

# A Short Biography of the Mothers of the Faithful" (part 1 of 2)

**Description:** A brief biography of the Mothers of the Believers", or the wives of Prophet Muhammad.

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The wives of Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, hold a special place in Islamic piety. The Quran calls them "**Mothers of the Faithful**" (**Quran 33:6**). They were his wives in this life and shall be in the life to come. They were young and old, widows and virgins, poor and wealthy, aristocrats and freed slaves. Each one played their specific role in forming the history of Islam.

## Khadeejah

Prophet Muhammad married her when he was twenty-five, while she had reached the age of forty. She was a widow, twice married. He was at the peak of his youth. Impressed by Muhammad's honesty and moral character, she sent a relative to propose marriage. They were married for twenty five years until her death. Through every persecution, Khadeejah was his sole companion and helper. Khadeejah, along with Aisha, played a major contribution in the establishment and spread of the Islamic civilization. Khadeejah bore four daughters with the Prophet: Zainab, Umm Kulthoom, Ruqayya, and Fatima. All four grew to maturity and accepted Islam. They all died in the lifetime of their father, except Fatima who died six months after the Prophet. Khadeejah also bore two sons, Qasim and Abdullah, both of whom died at an early age.

## Sawdah

Months after the death of Khadeejah, the Prophet had returned from an unsuccessful mission in Taif, helpless and persecuted. At this time he married Sawdah, another widow, who possessed neither beauty, nor social status, nor wealth. She had been forced to escape to Abyssinia with her husband from the persecution of pagan Meccans to find some security. Her husband died in exile, giving his life for the sake of his faith. He had migrated with his wife from his home for the cause of his religion, and he left her in utter poverty. Driven by a sense of generosity, the Prophet of Mercy married her, raising her to the spiritual level of "Mother of the Faithful." The Prophet did not marry another woman for the first three years of his Marriage to Sawdah. She died a few years after the death of Prophet Muhammad.

## Aishah

Aishah was the daughter of one of the closest companions of Prophet Muhammad, Abu

Bakr. An old friend of the Prophet, Abu Bakr was one of the earliest converts to the faith and was considered to be the most sincere, earnest, and devoted in faith. Seeing the loss of the Prophet, one of the woman companions proposed Abu Bakr's daughter to him and approached Abu Bakr on behalf of the Prophet. But there were two problems. One, Aishah was already betrothed to Jubair ibn Mut'im, a pagan Meccan. Jubair, it turned out, had lost interest because of the wide gulf between paganism and Islam. In addition, Aishah had not yet reached puberty, and this also contributed to Jubair's disinterest in pursuing the betrothal. Thus, she was betrothed to the Prophet while still in Mecca, and three years later, when both were in Medina and she had reached puberty, he consummated his marriage. She was the only virgin he married, though they did not have any children. Aishah was a leading scholar of Islam and played a pivotal role in the establishment of the Islamic civilization. She taught for forty years after the death of the Prophet until her death at the age of sixty-seven.

## Hafsah

Hafsah was the daughter of Umar, the man closest to Prophet Muhammad after Abu Bakr. She migrated with her husband to Medina, but was left a widow after the Battle of Badr. With a fiery temper like her father, she had remained without a husband ever since. Umar first asked Abu Bakr, and then Uthman, to marry her, but each refused in turn, much to his ire. This shows the unavailability of marriageable males at the time. At last, Umar approached Prophet Muhammad. The marriage took place in the third year after migration. The Prophet divorced her once, but was commanded by God to take her back. She was charged with keeping the official copy of the Quran during the caliphate of Abu Bakr and Umar. She passed away four years after the Prophet.

## Zainab

In the same year, the third year after migration, the Prophet married Zainab, made a widow after the Battle of Uhud. Her kindness to the poor had earned her the nickname of "mother of the destitute." She was past the prime of her life and when she was wed by him, and she died a few months after their marriage. She is the only wife beside Khadeejah who passed away in the Prophet's lifetime.

## Umm Salama

A year later, the Prophet married another widow who had suffered persecution, at one time losing the custody of her children to her pagan in-laws. After the Battle of Uhud, she was left a widow with four children. Abu Bakr first proposed to her, but she refused because she did not think anyone could be patient with her children. Finally, the Prophet proposed, assuring her the children would be taken care of; Prophet Muhammad married Umm Salama because of this noble motivation. The faithful loved their Prophet all the more and honored him as the Prophet of God. They saw in him a father to the destitute, the deprived, the weak, and the poor as well as to everyone who had lost his father in the cause of God. Umm Salama was the last wife of the Prophet to die. She passed away forty nine years after his death at the age of eighty-four.

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