Commemorating the Prophet’s (saw) Legacy

“Commemorating the Prophet’s Legacy” was the topic of Friday’s sermon delivered by Ameer Mustapha Elturk on February 18, 2011 at the IONA Center in Warren, MI. Ameer Mustapha reminded the audience that it was Rabi al-Awwal, the third month of the Islamic Calendar and it was on the 12th day of Rabi al-Awwal in the year 570 CE that the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was born.

Allah (SWT) had blessed humanity with a person who would eventually change the course of history and who is thought of to be the most influential man history has ever witnessed. Michael H. Hart, author of The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History, ranks Muhammad (SAW) at the top and says that he finds Muhammad (SAW) as “the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels.” Muhammad (SAW) of all past heroes is the most mentioned name today than anyone else in the world. Indeed Allah (SWT) has spoken the truth when He (SWT) says, “And We have not sent you except as a mercy to the worlds” (al-Anbiya’, 21:107).

We, Muslims, are blessed to be a part of the community that was started by one single person by the name of Muhammad ibn Abdullah ibn Abd al-Muttalib. What he did for humanity was never achieved by any of the prophets and messengers who came before him. His life and accomplishments must be the talk of every occasion. Muhammad (SAW) led an upright and dignified life. He was an observant and a curious man. He was always concerned about the welfare and the well being of his people. Born an orphan into this world, he grew up poor and found himself lost in the midst of his people. The Qur’an describes this when it says, “Did He not find you an orphan and shelter you? And He found you lost, and He guided you. And He found you needy and made you independent” (ad-Dhuha, 96:6-8). These three ayat of Surah ad-Dhuha epitomize the life of Muhammad (SAW) and represent the three distinct stages of his blessed life. The first stage is the period from his birth to the time when he married Khadija (RA) at the age of 25. The second stage is from the time of his marriage to the time when he was bestowed with prophethood at the age of 40. The third stage is from prophethood to his demise, which is referred to and explained in the middle of these three ayat. Ameer Mustapha then elaborated upon these three stages of the Prophet’s life.

The first stage: Prior to his birth, the Prophet’s mother, Amina, had a dream while she was carrying the Prophet in her womb. She saw that a light coming out of her womb shone over the castles of Busra and al-Sham (Syria). Indeed Muhammad (SAW) was destined to become the beacon of light (Sirajan Munira) for mankind. His grandfather, Abd al-Muttalib, named him Muhammad (the praised one), a name that was not familiar to the Arabs. He named him thus with the wish that his grandson would be praised by God in heaven and by men on earth. Indeed his wish has been fulfilled. Today Muhammad (SAW) is the most praised person in the world. Muhammad (SAW) was a blessing to all right from his birth. His wet nurse Halima reports that while Muhammad (SAW) was being fostered by her in the desert, she was amazed at the blessing she found around everything she saw. Just to mention one such blessing, her grazing animals had turned fat and multiplied in number. Muhammad (SAW) was returned to his mother after five years of desert life. His mother, Amina, took him on a journey to visit family members in Medina and to visit the grave of his father, Abdullah ibn Abd al-Muttalib, who had died before Muhammad (SAW) was born. Amina fell ill in Medina and eventually died. After a couple of years, Abd al-Muttalib also died and Muhammad (SAW) found himself under the custody of his uncle, Abu Talib, a man of modest means. In his teens, he accompanied his uncle to al-Sham (Syria) and learned the skills of trading. At home, he worked as a shepherd. As he matured, he began to think about the transcendent ultimate reality beyond the magnificent physical creation. The temptations of the bustling city life of Mecca had no control over his soul. He was far removed from any vice or immorality. His pensive and contemplative nature began to help him develop a worldview that started shaping his thoughts about the underlying truths of this earthly life. As fate would have it, he was employed by a noble and wealthy lady called Khadija to be her salesman. Muhammad (SAW), using his business skills and acumen, traded on her behalf with utmost loyalty and honesty as a result of which the business generated substantial profits. Khadija (RA) was impressed and overawed by Muhammad (SAW)’s flawless character, integrity, nobility, and unique personality. She offered herself in marriage to Muhammad (SAW) and they both got married. She was 15 years senior to him.

The second stage: This is the phase from Muhammad (SAW)’s marriage to his prophethood. Learning more about his husband’s nature, aspirations, and quest for truth, Khadija (RA) excused him from administrating her business in order to give him the leisure of
Muhammad (SAW) realized that his people’s understanding of the nature of this world and their concept of religiosity and devotion were based on utter falsehood. The man-made deities in forms of idols in and around the Ka’ba were nothing but dumb statues of stones. Muhammad (SAW) yearned for the truth. He searched for answers to the primordial, basic, and elementary questions about this ephemeral life and this grand creation. Is this world a mere accident? Who am I? What is my purpose? Men do good and evil instinctively or willingly? This unsated thirst for knowing the supreme truth led Muhammad (SAW) to take annual retreats—an Arab custom which the pious and thoughtful among the Arabs practiced. When he was approaching the age of forty, he began to take retreat (tahannuth) in the cave of Hirah in a nearby mountain called Jabal al-Nur (mountain of light). The practice of tahannuth according to some scholars involved subjecting each of these metaphysical questions to a searching analysis through deep thinking and contemplation and seeking genuine divine guidance—truths that would satisfy the soul. Allah (SWT)’s guidance finally came. Muhammad (SAW) encountered a unique experience in his last retreat during the month of Ramadan when he had reached the age of forty. Angel Jibril brought the message of Allah (SWT) to him and asked him to read. He replied that he did not know how to read. So the angel squeezed him in his arms till he felt that his soul was about to leave his body. This happened three times. After the third time the angel read to him the first five ayat of Surah al-’Aalaq: “Read in the name of your Lord Who created. Read...” (al-’Aalaq, 96: 1-5). Muhammad (SAW) had been blessed with prophethood.

The third stage: This was the beginning of a long rigorous journey—from the time of prophethood till the day Muhammad (SAW) accomplished what Allah (SWT) wanted him to accomplish. At the end of this journey, after a lapse of twenty three years the final ayat of the Qur’an were revealed: “This day have I perfected for you your din and completed My favor on you and chosen for you Islam as a din” (al-Ma’idah, 5:3).

The Qur’an revealed upon Muhammad (SAW) is the last gift of Allah (SWT) to the entire humankind. Islam is based on divine justice and guidance and is the only Din or way of life acceptable to Allah (SWT). The Prophet (SAW) struggled for twenty three years to establish Allah’s sovereignty on earth and emerged supremely successful in his mission. Falsehood does perish and truth does triumph. This is confirmed by the Qur’an when it says, And Say: “The truth has come and falsehood has perished. Falsehood is always bound to perish!” (al-Isra’, 17:81).

Amir Mustapha then explained that just as Allah (SWT) demands rights over His believing slaves and just as the Qur‘an demands its own rights upon the believers, so does the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) has certain rights over the believers. Allah (SWT)’s right is that all his slaves created by Him submit to none other than Him. The five rights of the Qur’an upon us are to believe in it as it ought to be believed, to read it, to understand it, to implement it in our lives, and to preach it to others. Similarly Muhammad (SAW) has five rights over every one who gives testimony of faith: “I bear witness that there is no deity other than Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.” These rights are: to believe in him as he ought to be believed, to obey him, to follow him, to love him, and to honor, respect, and salute him. Believing in the Prophet connotes obeying the Prophet. The Qur’an has urged the believers numerous times to obey Allah and to obey the Prophet. “And obey Allah and obey the messenger...” (al-Ma’idah, 5:92). Muhammad (SAW) was bestowed with the exclusive privilege of holding a particular thing to be halal (permissible) or haram (impermissible). “And whatever the Messenger commands you to do, you must do, and whatever he forbids you to do, you do not do” (al-Hashr, 59:7). Therefore, absolute obedience of the Prophet is imperative. The Prophet is also our role model, which implies that we follow him. This is the way out to become worthy of Allah’s mercy because the Qur’an says, “Say: If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your faults, and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful” (Aal ‘Imran, 3:31). Following Muhammad (SAW) does not only mean following the Sunnah of eating, drinking, sleeping, dressing, and the like. It also means following the way in which he accomplished his mission. Muhammad (SAW) also deserves to be loved more than oneself, or anyone or anything else besides Allah (SWT). And last but not least, Muhammad (SAW) has to be honored, respected, and saluted. Muhammad (SAW) deserves all this and much more for his great accomplishments and for all that he did for humanity.

In the end Ameer Mustapha made supplications to Allah (SWT) to help all Muslims to fulfill all the rights—the rights of Allah (SWT), the rights of the Qur’an, and the rights of Muhammad (SAW).

End

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