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ISL3560

Study of Sirah of the Holy Prophet (PBUH)

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Study of Sirah of the Holy Prophet (PBUH)

Lecture-Wise Study Handout
Virtual University of Pakistan

13 lectures • prepared for exam study

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About This Course

This course is a study of the Sirah — the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The Sirah is the practical commentary on the Quran: it shows how revelation was lived, taught and implemented in real human society, from personal character to statecraft.

The lectures follow the chronological journey — Arabia before Islam, birth and youth, revelation, the Makkan struggle, the Hijrah, the Madinan state, and the final days — and then draw lessons for character, leadership, family life and social justice. Each lecture gives the key events, their significance, and exam pointers.

Lecture 1: Arabia Before Islam: Society, Religion and Politics

Learning Objectives

- Describe pre-Islamic Arabian society
- Explain the background of the Islamic message

Before Islam, Arabia was tribal, fragmented and without a central state. Tribal loyalty (asabiyyah) was the supreme value; inter-tribal warfare was frequent; and social evils were widespread — female infanticide, alcoholism, gambling, usury and the exploitation of the weak. Makkah, however, was a thriving trade and religious centre because of the Kaaba, which drew pilgrims and commerce from across Arabia.

Religiously, most Arabs were idolaters, though the Kaaba's Abrahamic origin was remembered; small Jewish and Christian communities existed in Yathrib, Yemen and Najran. Politically, Arabia lay between two great empires — Byzantium and Persia — which influenced but never ruled the interior. This independence meant the coming message would grow without imperial interference.

Understanding this background is very important: Islam did not emerge in a vacuum. The Quran's condemnation of infanticide, usury and tribal arrogance, and its emphasis on the unity of mankind, directly addressed the diseases of this society. Exam questions often ask how pre-Islamic conditions explain the nature of the Islamic reform.

Key Definitions

Jahiliyyah (Age of Ignorance) is defined as the state of Arabia before Islam, marked by tribalism, idolatry and social injustice

Key Points — very important for exams

Tribal fragmentation, asabiyyah, warfare; social evils: infanticide, usury, alcohol, exploitation.

Makkah: trade and pilgrimage centre around the Kaaba; Arabia independent of Byzantium and Persia.

Islam's reforms (unity, justice, compassion) directly answered Jahiliyyah's diseases.

Review Questions

- ? List four social evils of Jahiliyyah.
- ? Why was Makkah significant before Islam?

Section Summary

Islam came to a tribal, idolatrous, unjust Arabia — and its message was a direct cure for those conditions.

Exam Pointers

- Describe pre-Islamic Arabian society and explain how it shaped the Islamic reform.

Lecture 2: Birth, Lineage and Youth of the Prophet (PBUH)

Learning Objectives

- Narrate the early life of the Prophet (PBUH)
- Explain the significance of his pre-prophethood character

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was born in Makkah in 570 CE, the Year of the Elephant — so called because Abraha's Abyssinian army, marching with elephants to destroy the Kaaba, was miraculously destroyed. He belonged to the tribe of Quraysh and the clan of Banu Hashim; his father Abdullah died before his birth and his mother Amina died when he was six, leaving him an orphan in the care of his grandfather Abdul Muttalib and then his uncle Abu Talib.

His childhood included the Bedouin fosterage with Halima Sadia — the desert upbringing that gave him pure Arabic eloquence and robust health — and, at about age twelve, the trading journey to Syria with Abu Talib, during which the monk Bahira is reported to have recognized signs of prophethood. As a youth he was known as Al-Sadiq (the Truthful) and Al-Amin (the Trustworthy); at twenty-five he married Khadija (may Allah be pleased with her), a respected merchant widow, after managing her trade caravan with renowned honesty.

These early years establish two very important themes: divine preparation (orphanhood, desert purity, honest livelihood) and earned moral authority — when he later claimed prophethood, even his enemies could not accuse him of dishonesty. His pre-prophethood character is itself a proof of his truthfulness.

Key Definitions

Year of the Elephant is defined as the year 570 CE, named for Abraha's failed elephant-borne attack on the Kaaba

Key Points — very important for exams

Born 570 CE (Year of the Elephant), Quraysh, Banu Hashim; orphaned young; raised by Abdul Muttalib then Abu Talib.

Desert fosterage with Halima; Syria journey; honest trader; married Khadija at 25.

Al-Sadiq, Al-Amin: his established truthfulness made the later message undeniable.

Review Questions

- ? Why is the year of birth called the Year of the Elephant?
- ? How did the Prophet earn the titles Al-Sadiq and Al-Amin?

Section Summary

An orphaned child of Makkah grew into the city's most trusted man — the moral foundation for prophethood.

Exam Pointers

- Narrate the Prophet's birth, lineage and youth; explain the significance of Al-Amin.

Lecture 3: The First Revelation and the Two Phases of the Quran

Learning Objectives

- Describe the event of the first revelation
- Contrast Makkan and Madinan revelation

At the age of forty, while meditating in the cave of Hira during Ramadan, the Prophet (peace be upon him) received the first revelation through the angel Jibreel: the opening verses of Surah Al-Alaq — Read in the name of your Lord who created. The command to read and learn made knowledge the very first subject of revelation, a very important point about Islam's attitude to learning.

اقرأ باسم ربك الذي خلق

The revelation continued in two phases. The Makkan period (13 years) focused on faith: the oneness of Allah (Tawhid), prophethood, the Hereafter, and moral purification — short, powerful verses awakening conscience. The Madinan period (10 years) added law and society: worship details, family law, economic justice, criminal law and statecraft — building the Muslim community and state.

The Quran was preserved through memorization and writing: the Prophet had scribes record each revelation, companions memorized it, and it was compiled in book form under Abu Bakr and standardized under Uthman. This dual preservation — in hearts and in writing — is unique among scriptures and a frequent exam theme.

Key Definitions

Makkan revelation is defined as the thirteen-year Makkan phase of revelation emphasizing faith, Tawhid and the Hereafter

Key Points — very important for exams

The first revealed words were 'Iqra' (Read) — see the Arabic verse quoted above.

The first word revealed was Read — knowledge stands at Islam's foundation.

Makkan (13 yrs): faith and morals; Madinan (10 yrs): law, society and state.

Preserved by memorization plus scribes; compiled under Abu Bakr, standardized under Uthman.

Review Questions

- ? What were the first revealed verses and why are they significant?
- ? How was the Quran preserved?

Section Summary

Revelation began with a command to read, built faith in Makkah and law in Madinah, and was preserved in hearts and writing.

Exam Pointers

→ Describe the first revelation and contrast the Makkan and Madinan phases.

Lecture 4: The Early Makkan Preaching and Quraysh Opposition

Learning Objectives

- Describe the early preaching phase
- Explain the Quraysh response

After the first revelation, the Prophet (peace be upon him) began preaching quietly among family and close friends: Khadija, Ali, Abu Bakr and Zayd were among the first believers. For three years the call was private; then came the public proclamation from Mount Safa, inviting the Quraysh to abandon idols and worship one Allah.

The Quraysh's opposition escalated in stages: mockery and propaganda (calling him a poet, a madman, a sorcerer), social boycott, economic sanctions — the three-year boycott in the ravine of Abu Talib, during which the Muslims endured hunger — and finally physical persecution and assassination plots. The Year of Sorrow (10th year of prophethood) brought the deaths of Khadija and Abu Talib, removing his two greatest protectors.

The early converts show who answered the call: the poor and enslaved (Bilal, Ammar, Suhayb) drawn by its message of human equality, alongside nobles like Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman. This mixed following refutes the claim that Islam spread only among the desperate or only among the powerful — it attracted truth-seekers from every class.

Key Definitions

Boycott of Banu Hashim is defined as the three-year social and economic boycott of the Muslims in the ravine of Abu Talib

Year of Sorrow is defined as the 10th year of prophethood, marked by the deaths of Khadija and Abu Talib

Key Points — very important for exams

Private preaching (3 years) → public call from Mount Safa.

Opposition escalated: mockery → boycott (3 years of hunger) → persecution → assassination plots.

Converts from all classes — Bilal the freed slave to Umar the noble — show the message's universal appeal.

Review Questions

- ? List the stages of Quraysh opposition in order.
- ? What does the social mix of early converts prove?

Section Summary

Thirteen years of patient preaching under escalating persecution built a community of believers from every class.

Exam Pointers

→ Trace the stages of Quraysh opposition and describe the early converts.

Lecture 5: Abyssinia, Taif and the Mi'raj

Learning Objectives

- Describe the Abyssinian migration
- Explain the significance of Taif and Mi'raj

As persecution intensified, the Prophet (peace be upon him) permitted some followers to migrate to Abyssinia (Ethiopia), whose Christian king, the Negus, was known for justice. The migrants lived there in peace and refused Quraysh demands for extradition — the Negus, moved by the Quranic account of Jesus and Mary, protected them. This was Islam's first hijrah and a landmark of Muslim–Christian coexistence.

The Prophet himself sought support at Taif, where he was mocked and stoned until his feet bled — yet when offered divine punishment for the town, he prayed instead for their guidance, saying that perhaps their descendants would believe. This response under persecution is among the most cited examples of his mercy.

Then came the miraculous Night Journey and Ascension (Mi'raj): from Makkah to Jerusalem and through the heavens, during which the five daily prayers were ordained. The Mi'raj strengthened the Prophet and the believers at their lowest point and established Salah as the direct connection between the believer and Allah — the second pillar of Islam.

Key Definitions

Hijrah to Abyssinia is defined as the migration of early Muslims to Abyssinia seeking the justice of the Christian Negus

Mi'raj is defined as the Prophet's night journey to Jerusalem and ascension through the heavens, when daily prayers were ordained

Key Points — very important for exams

Abyssinia: first hijrah; the just Christian Negus protected Muslims — a model of interfaith justice.

Taif: stoned and bleeding, the Prophet prayed for the town's guidance — supreme mercy under persecution.

Mi'raj: the ascension; five daily prayers ordained — Salah as the believer's direct link to Allah.

Review Questions

? What does the Abyssinian episode teach about Muslim relations with just non-Muslim rulers?

? What was ordained during the Mi'raj?

Section Summary

Justice was found in Abyssinia, mercy was shown at Taif, and prayer was gifted in the Mi'raj.

Exam Pointers

→ Describe the Abyssinian migration, the Taif visit and the Mi'raj with their lessons.

Lecture 6: The Hijrah and the Foundation of Madinah

Learning Objectives

- Narrate the Hijrah
- Explain the founding institutions of Madinah

The Hijrah — the migration from Makkah to Yathrib (Madinah) in 622 CE — was a turning point so decisive that the Islamic calendar begins with it. It was not a flight but a planned transfer: the Prophet sent followers ahead in groups, stayed behind to settle trusts and debts (even those of his enemies), and left Makkah secretly with Abu Bakr, hiding in the cave of Thawr while Quraysh search parties hunted them.

In Madinah, the Prophet laid the foundations of a community and state. The first acts were profoundly symbolic: building the mosque (worship and community centre in one), establishing brotherhood (Mu'akhah) between the Muhajirun (migrants) and Ansar (helpers) — pairing families across the migrant–local divide — and drawing up the Charter of Madinah, a written constitution binding Muslims, Jews and other tribes into one political community with defined rights and duties.

The Charter of Madinah is very important: it is arguably the first written constitution in history, guaranteeing religious freedom, collective defence and the rule of law. It shows that the Islamic state was from its birth a plural, law-governed polity — a powerful answer to modern questions about Islam and citizenship.

Key Definitions

Hijrah is defined as the 622 CE migration from Makkah to Madinah, marking the start of the Islamic calendar

Charter of Madinah (Mithaq al-Madinah) is defined as the written constitution of Madinah binding its tribes into one political community

Key Points — very important for exams

622 CE: planned migration, not panicked flight — trusts settled, secrecy, cave of Thawr.

First acts: the mosque, Mu'akhah brotherhood, and the Charter of Madinah.

The Charter: arguably history's first written constitution — religious freedom, collective defence, rule of law.

Review Questions

- ? Why does the Islamic calendar begin with the Hijrah?
- ? List the Charter of Madinah's key provisions.

Section Summary

The Hijrah turned a persecuted community into a constitutional, plural state — the model Islamic polity.

Exam Pointers

- Explain why the Hijrah is the turning point of the Sirah; describe the Charter of Madinah.

Lecture 7: The Defensive Battles: Badr, Uhud and Khandaq

Learning Objectives

- Describe the three major defensive battles
- Draw leadership and moral lessons from each

The Quraysh did not accept the Muslim state's existence. At Badr (624 CE), a Muslim force of 313 met a Quraysh army of about 1,000 — and won decisively. The Quran describes the victory as divine help for the outnumbered believers, and it established that the Muslims could defend themselves; the battle's captives were treated with unprecedented humanity, many ransomed by teaching literacy.

At Uhud (625 CE), initial Muslim success turned to loss when archers abandoned their post for spoils, disobeying the Prophet's explicit order. The lesson, drawn frankly in the Quran, was about discipline and obedience: military defeat came from indiscipline, and the Prophet's gentle treatment of the erring companions afterwards modelled merciful leadership.

At the Trench/Khandaq (627 CE), the Muslims — on Salman's suggestion — dug a defensive trench around Madinah, neutralizing the Quraysh-led confederate army of 10,000. After weeks of siege the confederates withdrew; the battle proved Madinah unassailable and marked the strategic turning point after which the Quraysh never again took the offensive.

Key Definitions

Battle of Badr is defined as the 624 CE battle in which 313 Muslims defeated a Quraysh force of about 1,000

Key Points — very important for exams

Badr (624): 313 vs ~1,000 — decisive victory; humane treatment of captives.

Uhud (625): victory lost through archers' disobedience — the Quranic lesson on discipline.

Khandaq (627): the trench strategy; confederates withdrew — Madinah proved unassailable.

Review Questions

- ? What caused the reversal at Uhud?

? Why is Khandaq considered the strategic turning point?

Section Summary

Three battles taught that faith plus discipline wins, indiscipline loses, and wise strategy can neutralize superior numbers.

Exam Pointers

→ Describe Badr, Uhud and Khandaq with their causes, outcomes and lessons.

Lecture 8: Hdaybiyyah and the Conquest of Makkah

Learning Objectives

- Explain the wisdom of Hdaybiyyah
- Describe the conquest of Makkah

In 628 CE the Prophet set out peacefully for Umrah with 1,400 unarmed followers and was blocked at Hdaybiyyah. The resulting treaty — a ten-year truce with terms that seemed humiliating (returning Makkah converts, postponing Umrah) — dismayed many companions. Yet the Quran called it a clear victory (Fath al-Mubin): the truce ended the state of war, recognized the Muslims as equals, and opened Arabia to peaceful preaching — and conversions multiplied, including Khalid ibn al-Walid and Amr ibn al-As.

When the Quraysh's allies violated the treaty by attacking the Muslim-allied Khuza'a tribe, the Prophet marched on Makkah in 630 CE with 10,000 men. The conquest was bloodless: a general amnesty was proclaimed — No blame shall rest on you today — and even the fiercest enemies (Abu Sufyan, Hind, Ikrima) were forgiven. The idols in the Kaaba were destroyed and Makkah entered Islam.

The conquest's mercy is its supreme lesson: absolute power used for absolute forgiveness. Within two years, delegations from across Arabia came to Madinah — the Year of Delegations — and Arabia was effectively united under Islam without a war of conquest.

Key Definitions

Treaty of Hdaybiyyah is defined as the 628 CE ten-year truce between the Muslims and Quraysh, called a clear victory in the Quran

Key Points — very important for exams

Hdaybiyyah (628): harsh terms, but truce + recognition → peace → mass conversions — a clear victory.

Conquest of Makkah (630): 10,000 men, almost bloodless; general amnesty — even arch-enemies forgiven.

Lesson: power exercised as mercy; Arabia united largely without war (Year of Delegations).

Review Questions

? Why did the companions initially dislike the Hudaibiyyah terms?

? What did the Prophet proclaim at the conquest of Makkah?

Section Summary

A humiliating treaty proved a masterstroke of peace; a total victory was used for total forgiveness.

Exam Pointers

→ Why is Hudaibiyyah called a victory despite its harsh terms? Describe the conquest of Makkah.

Lecture 9: The Farewell Sermon and the Prophet's Passing

Learning Objectives

- Summarize the Farewell Sermon
- Describe the final days and succession

In 632 CE, during his farewell pilgrimage, the Prophet (peace be upon him) delivered the Farewell Sermon (Khutbat al-Wada) on the plain of Arafat before over a hundred thousand companions. Its themes are a charter of human rights: the sanctity of life, property and honour; the abolition of usury and blood-feuds; the rights of women (treat women kindly); the equality of all mankind — no superiority of Arab over non-Arab except by piety; and adherence to the Quran and Sunnah as the guarantee against going astray.

Shortly after returning to Madinah, the Prophet fell ill and passed away in 632 CE in the apartment of Aisha, and was buried where he died. The companions' grief was overwhelming — Umar initially refused to believe it — until Abu Bakr's immortal address: Whoever worshipped Muhammad, let him know Muhammad is dead; whoever worships Allah, let him know Allah is Ever-Living and never dies.

The succession was settled the same day at Saqifah with Abu Bakr's election as the first caliph, preserving the community's unity at its most vulnerable moment. The Prophet left no dynastic will: leadership would be by consultation (shura), a principle with lasting constitutional significance.

Key Definitions

Farewell Sermon is defined as the Prophet's 632 CE sermon at Arafat proclaiming human equality, women's rights and sanctity of life and property

Key Points — very important for exams

Farewell Sermon (632, Arafat): life/property/honour sacred; usury and feuds abolished; women's rights; human equality.

The Prophet passed away in Madinah, 632 CE; Abu Bakr's address anchored the community in worship of Allah alone.

Succession by consultation at Saqifah: Abu Bakr elected — leadership by shura, not dynasty.

Review Questions

? List five themes of the Farewell Sermon.

? What did Abu Bakr say when the Prophet passed away?

Section Summary

The final sermon proclaimed universal human rights; the Prophet's death tested the community, which held together through consultation.

Exam Pointers

→ Summarize the Farewell Sermon and describe the Prophet's passing and succession.

Lecture 10: The Prophet's Character: Mercy, Honesty and Justice

Learning Objectives

- Describe the Prophet's moral character
- Support each virtue with Sirah incidents

Mercy (rahmah) was the Prophet's defining quality — the Quran calls him a mercy to the worlds. His mercy embraced children (he shortened prayers on hearing a baby cry, played with his grandchildren), women (he condemned the Jahiliyyah devaluation of daughters), the poor, animals (he forbade overloading and starving them), and even enemies — praying for Taif's guidance after being stoned and forgiving Makkah at its conquest.

His honesty and trustworthiness were proverbial before prophethood and absolute after it: he returned trusts even to enemies on the night of the Hijrah, never broke a treaty first, and said truthfulness leads to Paradise. His justice was impartial — the famous declaration that if his own daughter Fatima stole, he would apply the penalty — and his generosity boundless, especially in Ramadan.

His daily life modelled balance: he mended his own clothes, milked his goats, joked with companions, wept in night prayer, and consulted others in decisions. For exams, the formula is: each virtue + one concrete incident. Character study is not biography for its own sake — the Quran presents him as the excellent example (uswah hasanah) for lived emulation.

Key Definitions

Mercy to the worlds is defined as the Quranic description of the Prophet as a mercy to all creation (21:107)

Key Points — very important for exams

Rahmah to all: children, women, poor, animals, even persecutors (Taif, Makkah amnesty).

Honesty: trusts returned even to enemies; treaties never broken first.

Justice: impartial — even against his own family; generosity legendary, especially in Ramadan.

Review Questions

? Give one incident each for mercy, honesty and justice.

? What does *uswah hasanah* mean?

Section Summary

The Sirah's core lesson is character: mercy, truthfulness and justice practised consistently, even under extreme provocation.

Exam Pointers

→ Describe the Prophet's character (mercy, honesty, justice, generosity) with one incident for each.

Lecture 11: The Prophet as Leader and Statesman

Learning Objectives

- Describe the Prophet's leadership qualities
- Explain his statecraft in Madinah

As a leader, the Prophet combined consultation with decisiveness. He practised *shura* (consultation) — asking companions' opinions at Badr, Uhud and Khandaq — yet decided firmly once counsel was taken. He delegated authority (Mu'adh to Yemen, governors to tribes), forgave mistakes (Uhud's archers), and shared hardship (digging the trench alongside companions, tying stones to his stomach in hunger).

His statecraft in Madinah shows plural governance: the Charter bound diverse tribes under one law; non-Muslim communities kept their religion and internal autonomy; diplomacy (letters to Heraclius, the Negus, Khosrow) treated foreign powers as equals. War was strictly regulated: no killing of non-combatants, no destruction of crops or places of worship — rules that became Islamic international law.

Modern leadership lessons drawn from the Sirah: lead by example, consult before deciding, forgive errors while correcting them, share your people's hardships, and keep faith with treaties. These are examinable as applied questions — e.g. how the Sirah guides a manager or administrator today.

Key Definitions

Shura is defined as the Quranic principle of consultation in decision-making, practised by the Prophet

Key Points — very important for exams

Shura + decisiveness: consulted at Badr/Uhud/Khandaq, then decided firmly.

Delegation, forgiveness of mistakes, sharing hardship (digging the trench).

Plural state: Charter of Madinah; regulated warfare; diplomacy with empires as equals.

Review Questions

? Give three examples of the Prophet practising consultation.

? What rules of war did Islam establish?

Section Summary

The Sirah offers a complete leadership model: consultative, just, merciful — and a plural, law-governed state.

Exam Pointers

→ Explain the Prophet's leadership style and statecraft with examples; draw modern lessons.

Lecture 12: Family Life and the Status of Women in the Sirah

Learning Objectives

- Describe the Prophet's family life
- Explain the Sirah's reforms for women

The Prophet's family life is part of the Sirah's teaching. His marriage to Khadija — twenty-five years of monogamous devotion until her death — refutes caricatures; his later marriages were largely social and political bonds cementing tribal alliances and caring for widows. He was a devoted father: he stood to greet Fatima, shortened prayers for crying infants, and played with his grandchildren Hasan and Husayn.

His treatment of women was revolutionary for 7th-century Arabia: he condemned female infanticide, affirmed women's rights to property, inheritance and education (seeking knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim, male and female), consulted his wives (Umm Salama's advice at Hdaybiyyah saved the day), and declared the best of men are those best to their wives.

For husbands, fathers and teachers today, the Sirah's domestic lessons are direct: kindness at home as the measure of character, playfulness with children, consultation with spouses, and dignity for daughters. Exam questions often ask how the Sirah improved the status of women — answer with both principles and incidents.

Key Definitions

Seeking knowledge is obligatory is defined as the Prophet's declaration of women's right and duty to seek knowledge

Key Points — very important for exams

Devoted husband (Khadija, 25 years) and affectionate father/grandfather.

Women's rights affirmed: life, property, inheritance, education, consultation (Umm Salama at Hdaybiyyah).

Measure of character: kindness at home — the best of you are best to their families.

Review Questions

? How did the Prophet's marriages serve social purposes?

? Give three Sirah-based arguments for women's dignity and rights.

Section Summary

The Sirah revolutionized family ethics: daughters honoured, wives consulted, kindness at home made the test of character.

Exam Pointers

→ Explain the Sirah's teachings on family life and the status of women with examples.

Lecture 13: Lessons of the Sirah for Modern Life

Learning Objectives

- Apply Sirah lessons to contemporary life
- Summarize the Sirah's relevance

The Sirah is studied not as ancient history but as guidance. Its lessons for daily life include: truthfulness in speech and business, mercy to the weak, patience under provocation, forgiveness when powerful, simplicity in living, courage for justice, and constant remembrance of Allah. Each lesson is anchored in an incident — which is why narrative detail matters in exams.

For students and professionals: the Prophet's pursuit of knowledge (the first revelation commands reading), his work ethic (he was a shepherd and trader), his time discipline (prayers structuring the day), and his integrity in trusts and contracts translate directly into study and workplace ethics. The Sirah answers what a Muslim professional should be.

For society: the Madinan model shows how to build plural community — a constitution guaranteeing rights, brotherhood across migrant–local divides, welfare for the poor (the Prophet personally fed the hungry), and justice without favour. The very important concluding theme: the Sirah is Islam in action, and loving the Prophet means following his example.

Key Definitions

Uswah hasanah is defined as the Quranic designation of the Prophet as the excellent example for emulation (33:21)

Key Points — very important for exams

Personal: truthfulness, mercy, patience, forgiveness, simplicity — each anchored in an incident.

Professional: knowledge-seeking, work ethic, time discipline, contractual integrity.

Social: plural constitution, migrant–local brotherhood, welfare, impartial justice.

Review Questions

? How does the Sirah guide a student's study ethics?

? What does the Madinan model teach about plural societies?

Section Summary

The Sirah is Islam lived: a complete guide to character, work and just community — as relevant today as in Madinah.

Exam Pointers

→ Discuss the relevance of the Sirah to modern personal, professional and social life.

Glossary of Key Terms

Jahiliyyah (Age of Ignorance) — the state of Arabia before Islam, marked by tribalism, idolatry and social injustice

Year of the Elephant — the year 570 CE, named for Abraha's failed elephant-borne attack on the Kaaba

Makkan revelation — the thirteen-year Makkan phase of revelation emphasizing faith, Tawhid and the Hereafter

Boycott of Banu Hashim — the three-year social and economic boycott of the Muslims in the ravine of Abu Talib

Year of Sorrow — the 10th year of prophethood, marked by the deaths of Khadija and Abu Talib

Hijrah to Abyssinia — the migration of early Muslims to Abyssinia seeking the justice of the Christian Negus

Mi'raj — the Prophet's night journey to Jerusalem and ascension through the heavens, when daily prayers were ordained

Hijrah — the 622 CE migration from Makkah to Madinah, marking the start of the Islamic calendar

Charter of Madinah (Mithaq al-Madinah) — the written constitution of Madinah binding its tribes into one political community

Battle of Badr — the 624 CE battle in which 313 Muslims defeated a Quraysh force of about 1,000

Treaty of Hudaibiyyah — the 628 CE ten-year truce between the Muslims and Quraysh, called a clear victory in the Quran

Farewell Sermon — the Prophet's 632 CE sermon at Arafat proclaiming human equality, women's rights and sanctity of life and property

Mercy to the worlds — the Quranic description of the Prophet as a mercy to all creation (21:107)

Shura — the Quranic principle of consultation in decision-making, practised by the Prophet

Seeking knowledge is obligatory — the Prophet's declaration of women's right and duty to seek knowledge

Uswah hasanah — the Quranic designation of the Prophet as the excellent example for emulation (33:21)