

The Quran and its Message

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سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

WHERE DO WE LEARN ABOUT PROPHET MUHAMMAD'S^(pbuh) WIVES?

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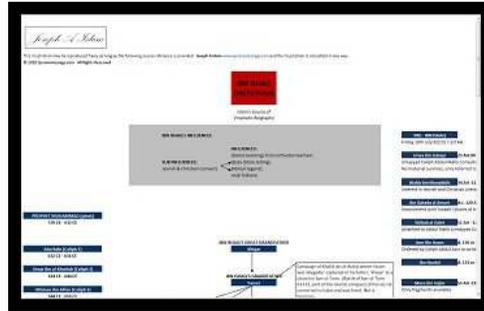
Extant written sources accumulate from over a century after the death of the Prophet. The purpose of this article is not to delve into a historical analysis of the source. The earliest (if not the earliest) source of literature which furnishes us with the information of the Prophet's wives is the Biography (Sira) of the Prophet Muhammad^(pbuh). This reaches us in the name of the professional historian, Ibn Ishaq (born c. 704 CE). Ibn Ishaq's own work does not survive but is further transmitted via different transmitters who have edited his works. One of Ibn Ishaq's most popular transmissions are those that have reached us via Ibn Hisham (d.833) who in turn received it from Al-Bakkai, who received it from Ibn Ishaq.

Ibn Ishaq (c. born 704 CE) -----> Al Bakkai -----> Ibn Hisham (died 833 CE)

Please see article: [Ibn Ishaq's Sira of Prophet Muhammad \(pbuh\)](#)

A historian is primarily concerned with the **earliest, most reliable, source**. The earliest narrative of the Prophet's biography collected nearly 150 years later held in oral traditions only and **without** contemporary verification that survives today raises many problems for historians. Ibn Ishaq's work attracts many criticisms from both Muslim and Oriental scholarship. However, this analysis is outside the remit and purpose of this article.

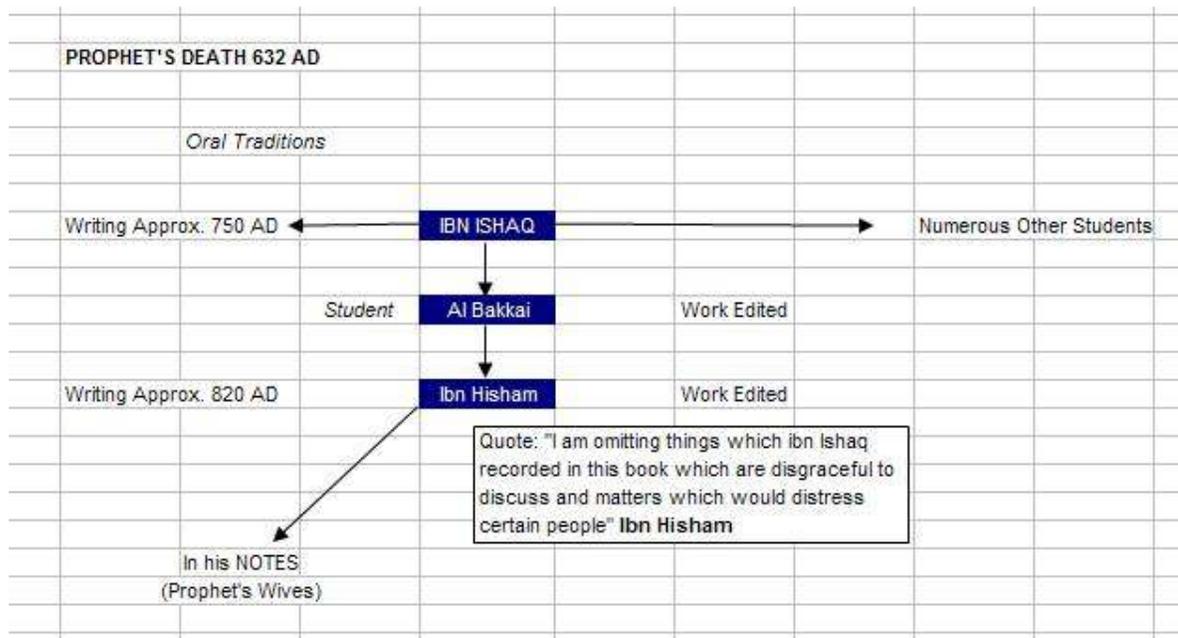
Please see the following illustration with regards Ibn Ishaq



Click image above

WHERE IS THE EARLIEST SOURCE OF INFORMATION OF THE PROPHET'S WIVES FOUND?

Details of the Prophet's wives are found in the **notes** section of Ibn Hisham's **abridgment** of Ibn Ishaq's Sira



[Illustration mine \(Joseph Islam\)](#)

In the section where Ibn Hisham informs us of Ibn Ishaq's recording of 'The Beginning of the Apostle's illness', there is a note by Ibn Hisham at the end of the narrative (represented by 918)

"The apostle smiled and then his pain overcame him as he was going the round of his wives, until he was overpowered in the house of Maymuna. He called his wives and asked their permission to be nursed in my house, and they agreed **(918)**" [1]

Note (918) is elaborated in Ibn Hisham's notes. First, it is worthwhile reading the following paragraph which is found in the introduction of Ibn Hisham's notes:

IBN HISHAM'S NOTES

"God willing I shall begin this book with Isma'il son of Ibrahim and mention those of his offspring who were the ancestors of God's apostle one by one with what is known about them, taking no account of Isma'il's other children, for the sake of brevity, confining myself to the prophet's biography and omitting some of the things that I. I (**Ibn Ishaq**) has recorded in this book in which there is no mention of the apostle and about which the Quran says nothing and which are not relevant to anything in this book or an explanation of it or evidence for it; poems which he quotes that no authority on poetry whom I have met knows of; **things which it is disgraceful to discuss; matters which would distress certain people; and such reports as al-Bakka'i told me he could not accept as trustworthy - all these things I have omitted.**" [2]

Note (918) elaborating the Prophet's wives reads as follows:

THE APOSTLE'S WIVES

The were nine: 'Aisha d. Abu Bakr; Hafsa d. 'Umar; Umm Habiba d. Abu Sufyan; Umm Salama d. Abu Umayya b. al-Mughira; Sauda d. Zama'a b. Qays; Zaynab d. Jahsh b. Ri'ab; Maymuna d. al-Harith b. Hazn; Juwayriya d. al-Harith b. Abu Dirar; and Safiya d. Huyay b. Akhtab **according to what more than one traditionist has told me.**

He married thirteen women: Khadija d. Khuwaylid, his first wife whom her father Khuwaylid b. Asad, or according to others her brother 'Amr, married to him. The apostle gave her as dowry twenty she-camels. She bare all the apostle's children except Ibrahim. She had been previously married to Abu Hala b. Malik, one of B. Usayyid b. 'Amr b. Tamim, an ally of B. 'Abdu'l-Dar to whom she bore Hind b. 'Abid b. 'Abdullah b. 'Umar b. Makhzum to whom she bore 'Abdullah and Jariya.

He married 'A'isha in Mecca when she was a child of seven and lived with her in Medina when she was nine or ten. She was the only virgin that he married. Her father, Abu Bakr, married her to him and the apostle gave her **four hundred dirhams.**

He married Sauda d. Zama'a b. Qays b. 'Abdu Shams b. 'Abdu Wudd b. Nasr b. Malik b. Hish b. 'Amir b. Lu'ayy. Salit b. 'Amr, or according to others Abu Hatib b. 'Amr, married her to him, and the apostle gave her **four hundred dirhams**.

Ibn Ishaq contradicts this tradition saying that Salit and Abu Hatib were absent in Abyssinia at this time. Before that she had been married to al-Sakran b. 'Amr b. 'Abdu Shams.

He married Zaynab d. Jahsh b. Ri'ab al-Asadiya. Her brother Abu Ahmad married her to him and the apostle gave her **four hundred dirhams**. She had been previously married to Zayd b. Haritha, the freed slave of the apostle, and it was about her that God sent down: 'So when Zayd had done as he wished in divorcing her We married her to you'

He married Umm Salama d. Abu Umayya b. al-Mughira al-Makhzumiya. Her name was Hind. Her son Salama b. Abu Salama married her to him and the apostle gave her a bed stuffed with palm leaves, a bowl, a dish and a handmill. She had been married to Abu Salama b. 'Abdu-l-Asad whose name was 'Abdullah. She had borne him Salama, 'Umar, Zaynab, and Ruqayya.

He married Hafsa d. 'Umar with her father's consent and the apostle gave her **four hundred dirhams**. She had been married to Khunays b. Hudhafa al-Sahmi.

He married Umm Habiba whose name was Ramla d. Abu Sufyan. Khalid b. Sa'id b. Al-'As married her to him when they were both in Abyssinia and the Negus gave her on behalf of the apostle **four hundred dinars**. It was he who arranged the marriage for the apostle. She had been married to 'Ubaydullah b. Jahsh al-Asadi.

He married Juwayriya d. al-Harith b. Abu Dirar al-Khuza'iya who was among the captives of B. Mustaliq of Khuza'a. She had fallen to the lot of Thabit b. Qyas b. al-Shammas al-Ansari and he wrote a contract of redemption which she brought to the apostle asking he help. **He asked her if she would like something better than that, and when she asked what that could be he said, 'Shall I rid you of the contract and marry you myself?' She said Yes, and so he married her.** This tradition was given us by Ziyad b. 'Abdullah al-Bakkai from Muhammad b. Ishaq from Muhammad b. Ja'far b. al-Zubayr from Urwa from A'isha.

It is said that when the apostle came back from the raid on B. al-Mustaliq with Juwayriya and was in the midst of the army he gave Juwayriya to one of the Ansar and ordered him to guard her. When the apostle reached Medina her father al-Harith came to him with his daughter's ransom. When he was in al-'Aqiq he had looked at the camels which he had brought for the ransom and admired two of them greatly, so he hid them in one of the passes of al-'Aqiq. Then he came to the prophet saying, 'Here is my daughter's ransom'. The apostle said: 'But where are the two camels which you hid in al-'Aqiq in such-and-such a pass?' Al-Harith said, 'I testify that there is no God but Allah and that you are the apostle of God, for by God none could have known of that but God most High'; so he became a Muslim, as did two of his sons who were with him and some of his people. He sent and fetched the two camels and handed them over to the prophet and his daughter Juwayriya was given back to him. She became an excellent Muslim. The apostle asked her father to let him marry her and he agreed and the apostle gave her **four hundred dirhams**. She had been previously married to a cousin of hers called 'Abdullah. It is said that the apostle brought her from Thabit b. Qays, freed her, married her, and gave her **four hundred dirhams**.

He married Safiya d. Huyay b. Akhtab whom he had captured at Khaybar and chosen for himself. The apostle made a feast of gruel and dates: there was no meat or fat. She had been married to Kinana b. al-Rabi' b. Abu'l-Huqayq.

He married Maymuna d. al-Harith b. Hazn b. Bahir b. Huzam b. Ruwayba b. 'Abdullah b. Hilal b. 'Amir b. Sa'sa'a. Al-'Abbas b. 'Abdu' l-Muttalib married her to him and gave her on the apostle's behalf **four hundred dirhams**. She had been married to Abu Ruhm b. 'Abdu'l-Uzza b. Abu Qays b. 'Abdu Wudd b. Nasr b. Malik b. Hisl b. 'Amir b. Lu'ayy. It is marriage came to her when she was on her camel. She said, 'The camel and what is on it belongs to God and His apostle.' So God sent down: 'And a believing woman if she gives herself to the prophet'

It is said that the one who gave herself to the prophet was Zaynab d. Jahsh, or Umm Sharik Ghaziya d. Jabir b. Wahb of B. Munqidh b. 'Amr b. Ma'is b. 'Amir b. Lu'ayy. **Others say it was a woman of B. Sama b. Luayy and the apostle postponed the matter.**

He married Zaynab d. Khuzayma b. al-Harith b. 'Abdullah b. 'Amr b. 'Abdu Manaf b. Hilal b. 'Amir b. Sa'sa'a who was called 'Mother of the Poor' because of her kindness to them and her pity for them. Qabisa b. 'Amr al-Hilali married her to him and the apostle gave her **four hundred dirhams**. She had been married to 'Ubayda b. al-Harith b. al-Muttalib b. 'Abdu Manaf; before that to Jahm b. 'Amr b. al-Harith who was her cousin.

The apostle consummated his marriage with eleven women, two of whom died before him, namely Khadija and Zaynab. He died leaving the nine we have mentioned. With two he had no marital relations, namely Asma' d. al-Nu'man, the Kindite woman, **whom he married and found to be suffering from leprosy and so returned to her people with a suitable gift:** and 'Amra d. Yazid the Kilab woman who was recently an unbeliever. When she came to the apostle she said '**I seek God's protection against you**' and he replied that one who did that was inviolable so he sent her back to her people. **Others say that** the one who said this was a Kindite woman, a cousin of Asma' d. al-Nu'man, and that the apostle summoned her and she said 'We are a people to whom others come; we come to none!' so he returned her to her people.

There were six Quraysh women among the prophet's wives, namely Khadija, 'A'isha, Hafsa, Umm Habiba, Umm Salama, and Sauda.

The Arab women and others were seven, namely, Zaynab d. Jahsh, Maymuna, Zaynab d. Khuzayma, Juwayriya, Asma', and 'Amra. The non-Arab woman was Safiya d. Huyay b. Akhtab of B. al-Nadir. [3]

FINAL THOUGHTS

It is useful to note that no information is provided as to who has narrated these traditions other than where it has been recorded (In Ibn Hisham's notes). What level of confidence does one place on narratives held in oral traditions removed over a century from source held amongst memories of traditionists?

Hadith compilers such as Imam Bukhari are further removed from early historians by nearly another century. The pool of traditionists that they were privy to were even further displaced from source. Could compilers such as Imam Bukhari provide any new information with regards the Prophetic biography that Ibn Ishaq could not provide nearly a century earlier? Or, were they simply drawing from an even more embellished pool of traditions?

A sincere deeper analysis of Islam's sources is strongly suggested to gauge a better idea of the fluidity of the early narratives which we (Muslims) today take as fact.

REFERENCES

[1] GUILLAUME. A, **The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah**, Oxford University Press, Page 679

[2] **Ibid.**, Page 691

Highlights in black text are my own insertions and are for clarification and emphasis only.

[3] **Ibid.**, Page 792-94

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