



# Horses in Islam

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The story about horses is never ending. It's more than a story, it's an education. The history of horses may take eons to research, and even when implemented controversy will arise, adding a bit of zing to the reader, or maybe to an uncompromising Arabian horse breeder! Stories about horses in Islam in specific go back to the mystic times of King Solomon, the Sultans, and the Caliphs of Baghdad.

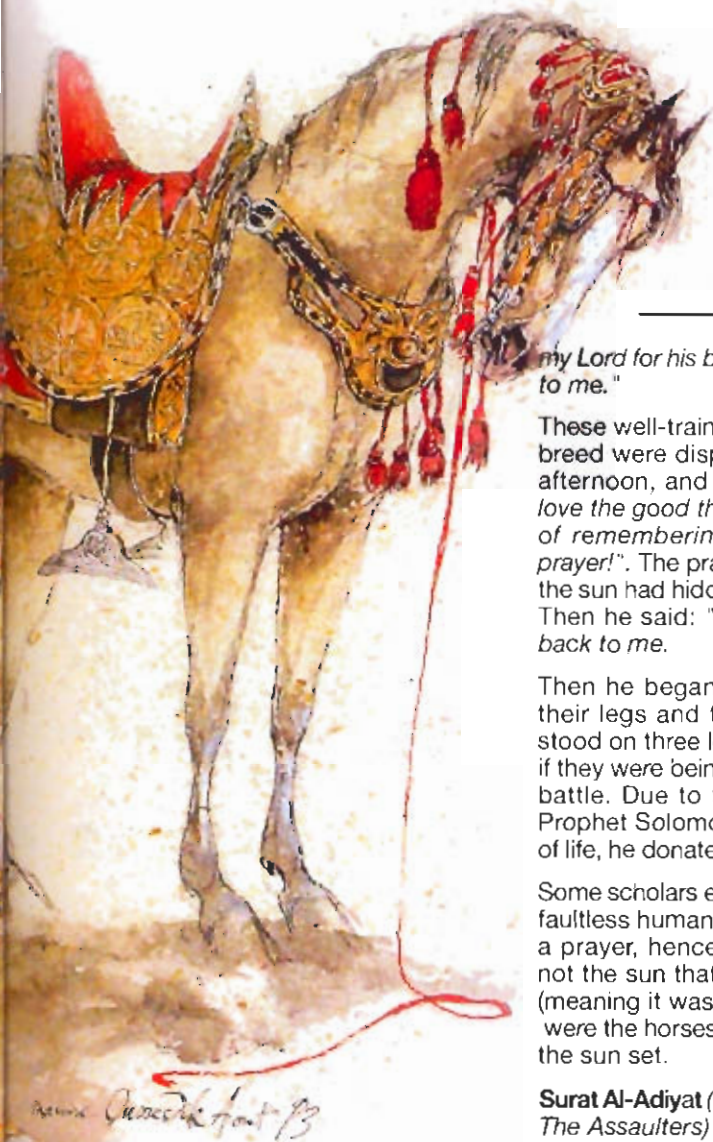
In the stories of Islam, there are many features about sports. In actual fact, many Islamic obligations include physical and spiritual activities as well as ways of straightening behaviour. To name a few, patience, and concentration. Prayer, for example, is not only about spiritual purification but it involves the physical movement of the body. While the Hajj, the annual pilgrimage, also involves physical effort in its various rituals. Some of the physical activities early Muslims were involved in were running, archery, fencing, wrestling, weight lifting, high jumping, stone tossing, and swimming. In addition to those activities, horsemanship and horse racing were two

major sports during that time. Horses were a huge passion and are linked in many ways to prophets and the Quran. Details about horse chronicles in Islam are remarkable, with a lot of them not being known to many.

## Stories from the Holy Quran

**Prophet/King Solomon** was a great ruler who was given wisdom, favour and special powers by God (he had under his rule not only people, but also hosts of





*my Lord for his blessings! Bring the horses to me."*

These well-trained horses of the highest breed were displayed before him in the afternoon, and he said: *'Alas! I did love the good things (the horses) instead of remembering my Lord in my Dusk prayer!'*. The prayer's time was over, and the sun had hidden in the veil of the night. Then he said: *'Bring them (the horses) back to me.*

Then he began to pass his hand over their legs and their necks. The horses stood on three legs, lifting their fourth as if they were being prepared to march into battle. Due to the prayer passing and Prophet Solomon loving the finer things of life, he donated those horses for battle.

Some scholars explain that prophets were faultless human beings and cannot miss a prayer, hence they clarify that it was not the sun that was veiled by the night (meaning it was not prayer's time), but it were the horses who galloped away until the sun set.

**Surat Al-Adiyat (The Courser, The Chargers, The Assaulters)** is the 100th surah of the Quran with 11 ayat (verses). This surah refers to how God SWORE by Horses, how they run fast, panting immensely, and how they behave to their masters, yet us, mankind, continue to disobey God. Therefore horses are better than man. If horses were not blessed creatures, then God wouldn't have SWORN by them.

## Prophet Mohamed (pbuh) and his treatment for animals

*"If anyone wrongfully kills even a sparrow, let alone anything greater, he will face God's interrogation".*

These words reflect the great reverence, respect and love that the Prophet always showed towards animals. He believed that as part of God's creation, animals

should be treated with dignity, and the hadeeth contains a large collection of traditions, admonitions and stories about his relationship with animals. It shows that he had particular consideration for horses and camels: to him they were valiant companions during journey and battle, and he found great solace and wisdom in their presence as the following hadeeth reveals:

*In the forehead of horses are tied up welfare and bliss until the Day of Resurrection .*

God also recommended Prophet Mohamed (pbuh) to care for horses in this Quran verse:

*"And make ready against the enemy all you can of power, including steeds of war. (Surat Al-Anfal 8: 60)*

Prophet Mohamed (pbuh) was also reported to have held races for horses that were specially prepared. They took place from Al-Hafya' to Thaniyyat Al-Wada' (about 6 or 7 miles from Al-Madinah, present day in Saudi Arabia), and for those that had not been trained, from Thaniyyat Al-Wada' to the mosque of Banu Zurayq (about 1 mile).

In Sahih Muslim it is reported that Prophet Mohamed (pbuh) said: *'Ride horses, for they are the legacy of your father Ismaeel.*

## From Sahih Bukhari

Prophet Mohamed (pbuh) said, *"Good will remain in the foreheads of horses for jihad for they bring about a reward in Paradise or booty."*

He (pbuh) also said: *"If somebody keeps a horse in God's Cause motivated by His promise, then he will be rewarded for what the horse has eaten or drunk and for its dung and urine."* (Rewards will be measured by every single drink, dung, and urine from the horse).

The Prophet (pbuh) said: *'The best horses are black with white foreheads having a white upper lip.'*

It has also been recorded that the horses

Jinn. He was also able to understand the language of ants and birds). His passion for horses was so majestic to an extent the main chronicles about horses are primarily related to him. Various scholars disagree upon the narrations regarding his stories with horses.

During his time, horses were the common mode of transportation. They were very essential for defence: to carry soldiers, cart provisions and weapons of war. The animals were well cared for and well-trained.

One day he was reviewing a horse parade of his stable. The fitness, beauty and posture of the horses fascinated him so much that he kept on stroking and admiring them. The sun was nearly setting, and the time for the middle dusk prayer was passing by. When he realised this, he exclaimed: *"I surely love the finer things of life as a result of always thanking*



to be raced were given adequate training under certain conditions. According to 'Encyclopedia of Islam' (2:953), Training lasted from 40 to 60 days which had the effect of bringing the horse into good conditions by a suitable system of feeding, while excessive weight was sweated off under blankets. On the other hand, in the book of 'Dar-Qutni' (2:552-4) he provides a system and manner of Arabian horse racing as follows:

Hazrat Ali, a follower, used to look after the arrangement for horse-races. He assigned this duty to Suraaqa Bin Malik as his deputy and formed certain rules of proceeding which are as follows:

- The horses should be made to stand in a row.
- It should be thrice announced that, if one has to set the rein in order, or get the colt to accompany the mare, or part with the saddle, he should look to it at once.
- If anybody makes an answer, the takbeer (the phrase, God is Great) should be cried out three times, and on the third takbeer, the horses should start off.
- The animal's ears should be considered a decisive measure for determining a winner.

Hazrat Ali would place himself at the farthest end of the plain, would draw a line, and post two men at each of the line. The racing horses had to cross the line between these two.

## Stories about Caliphs of Islam

**Omar Ibn Al-Khattab** was from Bani Udaie, a clan of the Quraysh tribe. He was a companion of Prophet Mohamed (pbuh) and became the second Caliph (634 - 644) following the death of Abu Bakr, the first Caliph. Omar was born in Mecca and he is said to have belonged

to a middle class family. He was literate, which by some accounts is considered to be uncommon in those times, and he was also well known for his physical strength, being a champion wrestler. Al-Jahiz also reported in his book 'Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabyeen' that Omar Ibn Al-Khattab wrote to his governors saying: "Teach your children swimming, archery, and horsemanship."

In another narration, Omar was reported to have added: "Tell them to jump on the horses' backs, and narrate the stories of famous proverbs and good poetry to them."

The conquest of Arabs under caliph Omar brought them into contact with foreign equestrian traditions and led them to organise new tactics for warfare on horseback. These foreign traditions were that of Iran, Turkey, and Greece.

**Khaled Ibn Al-Waleed** was born around 584 in Mecca to Waleed Ibn Mughirah, the chief of the Bani Makhzum clan of the Quraysh tribe, a clan which specialised in warfare. (The three leading clans of Quraysh at that time were, Bani Hashim, Bani Abd ad-Dar, and Bani Makhzum). Bani Makhzum was responsible for matters of war.

As a child, Khaled learned to ride due to the fact that riding was a matter of pride in his clan. Bani Makhzum were among the best horsemen in Arabia, and Khaled soon became one of the best in his clan. Along with riding, he learned the skills of combat. He learned how to use various weapons, including the spear, the lance, the bow and arrow, and the sword. He also learned to use them on horses, camels, and on foot. For Khaled, the sword was his most trusted, and due to his power and courage in battle, Khaled was named "Khaled Ibn Al-Waleed, the Sword of Allah." As an adult, Khaled

was well known among Quraysh for his fighting abilities. Following the establishment of the new faith of Islam, Prophet Mohamed's (pbuh) followers engaged in a number of conflicts and battles with pagan Meccan forces opposed to the new faith. Khaled's military genius is thought to be responsible for turning the Battle of Uhud into a victory for the Qurayshi forces after what had looked like a sure defeat. **HT**

### Sources:

- *Stories of the Quran* by Dr. Mohamed Bakr Ismail
- *Islamonline.net*
- *English Quran* by M.H. Shakir

• **PBUH:** Peace Be Upon Him

• **Surah:** Chapter

• **Hadeeth:** Oral traditions/reports recounting events in the lives of Prophet Mohamed (pbuh) and his followers

• **Jinn:** Spirits (In Islam, the existence of good and evil spirits is acknowledged)

• **Jihad:** Battle

• **Bukhari and Muslim:**

Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim are two of the Sunni six major Hadeeth collections. Sunni view this as their most trusted collections, calling them "The most authentic book after the Holy Quran." Sahih is an Arabic word one of whose meanings is "authentic." The hadeeths were collected by Persian Sunni scholar Mohamed Ibn Ismaeel Al-Bukhari (810-870) and published during his life. Sahih Muslim is collected by Imam Muslim. It is the second most famous hadeeth collection among Muslims.

