

Sayyida Halīma Sa'diyya

(may Allāh be pleased with her)

Right from his blessed birth till his last moment on this earth, Prophet Muhammad (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him) was in the care and protection of Allāh. He ensured that no one could hurt him, physically or otherwise.

Though in reality, it was Allāh who was protecting and upbringing the Messenger (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him), indirectly there were many great figures who looked after the Messenger (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him) in his blessed youth. Undoubtedly, Sayyida Halīma Sa'diyya (may Allāh be pleased with them) was one of those blessed characters.

Halīma Sa'diyya

It was the general custom of the Arabs that their young children were sent to the desert to be brought up with the Bedouins. For a few years, they grew up in the desert life before returning to their parents. There were many reasons for this:

- The tough desert life gave the child a good start in life.
- The language of the Bedouins was a much purer Arabic. We must remember that the Arabs were very proud of their language and all parents wanted their child to converse perfectly. Once, Abū Bakr (may Allāh be pleased with him) commented on the brilliant verbal skills of the Prophet (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him). He replied:

و ما يمنعني و انا من قريش و أرضعت في بني سعد

And why not, since I am from Quraysh and I was provided milk by Banū Sa'd? (*Ziā al-Nabī*, II: 66)

- Life in the desert was healthier for the child. Sometimes, Makka was subject to epidemics.

In fact, so important was this early period that some members of Quraysh would send their children to the desert for up to eight years after birth.

Of the many tribes around Makka that offered to take children in their care, Banū Sa'd ibn Bakr had the best reputation, who resided south east of Makka. One fortunate woman from this tribe was Sayyida Halīma Sa'diyya. She was a poor wet nurse. She and her husband Hārith only had a donkey and old she-camel. She did not even have enough milk to feed her own son in her care. It was also the year of famine and drought so they would constantly pray for rain.

When the wet nurses went to Makka, every woman got a child to bring up but Sayyida Halīma, who had arrived last, did not find a child to foster. She was ready to go back empty handed when she decided to return and collect the child Muhammad, even though he was an orphan. One report suggests that none of the foster mothers took Sayyidunā Muhammad (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him) because they did not see his blessed face. If they had, they would never have rejected him.

As soon as Sayyida Halīma lifted Sayyidunā Muhammad (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him), her fortunes turned right around and her life was filled with immense good fortune:

- a. Both Sayyidunā Muhammad (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him) and the other foster child were fully fed immediately, even though the previous night there was no milk for the other child.
- b. The old she camel, which had not given a drop of milk, was soon overflowing with milk.
- c. Even the old donkey found a new energy and suddenly became faster than any other animal. The people around her doubted if it was the same donkey.
- d. When they returned home, Sayyida Halīma and her husband noticed that their flock would graze on barren land all day, yet they would all return healthy and full of milk. The other flock belonging to the other locals would graze in exactly the same place, yet they would come home empty and hungry.

*In short, Sayyida Halīma was at the very back of the group of women but now was at the front of the group. This was indeed a great blessing for this poor Bedouin family. Her husband summed it up when on the very first night, he remarked (*Zia al-Nabi*, II: 68):

و الله يا حليلة لقد اخذنا نَسمة مباركة
By Allāh! O Halīma, we have taken a blessed child!

Sayyida Halīma knew that she had a blessed child with all the miracles and blessings she was seeing with her own eyes.

After two years, Sayyidunā Muhammad (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him) was returned to his mother Sayyida Aamina, but soon Aamina was persuaded by Halīma to return the baby back with them for another two years. At this time, Sayyida Halīma told Sayyida Aamina about the great blessings that she had received when Muhammad (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him) was in her care. There was also an illness in Makka and the child would be protected from it.

Later in life, when Halīma Sa'diyya (may Allāh be pleased with her) would visit him, he (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him) would stand in respect and spread out his mantle for her to sit on.

May Allāh send His Mercy upon the final resting place of Halīma Sa'diyya (may Allāh be pleased with her), Ameen.

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