

An open letter to The Prophet Muhammad on His Birthday

To our dearest Prophet,

May peace and blessings be upon you and your family.

This is the month of your birthday and millions of us around the world are remembering your message and example. In a time when our friends and countrymen are celebrating the birth of the great Prophet Jesus who came before you, we reflect on what you taught us during your life. Some people wonder how we can learn from a person who lived more than 1400 years ago. How can his example be relevant in today's age? they ask. The truth is, that it has never been more important to reflect on your life than it is today. We live in an age where a minority who claim to follow you commit such heinous acts that we wonder if they could ever have really known you. We cannot understand how your example could have become so twisted by these people to justify their acts. Indeed does not the name of the very faith you brought to us mean 'submission'? So today we write, to reaffirm what you mean to us, your real message, and your real example.

Even before you became a prophet, you were known as 'Al Amin' (The Faithful) because of your kindness, honesty and integrity. You told us that 'kindness is a mark of faith' and that 'whoever does not have kindness, has no faith'. We see murderers killing in the name of God, yet you were the one who said 'God is not merciful to the one who shows no mercy to mankind'. In an age of barbarism, war and ignorance, you showed love for orphans and widows, two of the most vulnerable groups in your society. In our time, people are often quick to take offence on your behalf, but did they not see that you showed us

the importance of forgiveness by forgiving the man who killed and mutilated your uncle and protector? On your victorious return to Mecca, you were faced with the people that had persecuted you and your followers for years. In a moment where you could have shown vengeance, you showed mercy instead, absolved everyone of wrongdoing and set them free. When you were preaching to the people of Taif, they slandered and stoned you and chased you out of their town, yet you prayed for their forgiveness. Were you not setting this example for your future followers?

But those who know you should also know that kindness is not only the right of fellow human beings. We recall the story of when you were travelling with your companions and realised that one of them had taken a chick from its mother who was then circling overhead in grief. You asked 'who has hurt the feelings of this bird by taking its young? Return them to her'. In a time when animals were simply tools for humans, you prohibited their killing for sport, and even admonished anyone who overburdened or maltreated their horse. You revealed the verse from God which says 'And there is no creature on the earth, or bird that flies with its wings, except that they are communities like you' (6:38) to help us realise that all living beings have their place in our world, and are deserving of our respect.

As well as the creatures within it, you taught us to look after the world we live in by proclaiming that the planting of trees and sowing of seeds were charitable acts. You encouraged people to use environmental resources responsibly, as exemplified by the time you rebuked your companions for wasting too much

water even though it was for ritual cleansing before prayers. In our age, we had come to take the Earth's bounties for granted and only now do we realise the folly in this.

There are some people today who want others to follow you by force, yet you revealed the verse of God saying 'there is no compulsion in religion' (2:256). When God allowed you to preach to the people, He said 'Invite to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and debate with them in ways that are best and most gracious' (16:125) Where in this can one find justification for force and violence?

You even showed us that in a true Islamic State, people of all faiths should be free to practice their religion and be protected from harm, and the constitution of Medina that you developed had this philosophy at its core. Why are we so quick to forget this? Indeed, wholly inspired by your teachings, the letter that your cousin, companion and successor Ali ibn Abu Talib wrote to his governor in Egypt outlining his policy for rule was upheld by the United Nations in 2002 as the prime example of 'establishing a regime based on justice and democracy and encouraging knowledge'. The UN Legal Committee even voted that the document should be considered as one of the sources of international law.

So on this day of your Birthday, let us remember your true example and let us learn from your actions so that together we can help to make this world a better place.

With peace and blessings.

Celebrating the birth of Prophet Muhammad Sunday 10th January

Balloon Release & Rose Distribution | Starting at 12.30pm. Albion Place LS1 5ER
(Junction with Albion Street, Lands Lane and Briggate)

Unity in Leeds | Starting at 2.00pm. Baabulilm Centre, 166 Shadwell Lane LS17 8AD

Further upcoming events

Visit My Mosque: Sunday 7th February | Interfaith Opening of Fast: Monday 4th July | Email info@baabulilm.co.uk for more information

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LOVE MUHAMMAD (PSUH)

