything untrue. He laughed, but did not burst with laughter. He would not let any time pass without being in the service of Allāh, Exalted is He, or being engaged in whatever was essential for his own self-development.

He never once cursed a woman, nor abused a servant. Never did he strike anyone, except for in *jibād* in Allāh's path. He did not exact revenge for his own sake, but did so when Allāh's limits had been transgressed. If he was presented with two options he adopted the easier of the two, unless it entailed disobedience or the severing of ties - in which case he would be the furthest away from it.

Anas remarked: "I served him for ten years and he never once rebuked me in the least; nor did he say about anything I had done, 'Why did you do it?' or anything I had not done, 'Why did you not to it?'"

His description in the Torah is: "Muḥammad, the Messenger of Allāh and My Chosen Slave. He is neither harsh nor severe. He does not shout in the market places, nor repay evil with evil, but instead he pardons and forgives" ...

He would sit in an assembly wherever it was convenient, and he would mingle among his Companions as one of them, so much so that when a stranger came he would not be able to distinguish him from other, except after inquiring as to who he was. He would take to long periods of silence; but when he did speak he did so slowly and clearly, repeating himself so that he would be clearly understood. He used to pardon, even when he was in a position to punish, and he would not confront anyone with what they did not like.

He was the most truthful of people; one who most fulfilled his commitments; the easiest going of people; the most affiable; and the most generous of them in companionship. Whoever gazed upon him unexpectedly, would be awe-stricken by him; whoever associated with him and came to know him, loved him. His Companions, whenever they spoke about worldly affairs, he would join in with them; and when, in recollecting their pre-Islamic days, they would laughed, he would simply smile.

He was the bravest of men; one Companion recalled: When the fighting became intense, we would seek shelter behind Allāh's Messenger; peace be upon him.



FOOTNOTES

* *Mukhtaṣar Minbāj al-Qāṣidīn* (Damascus: Maktabah Dār al-Bayān, 1999), 157-58; trans. Surkheel Sharif.