

# Bahira the Monk

Prophet Muhammad (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him) publicly announced his *Nabuwwa* at the age of forty. It is our belief that prior to this age, he always knew he was the chosen, final prophet of Allāh. In fact, what we find is that many other people around him also knew he was the final prophet, even before the public announcement.

One such figure was Bahira. He met the Prophet (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him) when he was twelve years old (though Ibn Khaldūn also suggests he may have been thirteen or seventeen at the time)(*Ziā al-Nabī*, II: 104).

The Prophet (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him) went on a trading trip to Syria with his uncle Abū Tālib. Their caravan reached a place called Busra, which was also the place where a Christian monk called Bahira lived. It is said that from the sincere disciples (*Hawwarūn*) of Sayyidunā Isā's (peace be upon him) time, individuals lived who passed on the true message of Isā from generation to generation. Normally, Bahira did not take any interest in passing caravans, but when he saw Sayyidunā Muhammad (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him), he wanted to meet him and learn more. He knew he was special because he saw a cloud over his head at all times, protecting him from the sun's heat. Then when he rested under the tree, the branches miraculously lowered themselves to protect this figure. Therefore he decided to invite all the members of the traveling caravan for a meal that evening, though he was not known to do that.

At first, all the guests came except Prophet Muhammad (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him). Bahira immediately noticed his absence and asked them to bring him too to the meal. Under a tree after the meal, Bahira finally got the chance to meet him alone (*Ziā al-Nabī*, II: 106-7). The conversation commenced:

أَسْأَلُكَ بِحَقِّ اللَّاتِ وَالْعُزَّىٰ أَلَا مَا أَخْبَرْتَنِي عَمَّا أَسْأَلُكَ عَنْهُ

Bahira: I ask you in the name of al-Lāt and al-Uzza to answer my questions correctly.

لَا تَسْأَلْنِي بِاللَّاتِ وَالْعُزَّىٰ شَيْئًا فَوَاللَّهِ مَا أَبْغَضُ شَيْئًا قَطُّ بَغْضِهَا

Sayyidunā Muhammad ﷺ: Do not ask me anything in the name of al-Lāt and Uzza. By Allāh!

Nothing gets me more angry than their names.

فَبِاللَّهِ أَلَا مَا أَخْبَرْتَنِي عَمَّا أَسْأَلُكَ عَنْهُ

Bahira: Then in the name of Allāh answer my questions.

فَقَالَ لَهُ سَلْنِي مَا بَدَا لَكَ

Sayyidunā Muhammad ﷺ: Now ask me what you want.

Bahira asked many questions, including about his sleep. He lifted his shirt and saw the sign of *Nabuwwa* on his back, which he kissed. He then approached Abū Tālib and asked him his relationship to Muhammad. He told him that he was his son. Bahira immediately said: 'He is not your son, for his father cannot be alive.' Abū Tālib then said that he was Sayyidunā Muhammad's (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him) uncle.

Bahira instructed Abū Tālib to return him to Makka as soon as possible and to protect him from the Jews. He said, 'Your nephew will have glory; this is what is written in our books and in what our ancestors have told us.' He then proclaimed:

هذا سيد العالمين هذا رسول رب العالمين هذا يبعثه الله رحمة للعالمين

'This is the leader of the worlds. This is the Messenger of the Lord of the worlds. This is the one that Allāh will send as a Mercy for all the worlds.'

There are two reports regarding what happened after this meeting. One report states that upon Bahira's advice, Abū Tālib quickly returned to Makka with the Prophet (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him). The other suggests that they proceeded to Syria, concluded their trade as quickly as possible and then returned to Makka.

This story also produced a wonderful miracle that is still visible today. The meeting between the Prophet (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him) and Bahira happened under the shade of a tree. Recently that same tree was discovered in the northern, barren deserts of Jordan (pictured below). Though the entire area is dry, barren and lifeless, that one tree is still green with life, thanks to the blessings of Sayyidunā Muhammad (peace & blessings of Allāh be upon him).



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