

## **BILAL EARNS HIS FREEDOM**

It was during the early part of the seventh century CE that the prophet Muhammad (pbuh) received the word of Allah directly from the Angel Jibril (Gabriel) and began to preach to the people of Makkah (Mecca), in Saudi Arabia, where he lived.

Worship of idols was common in Makkah at that time and it horrified the Prophet to see worshippers entering the great place of worship to pray to their favourite statues. They were charged a lot of money for this by members of Muhammad's (pbuh) own tribe, who were in charge of the place of worship. The Prophet spoke openly against idol worship and told the people of Makkah that there was one Lord, Allah. This made many people angry, including Muhammad's (pbuh) own relatives, but it made no difference to the Prophet's teaching.

One hot afternoon, Bilal, a poor slave, struggled into the place of worship almost carrying his master Umaiya, a fat, lazy man, who was also very rich. Umaiya always visited the place of worship when his camel drivers had sold the goods he sent to other countries. He liked to give thanks to his favourite statues. He sent Bilal to wait in the courtyard and it was there that the slave heard the prophet Muhammad (pbuh) teach for the first time. After hearing the Prophet, Bilal was glad to take his master to the place of worship because then he could learn more.

Bilal began to tell the other slaves about Allah, but Umaiya found out about this and had Bilal whipped. When this did not work, Umaiya made him lie down for hours on burning sand without water. "Admit you are wrong and that my gods are the ones to worship," ordered Umaiya, but Bilal whispered, "Allah is greatest. I believe there is no Lord but Allah."

Umaiya left his slave to die but Abu Bakr, also a businessman and a follower of Allah, visited him and asked, "Why are you torturing your slave?" Umaiya explained and Abu Bakr suggested that he and Umaiya exchange slaves. Umaiya agreed and was sent a slave in exchange for Bilal, who was carried to Abu Bakr's house. He was nursed back to health and given his freedom by Abu Bakr.

Some time later, when the prophet and the Muslims moved to the city of Madinah, a mosque was built. Bilal was asked to call the people to prayer as a reward for his faith and courage. He began with the words he had spoken to Umaiya, "Allah is greatest."

## MUHAMMAD (pbuh), BIBAL AND ABU BAKR

In the story there are three people who need courage.

1. Why did Muhammad (pbuh) need courage?

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2. Why did Bilal need courage?

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3. Why did Abu Bakr need courage?

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4. Why do you need courage in your life?

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5. What helped Muhammad (pbuh), Bilal and Abu Bakr to have courage?

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6. What helped you have courage in your life?

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