

# The Mothers of the Believers (part 1 of 2): Who are the Mothers of the Believers?

**Description:** The definition of the term Mothers of the Believers and a brief biography of the first four wives of Prophet Muhammad.

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## Objectives

- To understand how and why we use the term Mothers of the Believers.
- To know and understand something about the life and times of four of the wives of Prophet Muhammad.

## Arabic Terms

- *Dunya* - this world, as opposed to the world of the Hereafter.
- *Akhirah* - the Hereafter, the life after death.
- *Sunnah* - The word *Sunnah* has several meanings depending on the area of study however the meaning is generally accepted to be, whatever was reported that the Prophet said, did, or approved.
- *Sahabah* - the plural form of "Sahabi," which translates to Companions. A Sahabi, as the word is commonly used today, is someone who saw Prophet Muhammad, believed in him and died as a Muslim.
- *Hadith* - (plural "ahadith") is a piece of information or a story. In Islam it is a narrative record of the sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad and his companions.
- *Mushaf* " this is the book in which the Quran is contained.

Who are the Mothers of the Believers? You might have heard the expression *Ummahat al-Mumineen*. This translates into English as the 'Mothers of the Believers' and this is a title that refers to the wives of Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of Allah be upon him. They were his wives in this *dunya* and will be his wives in the *akhirah*. Each of these women played a significant role in the dissemination of Islam and their behavior in various situations teaches us many lessons applicable today.



They remind and teach us how to follow the *Sunnah* in our daily lives. They excelled in both religious and social life and many received the glad tidings that their final destination would be Paradise. They teach us integrity, loyalty, honesty and modesty and they showcase the unique status of women in Islam.

Allah refers to the wives of Prophet Muhammad in the Quran and He calls them the Mothers of the Believers. He says, **oeThe Prophet is closer to the believers than their ownelves, and his wives are their (believers') mothers (as regards respect and marriage)...” (Quran 33:6)** By using this reference and title a special status was bestowed upon the wives of Prophet Muhammad. They were accorded a high level of respect and after Prophet Muhammad’s death they were not allowed to marry again because legally they were considered to be the mothers of all Muslim men.

### · Khadijah bint[1] Khuwaylid (b.556 " d.619 CE)

oeMary, the daughter of Imran, was the best among the women (of the world of her time) and Khadijah is the best amongst the women (of this nation).”[2] Khadijah was the first wife of Prophet Muhammad, whom she met as a widow of a wealthy merchant but had become prosperous in her own right. She hired Muhammad as a business agent but soon came to see him as a suitable husband. According to most sources she was about 40 and Muhammad about 25 when they married. Khadijah bore him six children, including two sons who died in infancy. She gave Muhammad support and encouragement when he received his first revelations and remained loyal to him when many prominent Meccans began to oppose him. While she lived, Muhammad took no other wives. He loved, missed and remembered Khadijah for the rest of his life.

### · Sawdah bint Zam’a ( b.unknown " d.674 CE)

After a marriage of twenty-five years the Prophet’s first wife, Khadijah passed away. He was left alone to raise a small family and found that he could not devote enough time to calling the people to Islam so he decided to marry again. He chose a widow named Sawdah bint Zam’a.

Sawdah and her first husband were amongst the very early converts to Islam who immigrated to Abyssinia. Her husband passed away in exile and she was left a poor widow with small children. Prophet Muhammad sought approval for their marriage from Sawdah’s non-Muslim parents. The parents agreed and then directed him to seek approval from Sawdah herself. With this union, Sawdah’s and the Prophet’s households merged and the Prophet had more time to carry out the prophetic mission. They were married for three years before Prophet took another wife. Sawdah had the great honour of being an immigrant for the sake of Islam on two occasions, to Abyssinia and then to Medina. She was the first of a number of widows the Prophet married. Sawdah had a reputation for being a kind, charitable and jovial woman.

At about the same time as his marriage to Sawdah Prophet Muhammad became

betrothed to Aishah bint Abu Bakr. Some years later Aishah joined their household as a young bride and Sawdah made her welcome; they formed a close bond that remained unbroken even after the Prophet's death.

## · **Aishah bint Abu Bakr (b.612 " d.678 CE)**

Aishah was the daughter of Abu Bakr, one of Prophet Muhammad's closest friends and supporters. Her betrothal to him at a young age fortified that relationship. Aishah was raised as a Muslim while most of the close *sahabah* were converts to Islam. After marriage she and the Prophet became extremely close and many *ahadith* attest to this fact. She was his beloved wife and an extremely intelligent scholar of Islam. She is credited with narrating more than 2000 *ahadith* and became noted for her sharp intelligence, love of learning and impeccable judgment. Aishah was one of only three of Prophet Muhammad's wives who memorized the entire Quran. Among her notable attainments were that she was the only wife that was with the Prophet when he received revelation and it was in Aishah's arms that the Prophet died. Aishah was widowed at the age of 18 or 19 years old and went on to teach and play a significant role in the dissemination of Islam for more than 40 years.

## · **Hafsah bint Umar ibn Al-Khattab (b.605 " d.665 CE)**

Prophet Muhammad's fourth wife was Hafsah, the daughter of one of Prophet Muhammad's closest confidantes, Umar ibn Al-Khattab. Their marriage was an astute political alliance. Hafsah had been married at a young age and participated in the migrations to both Abyssinia and Medina. Sadly she was widowed when only eighteen years old but she then had the honour of marrying Prophet Muhammad and linking the Al-Khattab family with the Prophet's family. Hafsah and Aishah were the youngest of Prophet Muhammad's wives and both had similar personalities; they were strong, determined women and for the most part seemed to get on well. Hafsah was able to both read and write and like Aishah memorised the entire Quran. She was both pious and intelligent and would spend hours pondering over the verses of the Quran. It was Hafsah who had the great honour of being the custodian of the first *Mushaf* which came into her possession after the death of her father. Hafsah was married to the Prophet for eight years, and after his death she lived for another thirty four years.

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Endnotes:

[1] *Bint* in Arabic means the daughter of.

[2] *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*

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