The Life of the Gentile Prophet

Ḥayāt-i Rasūl-i Ummī

صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم

by

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CHAPTER 1

Arrival of the Promised Prophet

Five hundred and fifty years after the departure of Jesus (sws) from this world, it was time for Abraham's (sws) prayer to be answered, for that individual to be born, who was to:

Achieve the highest status within the caliphate of God

Termination of the institution of institution of prophethood to which all prophets and messengers of God had aspired

Be presented by God not only to one nation, but to the entire peoples of the world as a human being of exemplary character for them to emulate

Preserve the divine guidance in such a manner that it would be impossible to either hide any part of it, or to distort it

Be waited for by the Jews, Christians and the Ishmaelites, all wishing for him to be born among them.

Finally, this honour fell to the Ishmaelites who, despite being polytheists, possessed several good qualities and were in control of the centre made by Abraham (sws) for worship of God. The great Prophet of God, Muhammed (sws) was born amongst them, and he was the harbinger of a great Muslim nation that became responsible to carry God's word to other nations of the world until its end.

<u>The Family Tree</u>

the Ishmaelites had special arrangements to preserve information related to their lineage. They remembered not only their own but also those of other tribes. This is why historical books include the family trees of both men and women dating back to several generations. Prophet Muhammad (sws)'s family tree is as follows:

Muhammad ibn 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hāshim ibn 'Abd Munāf bin Qussay ibn Kilāb ibn Murrah ibn Ka'b ibn Luyyī ibn Ghālib ibn Fahr ibn Mālik in Nadr ibn Kanānah.

His mother was Āminah bint Wahb ibn ‘Abd Munāf ibn Zahrah ibn Kilāb ibn Murrah. Thus, from Kilāb ibn Murrah, both mother and father’s lineage merge onwards. Beyond Kanānah, this reaches Adnān and then Ismā‘īl (sws) finally. This lineage is one of the most respected ones in Arab families. Families are the backbones of an individual. Just as a gold mine produces gold and a silver one produces silver, families with good ancestral background produce individuals with high integrity. The Prophet (sws) has said:

God selected the Banū Kanānah from the children of Ismā‘īl, and the Quraysh from within the Banū Kanānah. He decided to dignify the Banū Hāshim from within the Quraysh, and chose me from the Banū Hāshim.[1]

His father, ‘Abdullāh, was 24 years old when his father, ‘Abd al-Muttalib asked for the hand in marriage of the daughter of Wahb ibn Munāf, who was the leader of the Banū Zahrah. According to historians, Wahb had died a few years ago, and Āminah’s guardian was her uncle, Wuhayb ibn Munāf. The latter agreed, and the two were married. Sometime later, ‘Abdullāh joined a trade caravan going to Syria and his father asked him to make an agreement on trade of dates in Yathrib on the return journey. He stopped at Yathrib to do so, fell ill and was unable to travel. When his caravan returned to Makkah without him, his father was worried and sent his elder brother Hāris to take care of him and bring him back. When Hārith reached Yathrib, he found that ‘Abdullāh had already passed away. Hārith came back with the tragic news. Muhammad (sws) was yet to be born.

Date of Birth

Historians agree that Muhammad (sws) was born on a Monday during the second week of the month of Rabī‘ al-Awwal. There is some disagreement on the date. The accepted date is the 12th, but research shows that if this is accepted, it does not conform to a Monday. Most historians have agreed on 9th Rabī‘ al-Awwal according to the Egyptian astronomer Mahmood Pasha. Qādī Suleymān Mansūrpurī has also mentioned this date in his book, Rehmat li al-‘Ālamīn. The date conforms to 22nd of April, 571, AD, and 1st Jeth, 628, Bakrami.[2]

Fosterage

The Prophet (sws) was initially breastfed by his mother and Abū Lahab’s slave Thūbiyah. It was a custom among the Quraysh that they sent their new born infants to the Bedouin tribes of the desert so that they would be nourished in the open air, away from the pollution of the city. Makkah’s language, too, had become tainted with other languages from incoming traders of other regions and countries, and the Quraysh had to give special attention to the protection of their original language and to gain mastery over its purity. The tribe of Banū Sa‘d that lived between Makkah and Tāi’f was known for the purity and command over its language, and its women often came to Makkah to take children who would be gladly given in their safe keeping so that the latter would learn to speak the original Arabic language.

Following this custom, when the Prophet's mother attempted to make arrangements for a foster mother from the tribe of Banū Sa'd, the latter were found to be hesitant, probably because of his fatherless state. They may have thought that they may not get adequate compensation in return. In any case, a woman called Halīmah agreed to take him. Halīmah was extremely poor, and the camel she was riding was also very undernourished, which was the main reason why no rich women of the Quraysh had been willing to give her any of their own children. Thus, when Halīmah was unable to find a suitably rich child, she settled on the orphaned child. As a result, her home was filled with plentiful blessings, and she was never sorry about her decision. The Prophet (sws) stayed in the Banū Sa'd until the age of five. He would say to his companions later:

I speak better than all of you because I am from the Quraysh and my language is the language of Banū Sa'd ibn Bakr.[3]

Although Makkah was an international city where the language of Arabia and Yemen was understood, yet special care was taken to preserve the language within the Quraysh.

Mother's Death

When the Prophet (swsh) had spent a few years in the desert, Halīmah Sa'diyah brought him back to Makkah and at last he was able to bask in his mother's love. When he was six years of age, his mother took him to Yathrib, her purpose being, ostensibly, to visit her husband's grave. She stayed with the maternal relatives of 'Abd al-Muttalib, Banū 'Adī ibn al-Najjār for about one month. During this period, the Prophet (sws) had an opportunity to get to know Yathrib and its environs. On the return journey, his mother fell ill, and at a place called Abwā' on the way, she passed away. Umm Ayman, who was 'Abdullah's slave and was travelling with Āminah, brought him back to Makkah and took him under her care.

Being a member of the Banū Hāshim family, He now came under the guardianship of 'Abd al-Muttalib who showered much kindness upon him. He would take him to the Ka'bah and seat him next to himself. This situation held only for two years and when the Prophet (sws) was eight years old, his grandfather too died. As the pall bearers led his coffin out, he too walked behind, and cried as he remembered his grandfather's love and kindnesses.

'Abd al-Muttalib had made his eldest son his heir, so the Prophet came under his uncle's guardianship. It seems that from childhood, he was closer to this uncle, and he too loved him most. Many books on the Prophet's life have recorded the lullabies that he would sing to him. The Prophet (sws) remained under his protection during his lifetime.

Of all his uncles, he was the kindest to him. It is also said that 'Abd al-Muttalib had instructed him to look after him after his death.[4]

A battle was fought between the Banū Kanānah and Hawāzin under Zubayr. This battle is known by the name of Harb al-Fujjār. Zubayr participated in this as the rich leader of the Banū Hāshim. The Hilf al-

Fudūl of which he was the driving spirit was signed during his time. The Prophet (sws) had also been a part of this agreement and he had been 20 years old at the time. When he married at the age of 25, the sermon had been given by Abū Tālib as the head of the family. This means that Zubayr had died when the Prophet (sws) was 23-25 years old, and he had no need for further support. Thus he had spent his entire guardianship years with Zubayr.

Interests of Adolescence

The Prophet (sws) took camels and goats out for grazing as a pastime. Some researchers believe that this statement does not fit well with the narration of his circumstances. According to them, the youth of Quraysh were not given to adopting the profession of grazing camels. This work was done by slaves. In our view, there should be no problem in accepting that just as young boys show interest in every new hobby and try to gain familiarity with it, so would the Prophet (sws) have been interested, although he would not have adopted it as a profession. In the tribe of Banū Sa'd, shepherding was a livelihood choice, not a hobby of the boys. It is not any wonder that the Prophet (sws) would have become interested. Other boys too were engaged in it. When 'Umar (rta) was the caliph, a woman from Makkah had a complaint and said: "O' 'Umar, I have seen your days when you shepherded goats the whole day in 'Ukkāz and people called you O' Umayr, O' Umayr. Now that you are the caliph of Muslims, fear God in matters related to the public."[5] 'Umar (rta) had the responsibility of the department of ministries and he was highly influential in Makkah. Obviously he had not chosen shepherding as a profession. He probably would go with a shepherd out of interest.

The young men of Quraysh also learnt the skills of warfare. The Prophet (sws) was an excellent archer, swordsman, fencer and wrestler. These skills were put to use against the disbelievers in later phases. He was also a great ware strategist and to this day, planners pay tribute to his battle strategies. Obviously he must have obtained such training during his youth.

Hilf al-Fudūl

In the days gone by, when the Banū Jurham were in control of Makkah, some people came to an agreement with the aim of protecting the oppressed. Of those making the agreement, three carried the name Fadl and thus the agreement was called Hilf al-Fudūl. The agreement had been in abeyance for centuries, but many people had remembered it, and it came to light when the Prophet (sws) was 20 years old.

A trader from the tribe of Zubayd came to Makkah with his produce. One of the Quraysh lords, 'Ās ibn Wā'il made a trade agreement under which he took the products in his custody, but when the questions arose of payment, he started to make excuses. When the trader sought help from people he knew, no one was willing to speak out against 'Ās because of the latter's status. Dejected, he climbed the mount of Abū Qubays, calling out: "O children of Fahr! A person away from his home and without any support

has been robbed of his belongings. The poor, wretched man is still in ihrām and has not yet performed the ‘umrah. O ye who present yourselves between the sacred stone of Aswad and the Hatīm, come to his help; for who is worthy of such a sacred and pure place, he who is truthful and sincere, or he who is deceitful and a usurper of rights?”

Zubayr ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib and others ran to the trader. When he explained his plight, they gathered at the house of the Quraysh lord ‘Abdullah ibn Jad‘ān at the behest of Zubayr. It was agreed that they would create a new agreement on the lines of the previous Hilf al-Fudūl, that would aim to: protect travelers; support those who need help; protect those who are weak against oppression by those who are strong, and stand with the oppressed ones without any discrimination between locals or foreigners. The tribes of Banū Hāshim, Banū Muttalib, Banū Asad, Banū Zahrah and Banū Tamīm were party to this agreement.

After this, everyone got together to convince ‘Ās ibn Wā’il to give the Zubaydī trader what he owed to him. The agreement proved to be useful in settling subsequent matters too.

The Prophet (sws) participated in this agreement in his youth. After prophethood, he would say: “The agreement reached at the house of ‘Abdullāh ibn Jada‘ān is dearer to me than red camels. If I were to be invited to be party to another such agreement today, I would accept immediately.”[6]

Earning a Livelihood

When the Prophet (sws) was old enough to start earning his own living, he began to travel for trade related purposes, as any other young man from the Quraysh. Some narratives about his trade travels indicate that his early travels were undertaken to Syria in the company of Abū Tālib. The fact is, however, that Abū Tālib was not a rich man. He could barely afford to maintain his own family. He was also lame and so it must have been difficult for him to travel. His source of income was the selling of perfume, or trade of grain.[7] It is difficult to believe that his nephew could have gone with him on long tours. However, since the Prophet (sws) was under the guardianship of Zubayr who was well to do and a well known trader, he might have gone with him to Syria, Yemen and Bahrain once old enough to do so. According to Ibn Kathīr, he went to Yemen at the age of 14. Initially, he would have travelled merely for company. Later, as he would have found a trade caravan, he would have taken some produce and gone along. The life histories include travels to Syria and Yemen, but several Ahādīth indicate that he must have seen many Arab countries, and that his knowledge of the countries was not based on what he had heard, but what he had seen for himself. Even the companions were often surprised of the extent of his knowhow about countries that only the residents of these countries would have known. It is likely, therefore, that his trade related travels could have been many more than what have been reported in historical books.

After the initial training on trade, he started his own trade based on the principles of partnership of capital investment by others, and his own services. He would take products from various traders of the city and travel to markets with caravans, sell the products, and on his return, take his share from the

profits. He gained so much repute on his ability for judgment, honesty, truthfulness, sincerity and trustworthiness that he began to be called by the names of Sādiq and Amīn. No one would ever regret doing business with him. His dealings were always managed with the greatest sense of responsibility. When one of the companions, Sā'ib ibn Sayfī 'Ā'iz Makhzūmī accepted Islam, people spoke of his integrity and the Prophet (sws) said that he knew him from the old days when he was dealing in trade. At this the companion said: "Indeed, you always kept matters straight." The same was said by Qays ibn Sā'ib Makhzūmī. Sā'ib was Khadījah (rta)'s first husband 'Atīq ibn Makhzūmī's nephew.

Marriage

After the death of Zubayr ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib, the Prophet (sws) thought of getting married. He was around 22-23 years old at the time. He requested for Abū Tālib's daughter Umm-i Hānī Hind's hand in marriage. It was at the same time that Hubayrah ibn Abī Wahab Makhzūmī from Abū Jahal's family also did the same. Abū Tālib decided in the latter's favour. When the Prophet (sws) asked for the reason why someone else was preferred over his nephew, the answer was that the equals of those who have a high status in society must be of equally high status.[8]

Thus the orphaned state of the Prophet (sws) and his not being well off became a barrier for this marriage. Abū Tālib had his daughter married into a strong and influential family. Her husband Hubayrah remained a self declared enemy of the Prophet (pbuh) and did not accept Islam. After the conquest of Makkah, he escaped towards the sea.

When the Prophet (sws) was 25 years old, possibilities for his marriage began to arise. Khadījah bint Khawaylid ibn Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzā ibn Qusayy was a reputable lady from the Banū Asad tribe of the Quraysh. She had been married earlier to 'Atīq ibn 'Ā'iz Makhzūmī, with no offspring. She then married Abū Hālah Hind ibn Niyash Tamīmī, and had three sons, Hālah, Tāhir and Hind who were all companions.[9]

Khadījah would invest her capital in trade. She would give funds to any trader who travelled to Syria or Yemen, and on his return, she would take her profit from his earnings. Since the Prophet (sws)'s profession was also trade, she requested him if he could take her products to the markets and sell it, and take whatever profit accrued to him. The business that the Prophet (sws) managed with Khadījah (rta)'s capital thrived so much due to his exceptional abilities that she was very impressed. It is likely that he may have gone several times and not just once. She had sent her slave Maysarah with him one occasion, and on his return he praised his manners, behavior and attitude. According to various narratives, she was so pleased with what she heard that she decided to marry him, and sent a friend called Nafīsah to inquire about his wishes. He agreed.

It appears from the manner in which historians have recorded this event that Khadījah (rta) was a stranger and she heard of the Prophet's (sws)'s reputation and sent him for trade related travel, was impressed with the reports of her slave and gave a proposal of marriage. This is not so. Various tribes of Quraysh kept marrying into each other, and were often visiting each other as well. The Prophet (sws)'s

aunt Safiyyah bint ‘Abd al-Muttalib was Khadījah’s sister-in-law, married to her brother ‘Awwām bin Khawaylid. Hence this potential relationship would have been well known. It is possible that Safiyyah may have initiated the proposal, and Khadījah (rta) may have accepted it, and then sent Nafīsah to speak with the Prophet (sws). When they married, Khadījah’s (rta) walī was ‘Amr ibn Asad because Khawaylid bin Asad had died. Abū Tālib read the sermon. The Prophet (sws)’s uncle, Hamzah bin ‘Abd al-Muttalib was also present at the occasion.

According to biographers, Khadījah (rta) was 40 years old at the time of her marriage. But not everyone agrees with this. Ibn Kathīr has stated her age as 35, and others as 25. They have categorically said that at the time of her death, she was 50 years old, and so she must have been 25 when she married the Prophet (sws). In support of this, Ibn Kathīr has quoted the narratives of Bayhaqī. Dr. Hamīdullāh states that she was 28 years old.[10]Compared with 40 years, the age of 25 or 28 seems much more tenable. It was common in Arabia to get girls married early after puberty, as had happened in case of the prophet’s own children and ‘Ā’ishah (rta) herself. After the birth of three children, and death of a husband, a woman of high societal status did not stay unmarried for long. In a society practicing polygamy, there were plenty of men ready for marriage, and divorced or widowed women made no difference. This is why even the companions married widowed and divorced women several times.

Apart from this, the couple had two sons and four daughters. Considering that a woman’s capacity to bear children is reduced drastically after the age of 40, Khadījah (rta) is likely to be 25 or 28 years of age when she married the Prophet (sws). According to Qādī Sulaymān’s research, the Prophet’s youngest son ‘Abdullāh was born after prophet hood. If Khadījah (rta)’s had been 40 years old at the time of her marriage, she would have been 56 years old when ‘Abdullāh was born, which is medically difficult to accept. In our view, Bayhaqī’s narrative and Dr. Hamīdullāh’s opinion is correct.

According to known records, the Prophet (sws) freed his father’s slave-maiden, Umm-i Ayman, and Khadījah (rta) gave her slave, Zayd ibn Hārithah (rta) to her husband who freed him and adopted him. Zayd ibn Hārithah (rta) began to be called Zayd ibn Muhammad, and was treated with much love and kindness by the Prophet (sws). Zayd (rta) was not a slave by race, but a member of the tribe of the Banū Kilāb. He was kidnapped when he was a child and sold as a slave in Makkah. His relatives were informed of his presence in the Banū Hāshim. When his father and other relatives came to Makkah to claim him, the Prophet (sws) said to them that if the child wishes to go, he will not stop him. When Zayd (rta) was asked, he preferred to stay under the protection of the Prophet (sws).

Construction of the Ka‘bah

When the Prophet (sws) was 35 years old, heavy floods caused much damage to the Ka‘bah. The Quraysh decided that it should be rebuilt. It should be raised above the ground to keep it safe from floods. The building was without a roof and its walls were low. It was decided to raise it high and to give it a ceiling. They also decided that all tribes would participate in its construction and would put in their share from wealth earned from legitimate means. There would be no input from wealth that was gained unfairly or through usurping another’s right. When this decision was reached, it so happened that a ship

from foreign lands loaded with construction material got stuck in the sandy sea shore of Jeddah. When all efforts to steer it clear back to the sea failed, the ship bearers wanted to get rid of the material. When the Quraysh came to know of this, they purchased the wood and other material and brought it to Makkah. They divided the pulling down of the existing structure between the different tribes, and then reconstruction on the same foundations started. When the walls were a few feet above ground, the stage was reached to install the ‘Hajr-i Aswad. Each tribe wanted to have the honour of doing so. Several suggestions were made but no settlement could be reached. The matter became one of heated debate, but before people would draw out their swords to settle it, an elder from the Quraysh suggested that any person belonging to Quraysh who enters first from the entrance of the Banū Shaybah be deemed as the arbitrator who should decide the matter. Everyone accepted this and all eyes turned to this entrance. The person to make the first entry was Muhammad (sws) who was known as Sādiq and Amīn, and who was the most trusted of all individuals. All those present were relieved to see him, satisfied that he would resolve the issue justly and fairly.

After assessing the situation, the Prophet (sws) laid out a blanket on the ground and placed the Hajr-i Aswad at its centre. He then asked the leaders of all the Quraysh tribes to lift the blanket from its sides, and then climbed the wall himself. When the blanket was raised, he took the stone and put it in its place. In such a manner, the issue that had begun to develop serious proportions was addressed through his wisdom and farsightedness.

The Abrahamic design of the Ka‘bah had two corners at the southern wall, and the northern wall was in the shape of a half circle. The funds collected by the Quraysh were insufficient for this construction. The northern wall was therefore left incomplete after filling in the foundations. The remaining square part was roofed, and its door was raised to the level of the ground. The half circle that had been left out still remains without a roof, and is called the Hatīm . Pilgrims consider it a great privilege to enter it and offer *nawāfil* there.

(*Translated from Hayāt-i Rasūl-i Ummī by Nikhat Sattar*)

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1. Muslim ibn al-Hajjāj, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār Ihyā’ al-turāth al-‘arabī, n.d.), 1782 (no. 2276).

2. Qādī Sulaymān Mansūpurī, *Rahmah li al-‘Ālamīn*, vol. 2, 16.

3. Muhammad ibn Sa‘d, *Al-Tabaqāt al-kubrā*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-fikr, n.d.), 76.

4. Ahmad ibn Yahyā ibn Jābir ibn Dā’ūd al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1996), 85.

5. Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Al-Istī‘āb*, vol. 2, 723.

6. Ibn Sa‘d, *Al-Tabaqāt al-kubrā*, vol. 1, 86.

7. Ibn Qutaybah, *Al-Ma‘ārif*, 249.

8. Ibn Sa‘d, *Al-Tabaqāt al-kubrā*, vol. 6, 112.

9. Qādī Sulaymān Mansūpurī, *Rahmah li al-‘Ālamīn*, vol. 2, 173-176.

10. Dr. Muhammad Hamīdullāh, *Rasūl Akram kī Siyāsī Zindagī*, 65.

CHAPTER 2

Reasons for Supremacy of the Ishmaelites over the Jews

Abraham's real legacy comprised of belief in the oneness of God, Hanifiyyat (hatred of polytheism and attention to oneness), the prayer and arrangements for *zakah*, serving the House of God, *hajj*and teaching of its rites, and providing guidance to pilgrims. He had given his eldest son, Ishmael (sws) to the service of the House of God, and thus the latter was, in fact the heir to this legacy. Subsequently, his children were responsible for implementing the objectives of the construction of the Ka'bah. Thus, their most desired obligations were to arrange for *hajj* and *'umrah*, being hosts to the pilgrims, providing facilities to them during their stay in Makkah and sacrificing animals at the altar of the Ka'bah. There is evidence of the homage paid by the younger son, Isaac (sws) and his children at the Ka'bah, but they were free of the managing responsibilities. They were, however, honoured by being recipients of several prophets, one after the other. They received divine guidance in the form of holy books of Torah, the Psalms and the Gospels. They had the commandments in the form of the compiled *shari'ah*. It is obvious, therefore, that the children of Isaac (sws) were given the responsibility to communicate the word of God to the rest of mankind.

The two branches of the progeny of Abraham (sws) could have wished, and, in fact were desirous of, having the prayer of Abraham (sws) being in their favour, and the promised prophet being born amidst them. But the Ishmaelites possessed some qualities that Isaac's progeny did not. God therefore preferred them over the children of Isaac (sws), and chose them to lead the world. The factors that came into play for this selection will be discussed below.

Performance of the Israelites

When the children of Isaac (sws), more commonly known as the Israelites were chosen to serve the cause of faith, they perceived it to be their right, based on their being children of prophets and of elitist families. They were under the misunderstanding that they were the chosen and favourite group of God. They would openly declare themselves as the children of God and say that their birth was different from that of others on earth. Hence they would consider no other nation equal to themselves, nor would they treat them on an equal footing. They possessed divine guidance, but they held on to it as a snake on a treasure, neither spreading its knowledge, nor bringing the original book out in the open. Whatever they wanted done, they would declare it to have come from God and to be a part of the book. They did not preserve the books either, and when they were lost, they tried to restore these through memory, which changed their content entirely. Despite this, they could not get rid of their habit of continuing to distort

the word of God. They were thus responsible of being dishonest with the responsibility that had been entrusted to them. Their behavior with the Ishmaelites was so offensive and disparaging that they considered any cruelty or insult to them to be lawful and allowable for themselves. The Qur'an refers to this in the following words:

There are some among the people of the Book who return a whole treasure entrusted to them. Yet some who do not give back a *dinar* until you demand and insist, because they say: "We cannot be blamed for [usurping] the rights of the un-lettered." (3:75)

The Israelites tried to erase all signs that showed the Ishmaelites in a positive light. They even removed any mention of the legacy of Abraham (sws) from their literature, and assumed the House of God to mean Bayt al-Maqdis. They replaced Makkah's original name, Bakkah, with the word Buka', and connected it with a valley. They renamed Marwah, which was the place of sacrifice for Ishmael (sws), with Muriyah, claiming that it was in Jerusalem and that Isaac (sws) had been presented there for sacrifice. They also eliminated the basic two pillars of the Abrahamic faith: prayer and *zakah*. The Qur'an says:

But they were succeeded by a generation, who neglected their devotional prayers and follow only earthly pleasures. (19:59)

This is the reason why ancient books are devoid of any mention of prayer. Although *zakah* and *'ushr* are mentioned, the recipients are given as soothsayers instead of the poor and needy. The Israelites did not preserve their own language, Hebrew which was the language of the Torah and earlier holy books. As a result, their own people, who came to be called the Jews, remained ignorant of the real content of these books.

The Israelites had put so many constraints in the way of learning the basic tenets of religion that the concept of oneness and of life after death vanished completely. Prophets were taken to be sons of God; holy books were emptied of any mention of the Day of Judgment. If this was mentioned in any form, it was only to assume that they would be successful and achieve their goal. History recorded the Israelites in general and the Jews in particular, as a cruel, conspiratorial, untrustworthy and self serving group. Stories of their cruelty and miserliness are legendary. In spite of this, they were assured that the promised prophet would be from among them. They used to announce this to the Arabs who were awed by them.

Performance of the Ishmaelites

No prophet was born among Abraham's progeny after Ishmael (sws). He had the divine guidance in non-written form, but he was entrusted with the management of the House of God, with associated worship rites of prayer, *zakah*, sacrifice, circumambulation, *i'tikaf*, *hajj* and *'umrah*. The Ishmaelites were large in numbers and had to migrate to other parts of the country where they also had the opportunity to rule, but they never broke off their ties with their religious centre. Whenever any weakness was exhibited by those responsible for management of the centre, or the pilgrims faced persecution, the Ishmaelites stepped in to put a stop to such acts, and turn them around. This is why even after thousands of years had passed, the system of worship was preserved and so was the interest of the Ishmaelites in this system.

As far as the concept of the oneness of God is concerned, there was always a particular group within the Ishmaelites that continued to believe in it and to follow the faith that had been a tradition with all the good people. The Ishmaelites were never arrogant or proud of their qualities. Instead, they were respectful of the Israelites for receiving so many prophets and holy books and called them People of the Book. In their own humility, they considered themselves unlettered and ignorant of religious matters. They did not give much importance to their population, sovereignty of several states and worldly grace, but saw greatness in prophethood and apostleship. They retained a vague idea of the Abrahamic prayer regarding the promised prophet, and, when comparing themselves to the Jews in relation to their love for truth, they would say that if ever they received a divine book, they would meet its obligations fully and become God's servants by accepting it with their hearts and souls. Referring to this, the Qur'an says:

The disbelievers swore emphatically that if an admonisher came to them, they would be guided better than the other communities. (35:42)

They used to say: "If we had been reminded of the example of earlier people, we would have been the chosen creatures of God." (37:167-169)

We see magnanimity of character within the Ishmaelites. They were extremely generous and charitable towards guests, willing to sacrifice and give of their own. Bravery and heroism were qualities they had in abundance. They would fight for meaningful goals with fearlessness, compete with each other in courage and tell stories about their courage to others with pride. Such incidents became topics of poetry and became n common knowledge. The Ishmaelites recognized the rights of others, and respected the obligations of relationships. Their attitude in worldly matters was based on sincerity and free from hypocrisy. They refrained from telling lies, valued truth, honoured promises and were kind and merciful towards the poor. If they believed in something, they would not let any expedience stand in the way. Their language, too, was free of any artificiality, and they took special care to preserve its originality.

This is the reason why the Arabic language is still in its pure form, barring a few words that have come in because of cultural inroads from other nations.

The Ishmaelites lived the life of a tribal people. Collectively, each tribe was responsible for the safety and welfare of its people. Any tendency to consider issues of individuals or of supporters as no concern of their own was looked down upon. Turning in any person from one's own tribe to the enemy was an act of baseness. If an individual of a tribe committed a big crime, the entire tribe contributed to payment of the expiation money. As much effort was put into defending a supporter as their own relatives. If anyone took an outsider into protection, it was necessary for the entire tribe to protect that person exactly the same as they would protect their own families. Such protection was called *jiwar.*

The superiority of Ishmaelites over the Israelites was also due to the fact that the former had never been enslaved, whereas the latter has become slaves several times. They were slaves inEgypt at the time of the Pharaohs; they were freed but were again enslaved by Nebuchadnezzar for 70 years. They were freed by Cyrus of Persia. The psyche of a nation that has remained independent is different from that of one that has seen years of slavery.

Religious and Moral Conditions of the Ishmaelites

Although the Ishmaelites possessed all the above positive qualities, with the passing of time, various ills related to beliefs and practices crept in and started to diminish their favourable character. However, their excesses did not go beyond a certain level. We need to understand what these collective ills of their society were.

The Concept of Oneness of God

The Qur'an has clarified it clearly that the Arabs believed in God and in His attributes, although they were polytheists. They knew that He was the Creator and Owner of everything, He bestowed sustenance to every creature, He was in control, He was the source of life and death and He was the Driver and the Force behind the entire universe. The Qur'an says:

Ask them: "Who gives you food and sustenance from the skies and earth? Or, who is the Lord of the ear and the eye? And who brings forth the living from the dead, the dead from the living. And who directs all affairs?" They will say: "God." So tell them: "Why do you not fear Him?" (10:31)

Say: “To whom does the earth and whosoever is upon it then belong, if you know?” They will say: “To God.” Say: “Then why do you not bethink yourselves.” Say: “Then who is the Lord of the seven skies? And who is the Lord of the mighty Throne?” They will say: “God.” Say: “Then why do you not obey and fear him?” Say: “Whose is the sovereignty over all things? Who protects, and against whom there is no protection? [Answer] if you have knowledge.” They will say:” “God’s.” Say: “Then why are you so deluded?” (23:84-89)

These verses draw the attention of Arabs to the fact that while they believe in God and his attributes, they do not understand the concomitant demands made on them, and end up negating their beliefs through their practices. They should, therefore, remove this blemish and create harmony between what they believe in and what they do.

The polytheism of the Arabs was relatively simple. It has been observed that nations that spend thousands of years practicing polytheism develop it to an extent that they create a complex mythology around it. In the mythology, the status of gods and goddesses, their relationships with each other, matters related to their wars and peace, love and hate and how they settle their differences is defined. This can be seen from a study of both the Greek and Hindu mythologies. Their stories are so complicated that the mind finds it difficult to extricate itself from its intricacies. According to the concept of the Arabs, God’s kingdom was similar to that of kings on earth. Just as human beings as kings delegate their responsibilities to others who use these powers as they will, God did the same. The Arabs thought that since it was difficult to reach God Himself, it was necessary to keep these “delegatees” happy and satisfied so that they would, in turn, sort out their matters for them. Thus, keeping them happy was perceived to being near to God.

Thinking that God was far from human beings, Arabs also believed that there were separate Gods for the earth and heaven. The heavenly God was ensconced firmly on His throne, and the God on earth took care of things that happened here. Since human beings interacted with representatives of the “earthly God”, it was important to keep them happy and ask them for favours.

The beings that were considered to be partners of God by the Arabs were angels, jinn and some vague, but revered personalities. Angels were taken to be daughters of God. They thought that angels are of a very high status within the kingdom of God and that He favours them and fulfills their wishes readily. They considered the blessings of this world to be favours bestowed on them through angels. They thought that angels would enable them to gain a high status in the life after death and that they would plead their case because they worship them.

The jinn were thought to share the attributes of God and had the same rights. They were the source of knowledge of the occult. Various efforts were made to develop connections with the jinn.Sorcery was practiced based on perceived knowledge received through the jinn. Good and evil was related with them, and offerings and sacrifices were made to them to be free from misfortunes. When travelling and

crossing a valley or a pass, they would call out to the jinn associated with that area and request for safe transit.

The Arabs were also believers in the fortunes of the stars. Some stars were supposed to be blessed, and some were evil. Some were associated with good fortune. Different superstitions came to be attached with the rising and setting of stars, and with their revolution around the planet. The study of stars was also a part of sorcery. People would consult sorcerers and soothsayers in every important matter, and seek their guidance before taking decisions for the future.

Idol Worship

Idol worship began among the Ishmaelites by ‘Amr ibn Luhayy Khuza‘i when the Banu Khuza‘ah was managing the House of God. He had installed the statue of Habal in front of the Ka‘bah, and it gained central importance. More statues started to come in and when those of I%saf and Na’ilah were brought, it was thought that this corner would be most appropriate for the altar. When Makkah’s citizens travelled out of the city, they would keep a stone from the House of God with them for blessings. Being away from the Ka‘bah, their attachment with the stone would be enhanced, and they would make them a source of prayer for help and success. In this manner, idol worship spread to other parts of Arabia.

Idol sculpture was never adopted as a craft among the Arabs. The stones mentioned above were not sculpted. As narrated by one of the companions of the Prophet (sws), Abu Raja’ al-Attardi (rta), they would take any stone and start to worship it. If they found something better, they would throw away the previous one and worship the second. From this statement it appears that polytheism was not fully established in Arabia, and if a few people had made efforts to eliminate it, there was possibility of overcoming any minor resistance that may have been offered and gathering the Arabs under the natural faith once again.

The other main idols were ‘Uzza, Lat and Manat. ‘Uzza was installed at Nakhlah and was accessible while coming from Ta’if to Makkah. Banu Hashims’ supporting tribe, Banu Shayban was in charge of this idol. The idol for the tribe of Thaqif, Lat was in Ta’if. Manat was placed in a worship house at the top of a hill in a district called Qadid on the way between Yathrab and Makkah. These three statues were assumed to be those of angels. The polytheists declared that they were goddesses of the highest stature, and that they were fully convinced that their prayers to them would be answered. When idol worship expanded to other tribes too, the trustees of the House of God brought the statues that they worshipped inside, until their total number reached 360. The keepers started seeing them as a source of their strength, and slowly the belief that the presence of these statues was essential to retain the political superiority of

Makkah gained ground. If the statues were displaced, this would be seen as the political demise of the Arabs.

The Arabs did not believe that these idols were the creators of the earth or heavens, or that they had made the sun and the moon. They believed that they are beings that are beloved of God who listens to them. If they are served, they would bring blessings on earth. If there is a life hereafter, they would speak up for them and have them forgiven. Hence they were presented with offerings to please them, prayers were chanted to have wishes granted and sacrifices were offered in their names.

Observing this interest of the Arabs in statues, some self-serving people created sacred places, abodes and temples, making it known that gods, goddesses and ghosts reside there, and in order to appease them it was necessary to make offerings to them. Priests gave decisions on concocted religious grounds, and superstitious people would believe in them. Animals were also slaughtered at these places.

If anyone raised a voice against such a system, he was quickly silenced by the argument that the system is a legacy that has come from their ancestors, and hence could not be abandoned. Had it been disliked by God, He would have exercised His powers and stopped them from implementing it.

Sanctity and Religious Approval

Nations that follow polytheism also create a system of rules and regulations for practical life so that polytheism becomes strongly entrenched within their lives and they are unable to leave it. This is also what happened with the Arabs. According to the *shari'ah* of Abraham (sws), they were liable to taking out a certain proportion of their wealth from agriculture and livestock. Under the polytheist system, they began to share out a proportion for the idols too. If for some reason, they were unable to take out both, they would transfer the one they had put aside for God towards the idols, but never vice versa. Thus, it was possible to compensate the idols from what had been kept aside for God, but if God's share was used up, the Idol's share could not be used as compensation.

The Arabs would readily eat the things that had been declared prohibited from the days of Abraham (sws), but would refrain from eating those they had themselves given this status under polytheism. According to ancient *shari'ah*, it was necessary to slaughter with the name of God to ensure religious sanctity, and any animal slaughtered without this was prohibited. But animals were slaughtered without taking God's name at the temples, and people would eat the meat with no hesitation. There were several restrictions placed on these offerings. Men could eat them, but women could not. If a sacrificial animal gave birth, men could eat its meat, whereas women could not, but if the baby was stillborn, both sexes could partake of its meat.

Some animals were left free. It was not considered legitimate to ride them or to use them for carrying burdens. These animals could graze anywhere or drink from any water place. They were considered so sacred that people would be frightened lest they be taken to be teasing them. The Qur'an has mentioned *bahirah, sa'ibah, wasilah* and *ham.* Historians have differed on the characteristics of the

animals, but this is of no significance here. It would be enough to understand the mentality of the polytheists to know that the *bahirah* was the she camel that had birthed five babies and the last one had been a male. *Sa'ibah's* owner should have made a vow that he would free her once she had grown well enough. *Wasilah* was the goat or ewe that gave birth to both females and males simultaneously and its male children were not considered good enough as offerings for the idols. *Ham* was the camel that had sired 10 generations.

The Rituals of *Hajj*

The Arabs had retained all the worship rituals for *hajj*, but had made some changes according to their whims. As a result, the spirit that was desired was no longer existent. The original form of prayer existed, but in imitation of other polytheists, they had introduced whistling and clapping of hands. It is mandatory to recite the *talbiyah* during *hajj* and *'umrah* travel, whose words negate polytheism entirely, but the Arabs changed the wordings to accommodate their idols. After the completion of the rituals, people are supposed to change from their *ihram*, but the tribes from Aws, Khazraj and Ghassan would present themselves at the statue of Manat while still dressed in the*ihram*, and reciting the changed form of *talbiyah.* People from Yathrab would start their journey with the *talbiyah* for Manat, and would not go under a roof until they had completed all the rituals. After putting on the *ihram*, if they needed to go into any house, they would climb over the wall behind the house.

The greatest ritual of *hajj* is to go to 'Arafat on the day of *hajj*, but the Quraysh did not think this was essential for them. Other pilgrims would stop at Muzdalifah on their way from Mina to Arafat. They believed that being the keepers of the Ka'bah, and residents of Makkah, they should not leave Makkah because the latter is more sacred than any other place. They had given this exception to tribes of their choice, such as Thaqif, Ghatfan, Khuza'ah, Aws and Khazraj. The tribes who were considered worthy of this were called *hums* and were eyed with great respect and envy.

The Quraysh had also placed the restriction on pilgrims that they would throw away their clothes after circumambulation and that they would not be worn again. If they did not wish to throw them away, they could borrow clothes from the people from the tribes of *hums,* or circumambulate naked. Thus they made nakedness a part of worship for both men and women and caused a situation for them to look at each other in front of the Ka'bah. However, no records are available for women who danced, sang or otherwise were responsible to keep the pilgrims happy.

Four months of the twelve, Dhu al-Qa'dah, Dhu al-Hijjah, Muharram and Rajab had been taken to be the sacred months since ancient days. The first three months were reserved for *hajj*, and Rajab for *'umrah*. All Arab tribes would stop any fighting during these months. There would be complete peace

everywhere and pilgrims came to Makkah without any fear. The managers of the Ka'bah did not maintain the sanctity of the sacred months either. They created a system whereby each month moved from its original place,. Additionally, sometime they made a year thirteen months long, adding the unnamed month before or after Muharram or even next to Rajab. Various opinions exist about the system that was created but it is necessary here to understand its basic principles.

We know that the lunar calendar is eleven days shorter than the solar one, and that is why one month is added to their difference after every three years. For example, if the lunar month of Dhu al-Hijjah is according to the solar calendar of September, after three years, this would fall in August. As the years advance, the lunar month will recede and in thirty three years, the difference between the two systems would be of one year. Because weather changes are according to the solar system, the months of *hajj* may fall in spring, autumn, summer or winter. The Arabs did not like this situation. They wanted *hajj* to come at a time when their quarterly trade related travels would not be affected, and they would start for *hajj* after cutting their harvests. Such was the month of September, which was then associated with Dhu al-Hijjah. After three years, when *hajj*fell in August, one month would be added to the lunar year so that Dhu al-Hijjah would still come in September. In this way, the year was of twelve months. This prerogative of adding one month was given to the tribe of Banu Malik bin Kananah. They would add three months in eight years, sometimes after two, and at other times after three years. The announcement of the additional month was made by a reputed man from the tribe. As a result of this innovation, not only did the month of *hajj* move from its original position, the status of the four sacred months was also affected.

The month of September was very appropriate for holding trade fairs and recreational activities. The real purpose of *hajj* and *'umrah* was relegated to the background, and the main interests became trade and entertainment. 'Arafat, Muzdalifah and Mina became places of interest. The Arabs were very fond of war challenges and boasts. They were often engaged in tribal wars. In their boasts, their poets and orators would exaggerate the feats of their respective parties and win over the others. During the days of Hajj, instead of focusing on God, their attention was on storytelling and boasting about their achievements on the battlefield.

Culture

Drinking and gambling were favourite pastimes among the Arabs. But the purpose was not always winning for personal gain or debauchery, but it had sympathy and provision of support for the poor and needy at times. During winter, sometimes there would be famine and the poor would find it difficult to meet their food requirements. Some of the more adventurous and generous leaders would hold

gatherings for men to drink, and in a state of drunkenness, get hold of someone's camel and slaughter it. They would then gamble atop the collected meat, distribute the winnings and the meat among the poor. The owner of the camel would be given the payment that he asked for. Such generous people were honoured greatly in society and were written about in poetry.

Interest-based trade was always common among the Jews of Arabia, and they played a hateful role in this, but it had also extended to most of Arabia. There were some people who fixed a time period by which the borrower would have to return the money. When this period ended, they would ask the borrower to pay an additional amount in the form of interest.

In some groups of the society, certain customs that were unjust and cruel to women had become a norm. For example, if a man died, his wife/wives would be transferred to his heir along with his property. His sons would leave their respective biological mothers, and take on his other wives as theirs. If a man said to his wife that she is as unlawful to him as his own mother, or compared any of her physical features with those of any females he was not allowed to marry, it would be considered the same as divorce, and there would be no possibility of any reconciliation. Such a form of divorce was called *zihar.*

There was no limit on the number of wives. Tribal leaders wed several times. Temporary marriages were also common. Women desirous of such marriages would raise flags at their houses so that candidates might approach them.

Marriage could be solemnized simultaneously with sisters, aunts and nieces. Adopted sons were considered real sons and their wives were treated as daughters-in-law. Adoptive fathers would never consider marrying them.

Some Arabs considered daughters to be hateful beings. When hearing the news of the birth of his daughter, a new father would hide his face from others. The reason was that in the tribal form of life, sons were assets by taking part in all the battles and adding to the strength of the tribe, whereas daughters were merely a burden to these efforts. They were useless in competitions of boasting, and the parents had to bear additional burdens of marrying them off.

Infanticide was carried out for the following reasons:

1. The priests at the temples would frighten superstitious people that they are the target of some ghosts or the jinn who would get off their backs only if they sacrificed one of their children. They would then be safe.

2. During days of famine, people would go hungry and some would try to reduce the number of mouths to feed by killing their children.

3. It is commonly perceived that Arabs buried their daughters alive. This is not true generally of most of them. Only a few of the so called "honour" driven and hard-hearted fathers of the Banu Tamim tribe did so that they did not have to give their daughters to others in wedlock. The entire Banu Tamim tribe did not practice this; otherwise such a large tribe could not have sustained it on the basis of men alone. The

bad acts of a few are generalized as the actions of all. Such acts of misguided honour are the result of a few mentally ill people and this is also what happened inArabia.

It was possible to remove these weaknesses of the Ishmaelites through knowledge based arguments because Arabs were simple and clear headed by nature. When they understood something, they showed their generosity by accepting it fully. The positive aspects of their character distinguished them from the Israelites. Therefore, God answered the part of Abraham's (sws) prayer in which he had asked for a prophet and the establishment of a Muslim nation, in favour of the Ishmaelites. The stage when the last Prophet would come and the world would be graced by the divine and final guidance had been reached.

(*Translated from Hayat-i Rasul-i Ummi by Nikhat Sattar*)

CHAPTER 3

The Trusteeship of the House of God to the Israelites

Ishmael (sws) was married into Hagar's tribe, Banū Jurham, which was a devotee of Abraham (sws). The people of this tribe had also come and settled in Makkah. According to the revelations received by Abraham (sws), Ishmael's progeny expanded considerably. He had 12 sons, who led 12 tribes. Ishmael (sws) was already dedicated to looking after the House of God, his sons also took up the responsibility after him. His eldest son, Nābat made all the arrangements for the Ka'bah. There is evidence about both Nābat and the second son Qaydar in ancient books:

All ewes of Qaydār shall be with you. Nābat's sheep too will be present before you. They will be accepted at my altar, and I shall bestow grandeur to my House of Glory. (Isaiah; 60:7)

It is obvious that the House of Glory means the House of God. Hence both Qaydar and Nābat played a role in managing the affairs of this great place. Using the strong relationship the tribe of Banū Jurham had with the Ishmaelites, the former too began to assist the latter in fulfilling the objectives of the House of God.

Management of the House of God outside the Ishmaelites

As the numbers of the Ishmaelites increased, they moved out of Makkah. Wherever they went, they were blessed by God and they set up their own states. One of the consequences of this migration was that the Banū Jurham became stronger in Makkah and obtained full control of the Ka'bah. Initially they too took great care in looking after it, but over time, they started to make grave mistakes in their obligations. They used the Ka'bah for their vested interests, and instead of using the offerings made for improvements of the facilities or the pilgrims, they took them for their private consumption. The pilgrims finally grew tired of the ways which the managers robbed them of their wealth and possessions, with no thought of the revered significance of the Ka'bah. To redress the situation, the tribes of Banū Bakr and the Banu Khuzā'ah decided to jointly expel the Banū Jurham from Makkah. The two parties fought a battle in which Jurham lost and were forced to leave Makkah. As they were leaving, they covered the well of Zamzam next to the Ka'bah with their ammunition and other equipment and leveled it with the ground.

The Banū Bakr were in reality nomads; so the management of the House of God was now in the hands of the Banū Khuzā'ah. The trusteeship began to be transferred from father to son and as is usually the case, when reformists bring about a revolution, they start with much sincerity and faithfulness, but as time passes, they lose control and their behavior becomes similar to that of their predecessors. The

Banū Khuzā‘ah too started to act as Banū Jurham had. One of its men, ‘Amr ibn Lahayy was the source of introducing elements of polytheism to the Ka‘bah by bringing a statue of Habal from Syria, on his way from his travels. He installed it right in front of the Ka‘bah and instilled fear of the idol in the heart of the people. They started to pray to it for blessings in case of important events. Once the sanctity of the Ka‘bah had been thus sullied, it was no longer difficult for more idols to enter. Soon, the centre for the oneness of God was converted into the centre for polytheism.

Retrieval of the Management of the House of God

Qusayy ibn Kilāb

An oft mentioned name in the progeny of Ishmael (sws) is one of ‘Adnān whose family tree has been preserved over the ages. In the second century A.D, the children of Kanānah, who lived in Makkah became prominent. Kanānah’s great grandson, Fahr ibn Mālik was a man of many qualities. His children came to be known as Quraysh. Qusayy ibn Kilāb in Fahr’s sixth generation gained a lot of fame. He married the daughter of the Ka‘bah’s trustee, belonging to the tribe of Khuzā‘ah, Halīl ibn Habshiyyah, and became a partner in the management of the House of God. On Halīl’s death, Qusayy took over the entire responsibility. When the tribe of Khuzā‘ah opposed him, he took help from his family, the Banū Kanānah and the rest of the Ishmaelites, inviting them to come and stay close to Makkah. Several of his tribes did so, and consequently, the strength of the Quraysh increased. Qusayy was given the name of “Assembly,” presumably at being able to gather such crowds together.

It finally came to a battle between the warring parties with heavy losses to both. Ya‘mar ibn ‘Awf was assigned as the arbitrator to decide between them. He decided that as compared to the Khuzā‘ah, Qusayy ibn Kilāb holds greater legitimacy to keep the management of the Ka‘bah under his control. Also, that the Banū Bakr and Banū Khuzā‘ah will have to give blood money in lieu of the men of the Quraysh they have killed. However, those killed by Qusayy will not be atoned for. In this manner, the legacy of Abraham (sws) and the religious governance of the Arabs came to the tribe that was from the progeny of Ishmael (sws) and whose trusteeship was its first right.[1]

Qusayy’s farsighted mind thought of setting up an urban city within Makkah, dividing the responsibilities of its management among the various dynasties of Quraysh so that each would feel ownership. Each tribe would believe that it is being given importance and that each must fulfill its duty in the responsibilities of the state so that they are equal partners in maintaining order and management. Qusayy delineated separate districts for each of the branches of the Quraysh, and set up a council for consultation comprised of the leaders. None of the leaders was less than 40 years of age. The head of the council was Qusayy himself, and the council was responsible for matters related to management of the House of God, war and reconciliation, important issues related to the state and decisions of marriage. He set up the Dār al-Nadwah for gatherings of the council, the door of which opened towards the Ka‘bah. Qusayy took up the responsibilities of the Ka‘bah himself, as he was the governor of Makkah as well as the religious head of all Arabs. With such status, he was held in great regard.

The city government had several departments, of which the hijābah (security and guard ship) and sadānah (key handling) related to the Ka'bah. Siqāyah (giving water to drink), and rifādah (making food arrangements) were departments to serve the pilgrims. Al-Liwā' (flag), qiyādah (leading the war) and raqbah (managing military encampments) were concerned with the state of war. This division of responsibilities improved the city management, enhanced the importance of families and created synergies amongst them. Qusayy started to take a tenth of the earnings from the traders who came to Makkah and this became a major source of its income. He also made several reforms in the arrangements for hajj and 'umrah. For the welfare of the pilgrims, he advised the Quraysh that they should consider themselves the servants of the House of God, and the pilgrims to be God's guests. He improved the water supply system and made it mandatory for the Quraysh to collect funds and arrange feasts for the visiting pilgrims.

At his death, Qusayy made his eldest son 'Abd al-Dār responsible for the state affairs, although his second son, 'Abd Munāf was the most capable of his four sons and had demonstrated this during his father's lifetime. He was also highly respected by the people. The other brothers accepted their father's decision, but their children were not satisfied. At 'Abd al-Dār's death, 'Abd Munāf's sons raised their voices against their grandfather's decision, and demanded a just division of the departments. As a result, the Quraysh were divided into two: Banū Asad, Banū Zahrā' and the Banū Hārith were in favour of 'Abd Munāf's son's demands. They resolved to remain together and came to be called Mutayyibīn. 'Abd al-Dār's children were supported by the Banū Sahm, the Banū 'Adī, the Banū Makhzum and the Banū Jamha. They were called Ihlaf. The two groups had come close to war when some people intervened to arbitrate and brought them to a compromise. The Banū 'Abd al-Dār retained the departments of nadwah, hijābah and liwā', and the Banū Munāf were given siqāyah and rifādah. Although the decision was taken with a reconciliatory spirit, the respective families retained the divisive feelings that had existed between the Mutayyibīn and the Ihlaf.

Hāshim ibn 'Abd Munāf

After 'Abd Munāf's death, the tribe was led by 'Abd Shams. Since he was mostly on his travels and was also financially weak, his responsibilities were mainly met by 'Abd Munāf's second son, Hāshim. He was a very generous and kind man by nature. Once when Makkah was ravaged by famine, he went to Palestine, bought flour and fed the people of Makkah with tharīd (bread dipped in curry). Hāshim was in the forefront in serving the pilgrims to Makkah, feeding them from his own pocket. He was a successful trader. He and his brothers had used their relationships and connections and obtained written agreements for peaceful passage for the trading caravans of the Quraysh from the governments of Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Egypt and Yemen as well as from other tribes of Arabia. Muttalib ibn Munāf obtained permission from Negus, Nawfil ibn Munāf obtained one from the Shah of Iran. Hāshim himself obtained such permissions for the safe passage of the Quraysh from the King of Rome.[2]Through the efforts of these brothers, the Quraysh received such facilities that were not available to any other tribe in Arabia. Whenever other tribes passed the area that belonged to another, they had to pay a tax. In contrast, the Quraysh could commute easily across other states and countries without any payment. Since their

profession was trade, each individual could send his goods to the market either himself or through his emissary, being promised of safe travel. Those who did not have capital of their own acted as agents of others, and the people of Makkah, including their women, earned income through trade while staying in Makkah. It was common for the Quraysh to travel to Yemen and Egypt in summer, and Palestine and Syria in the winter. The people would not object to them, taking them to be servants of the House of God, its trustees and supporters of pilgrims. These travels were a source of good times, wealth and blessings for the Quraysh. Referring to this extraordinary facility for the Quraysh, the Qur'ān says:

Owing to the association the Quraysh have – the association they have with the winter and summer journeys. So, they should worship the Lord of this House who fed them because of hunger and provided them with peace because of fear. (106: 1-4)

Since the Quraysh were bestowed with this facility because of the trusteeship of the Ka'bah, they could only fulfill their obligation if they worshipped the Lord of this House and abstained from polytheism.

'Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hāshim

Hāshim married a woman of status from the tribe of Banū Najjār in Yathrib. She put the condition that she will remain in Yathrib to look after her affairs. When she gave birth to a son, Hāshim had to leave him with the mother according to his promise. The son was named Shaybah. On Hāshim's death, his brother, Muttalib went to Yathrib and asked the mother to send the boy with him so that he may be brought up according to the family customs. She agreed, but after much difficulty. When Muttalib reached Makkah, people there thought the boy was his slave, and started to call him 'Abd al-Muttalib. Even after they knew the truth, this name had become entrenched that his real name was forgotten and he was always known as 'Abd ul-Muttalib. Muttalib ibn Munāf became responsible for the departments of siqāyah and rifādah after Hashim died, and he also took on the leadership of Banū Hāshim.[3]

A significant incident during the time of 'Abd al-Muttalib is the discovery of the well of Zam Zam that the Banū Khuzā'ah closed after being chased out from the House of God. Although the well was located just next to the Ka'bah, with the passage of time, people had forgotten its whereabouts. According to various narratives, 'Abd al-Muttalib dreamt that he was digging in a particular spot. Considering this as a divine sign, he consulted the Quraysh and sought their help in digging the place. They thought it would be a useless exercise and refused to cooperate. 'Abd al-Muttalib started digging with his son, Hārith. In a while, they found the swords that had been buried by the Banū Jurham. Now the Quraysh wished to participate, but 'Abd al-Muttalib did not agree to their involvement at this stage, and decided to complete the process himself. It was after a very long time that pilgrims had the honour of drinking water from the blessed well.

According to the narratives in books on the life of the Prophet (sws), 'Abd al-Muttalib had been deeply hurt by the fact that the other families of the Quraysh had not assisted him in the digging of the well. He made a vow that if God granted him ten sons, he would offer one of them as sacrifice. This wish was granted, and he had ten sons. When they were old enough, the father gathered them and told them of

his vow. They agreed to implement it. ‘Abd al-Muttalib drew a lot near the Ka‘bah for which of his sons to be sacrificed, and it fell to his youngest, ‘Abdullāh. As ‘Abd al-Muttalib walked towards the altar with ‘Abdullāh, the Quraysh were concerned that such an act would set a wrong precedent in the Arab world that would be difficult to check for anyone. They asked ‘Abd al-Muttalib to consult a famous soothsayer in Yathrib, and offer something in expiation. Some people went to Yathrib, where the soothsayer advised them to draw a lot between 10 camels and ‘Abdullāh near the Ka‘bah. If the draw is for ‘Abdullāh, it should be repeated with 20 camels. Each time the draw is in favour of ‘Abdullāh, the number of camels should be increased by 10 until the draw is in favour of the latter. This was followed until the expiation was settled at 100 camels for ‘Abdullāh. The camels were slaughtered and their meat was distributed within the community.

During the time of ‘Abd al-Muttalib, a biased Christian ruler of Yemen, Abrahah, advanced upon the Ka‘bah with a large army, intending to destroy it. The attacking contingent included elephants. The Arabs had no previous experience of fighting battles with such armies. The Quraysh, along with other tribes of Arabia adopted the strategy of guerilla warfare by keeping themselves safe behind the mountains. Abrahah had deliberately concocted a false reason and a time to launch his attack. The reason was to avenge the alleged defiling of a newly built church in Yemen by an Arab. The time chosen was the holy months, because he thought that since the Arabs do not consider it right to wage war during these days, he would not be offered much resistance. He attempted to attack during the days when the pilgrims who had come from across the country were either busy in sacrifice or are returning home, tired after a physically demanding pilgrimage. Makkah was usually empty in those days because its residents were busy making arrangements for hajj outside. When ‘Abd al-Muttalib heard of the attack, he prayed in the Ka‘bah:[4]

O Lord, a man protects his family and property; please protect your own people. The cross of the enemy and his strength should not overwhelm your strength. If you wish to leave our Qibla to the whims of our enemy, that is your will; so do what you will.”

God destroyed Abrahah’s plans and his tricks completely. He had to face attacks from the Arab tribes while travelling from Yemen to Makkah. When he reached Makkah, the residents of Makkah and unarmed pilgrims pelted his army with stones from Minā, using them as ammunition, and forcing the attackers to retreat. Meanwhile, the Quraysh used guerilla warfare tactics, and kept praying to God. As a result, a strong stone-laden wind blew from the valley of Muhassar, adjacent to Minā, that stoned Abrahah’s army, causing it to be completely destroyed. All of a sudden, birds of prey descended in flocks and cleaned the flesh off the bodies, thus eliminating the stench of dead bodies from the valley. The valley was then flooded with water that carried away the remaining bones with it. God thus made the resistance of the Quraysh so effective with His support that the “people of the elephants” were reduced to nothingness. This incident became so significant in the history of the Arabs that they started their calendar from this date, and this year was called the Year of the Elephant.

Ever since the Banū Khuzā‘ah had been deprived of the management of the Ka‘bah, they had been feeling hurt and resentful. During his leadership, ‘Abd al-Muttalib had developed an agreement of mutual support and assistance with Banū Khuzā‘ah’s ‘Amr ibn Rabī‘ah and his friends. This agreement was also to be followed by their children. The Banū Muttalib also entered this agreement, but the children of ‘Abd Shams, Banū Umayyah, and Banū Nawfil remained outside it. ‘Abd al-Muttalib asked his heir Zubayr bin Muttalib, and he his heir in turn, Abū Tālib, to honour this agreement. Banū Khuzā‘ah, too, continued to support ‘Abd Muttalib and his children later in accordance to this agreement. It was thus that the tribe of Banū Khuzā‘ah that was living around Makkah came close to the Quraysh again and began to take an interest in matters related to the Ka‘bah.

The Children of ‘Abd al-Muttalib

Of ‘Abd al-Muttalib’s sons, Hārith, Zubayr, Abū Tālib, Abū Lahab, ‘Abbās, Hamzah and ‘Abdullāh became famous. Hārith died during his father’s lifetime. ‘Abd al-Muttalib had three sons from his second wife, Fātimah bint ‘Amr: Zubayr, Abū Tālib and ‘Abdullāh. On his deathbed, he gave his responsibilities to the eldest, Zubayr who, as his father’s heir,[5] became the head of the household. In this position, he established his piety and kindness among all. He remained the head of Banū Hāshim for about 13-14 years, and on his death, this position was transferred to Abū Tālib. Abū Tālib was a poor man and was in debt to his brother, ‘Abbās. When he was unable to pay off the debt, he resigned from the management of siqāyah, in favour of ‘Abbās.

‘Abdullāh died while his father was still alive. He had the honour of being the father of the greatest of all prophets, for whom Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws) had prayed; about whom the prophets of the Israelites had been predicting and asking their people to have faith in, and about whose advent Jesus (sws) had brought tidings and had paved the way for; ie. Prophet Muhammad (sws).

In previous times, the signs that prophets had given of the prophet to come had included the fact that he would be from the Ishmaelites, who would be in charge of the House of God. Muhammad (sws) was born in that branch of the Quraysh, which had the trusteeship of the Ka‘bah. The second sign was that there would be no prophet between Jesus (sws) and him, so, in fact, there was none. The Israelites, Jews and Christians all had waited for the promised prophet. The third sign was that this prophet would be for all times to come, and no other prophet would come after him. After Muhammad (sws), several individuals have claimed that they are prophets, but no one has been able to give any evidence of their claims. They have had no knowledge gained through wahī, and they have not been accepted by the world. Several other signs have been proved in relation to the Prophet’s (sws) life, and these shall be explained in later chapters.

(Translated from Hayāt-i Rasūl-i Ummī by Nikhat Sattar)

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1. Muhammad ibn Sa‘d, Al-Tabaqāt al-kubrā, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-fikr, n.d.), 44.

2. Ibid., vol. 1, 51.

3. Ibid., vol. 1, 54.

4. Ibid., vol. 1, 60.

5. Ibid., vol. 1, 61.

CHAPTER 4

Reasons for Supremacy of the Ishmaelites over the Jews

Abraham's real legacy comprised of belief in the oneness of God, Hanīfiyyat (hatred of polytheism and attention to oneness), the prayer and arrangements for *zakāh*, serving the House of God, hajj and teaching of its rites, and providing guidance to pilgrims. He had given his eldest son, Ishmael (sws) to the service of the House of God, and thus the latter was, in fact the heir to this legacy. Subsequently, his children were responsible for implementing the objectives of the construction of the Ka'bah. Thus, their most desired obligations were to arrange for hajj and 'umrah, being hosts to the pilgrims, providing facilities to them during their stay in Makkah and sacrificing animals at the altar of the Ka'bah. There is evidence of the homage paid by the younger son, Isaac (sws) and his children at the Ka'bah, but they were free of the managing responsibilities. They were, however, honoured by being recipients of several prophets, one after the other. They received divine guidance in the form of holy books of Torah, the Psalms and the Gospels. They had the commandments in the form of the compiled sharī'ah. It is obvious, therefore, that the children of Isaac (sws) were given the responsibility to communicate the word of God to the rest of mankind.

The two branches of the progeny of Abraham (sws) could have wished, and, in fact were desirous of, having the prayer of Abraham (sws) being in their favour, and the promised prophet being born amidst them. But the Ishmaelites possessed some qualities that Isaac's progeny did not. God therefore preferred them over the children of Isaac (sws), and chose them to lead the world. The factors that came into play for this selection will be discussed below.

Performance of the Israelites

When the children of Isaac (sws), more commonly known as the Israelites were chosen to serve the cause of faith, they perceived it to be their right, based on their being children of prophets and of elitist families. They were under the misunderstanding that they were the chosen and favourite group of God. They would openly declare themselves as the children of God and say that their birth was different from that of others on earth. Hence they would consider no other nation equal to themselves, nor would they treat them on an equal footing. They possessed divine guidance, but they held on to it as a snake on a treasure, neither spreading its knowledge, nor bringing the original book out in the open. Whatever they wanted done, they would declare it to have come from God and to be a part of the book. They did not preserve the books either, and when they were lost, they tried to restore these through memory, which changed their content entirely. Despite this, they could not get rid of their habit of continuing to distort the word of God. They were thus responsible of being dishonest with the responsibility that had been entrusted to them. Their behavior with the Ishmaelites was so offensive and disparaging that they considered any cruelty or insult to them to be lawful and allowable for themselves. The Qur'ān refers to this in the following words:

There are some among the people of the Book who return a whole treasure entrusted to them. Yet some who do not give back a dīnār until you demand and insist, because they say: “We cannot be blamed for [usurping] the rights of the un-lettered.” (3:75)

The Israelites tried to erase all signs that showed the Ishmaelites in a positive light. They even removed any mention of the legacy of Abraham (sws) from their literature, and assumed the House of God to mean Bayt al-Maqdis. They replaced Makkah’s original name, Bakkah, with the word Bukā’, and connected it with a valley. They renamed Marwah, which was the place of sacrifice for Ishmael (sws), with Mūriyah, claiming that it was in Jerusalem and that Isaac (sws) had been presented there for sacrifice. They also eliminated the basic two pillars of the Abrahamic faith: prayer and zakāh. The Qur’ān says:

But they were succeeded by a generation, who neglected their devotional prayers and follow only earthly pleasures. (19:59)

This is the reason why ancient books are devoid of any mention of prayer. Although zakāh and ‘ushr are mentioned, the recipients are given as soothsayers instead of the poor and needy. The Israelites did not preserve their own language, Hebrew which was the language of the Torah and earlier holy books. As a result, their own people, who came to be called the Jews, remained ignorant of the real content of these books.

The Israelites had put so many constraints in the way of learning the basic tenets of religion that the concept of oneness and of life after death vanished completely. Prophets were taken to be sons of God; holy books were emptied of any mention of the Day of Judgment. If this was mentioned in any form, it was only to assume that they would be successful and achieve their goal. History recorded the Israelites in general and the Jews in particular, as a cruel, conspiratorial, untrustworthy and self serving group. Stories of their cruelty and miserliness are legendary. In spite of this, they were assured that the promised prophet would be from among them. They used to announce this to the Arabs who were awed by them.

Performance of the Ishmaelites

No prophet was born among Abraham’s progeny after Ishmael (sws). He had the divine guidance in non-written form, but he was entrusted with the management of the House of God, with associated worship rites of prayer, zakāh, sacrifice, circumambulation, i‘tikāf, hajj and ‘umrah. The Ishmaelites were large in numbers and had to migrate to other parts of the country where they also had the opportunity to rule, but they never broke off their ties with their religious centre. Whenever any weakness was exhibited by those responsible for management of the centre, or the pilgrims faced persecution, the Ishmaelites stepped in to put a stop to such acts, and turn them around. This is why even after thousands of years had passed, the system of worship was preserved and so was the interest of the Ishmaelites in this system.

As far as the concept of the oneness of God is concerned, there was always a particular group within the Ishmaelites that continued to believe in it and to follow the faith that had been a tradition with all the good people. The Ishmaelites were never arrogant or proud of their qualities. Instead, they were respectful of the Israelites for receiving so many prophets and

holy books and called them People of the Book. In their own humility, they considered themselves unlettered and ignorant of religious matters. They did not give much importance to their population, sovereignty of several states and worldly grace, but saw greatness in prophethood and apostleship. They retained a vague idea of the Abrahamic prayer regarding the promised prophet, and, when comparing themselves to the Jews in relation to their love for truth, they would say that if ever they received a divine book, they would meet its obligations fully and become God's servants by accepting it with their hearts and souls. Referring to this, the Qur'ān says:

The disbelievers swore emphatically that if an admonisher came to them, they would be guided better than the other communities. (35:42)

They used to say: "If we had been reminded of the example of earlier people, we would have been the chosen creatures of God." (37:167-169)

We see magnanimity of character within the Ishmaelites. They were extremely generous and charitable towards guests, willing to sacrifice and give of their own. Bravery and heroism were qualities they had in abundance. They would fight for meaningful goals with fearlessness, compete with each other in courage and tell stories about their courage to others with pride. Such incidents became topics of poetry and became n common knowledge. The Ishmaelites recognized the rights of others, and respected the obligations of relationships. Their attitude in worldly matters was based on sincerity and free from hypocrisy. They refrained from telling lies, valued truth, honoured promises and were kind and merciful towards the poor. If they believed in something, they would not let any expedience stand in the way. Their language, too, was free of any artificiality, and they took special care to preserve its originality. This is the reason why the Arabic language is still in its pure form, barring a few words that have come in because of cultural inroads from other nations.

The Ishmaelites lived the life of a tribal people. Collectively, each tribe was responsible for the safety and welfare of its people. Any tendency to consider issues of individuals or of supporters as no concern of their own was looked down upon. Turning in any person from one's own tribe to the enemy was an act of baseness. If an individual of a tribe committed a big crime, the entire tribe contributed to payment of the expiation money. As much effort was put into defending a supporter as their own relatives. If anyone took an outsider into protection, it was necessary for the entire tribe to protect that person exactly the same as they would protect their own families. Such protection was called jiwār.

The superiority of Ishmaelites over the Israelites was also due to the fact that the former had never been enslaved, whereas the latter has become slaves several times. They were slaves in Egypt at the time of the Pharaohs; they were freed but were again enslaved by Nebuchadnezzar for 70 years. They were freed by Cyrus of Persia. The psyche of a nation that has remained independent is different from that of one that has seen years of slavery.

Religious and Moral Conditions of the Ishmaelites

Although the Ishmaelites possessed all the above positive qualities, with the passing of time, various ills related to beliefs and practices crept in and started to diminish their favourable character. However, their excesses did not go beyond a certain level. We need to understand what these collective ills of their society were.

The Concept of Oneness of God

The Qur'ān has clarified it clearly that the Arabs believed in God and in His attributes, although they were polytheists. They knew that He was the Creator and Owner of everything, He bestowed sustenance to every creature, He was in control, He was the source of life and death and He was the Driver and the Force behind the entire universe. The Qur'ān says:

Ask them: "Who gives you food and sustenance from the skies and earth? Or, who is the Lord of the ear and the eye? And who brings forth the living from the dead, the dead from the living. And who directs all affairs?" They will say: "God." So tell them: "Why do you not fear Him?" (10:31)

Say: "To whom does the earth and whosoever is upon it then belong, if you know?" They will say: "To God." Say: "Then why do you not bethink yourselves." Say: "Then who is the Lord of the seven skies? And who is the Lord of the mighty Throne?" They will say: "God." Say: "Then why do you not obey and fear him?" Say: "Whose is the sovereignty over all things? Who protects, and against whom there is no protection? [Answer] if you have knowledge." They will say:" "God's." Say: "Then why are you so deluded?" (23:84-89)

These verses draw the attention of Arabs to the fact that while they believe in God and his attributes, they do not understand the concomitant demands made on them, and end up negating their beliefs through their practices. They should, therefore, remove this blemish and create harmony between what they believe in and what they do.

The polytheism of the Arabs was relatively simple. It has been observed that nations that spend thousands of years practicing polytheism develop it to an extent that they create a complex mythology around it. In the mythology, the status of gods and goddesses, their relationships with each other, matters related to their wars and peace, love and hate and how they settle their differences is defined. This can be seen from a study of both the Greek and Hindu mythologies. Their stories are so complicated that the mind finds it difficult to extricate itself from its intricacies. According to the concept of the Arabs, God's kingdom was similar to that of kings on earth. Just as human beings as kings delegate their responsibilities to others who use these powers as they will, God did the same. The Arabs thought that since it was difficult to reach God Himself, it was necessary to keep these "delegatees" happy and satisfied so that they would, in turn, sort out their matters for them. Thus, keeping them happy was perceived to being near to God.

Thinking that God was far from human beings, Arabs also believed that there were separate Gods for the earth and heaven. The heavenly God was ensconced firmly on His throne, and the God on earth took care of things that happened here. Since

human beings interacted with representatives of the “earthly God”, it was important to keep them happy and ask them for favours.

The beings that were considered to be partners of God by the Arabs were angels, jinn and some vague, but revered personalities. Angels were taken to be daughters of God. They thought that angels are of a very high status within the kingdom of God and that He favours them and fulfills their wishes readily. They considered the blessings of this world to be favours bestowed on them through angels. They thought that angels would enable them to gain a high status in the life after death and that they would plead their case because they worship them.

The jinn were thought to share the attributes of God and had the same rights. They were the source of knowledge of the occult. Various efforts were made to develop connections with the jinn. Sorcery was practiced based on perceived knowledge received through the jinn. Good and evil was related with them, and offerings and sacrifices were made to them to be free from misfortunes. When travelling and crossing a valley or a pass, they would call out to the jinn associated with that area and request for safe transit.

The Arabs were also believers in the fortunes of the stars. Some stars were supposed to be blessed, and some were evil. Some were associated with good fortune. Different superstitions came to be attached with the rising and setting of stars, and with their revolution around the planet. The study of stars was also a part of sorcery. People would consult sorcerers and soothsayers in every important matter, and seek their guidance before taking decisions for the future.

Idol Worship

Idol worship began among the Ishmaelites by ‘Amr ibn Luhayy Khuzā‘ī when the Banū Khuzā‘ah was managing the House of God. He had installed the statue of Habal in front of the Ka‘bah, and it gained central importance. More statues started to come in and when those of I%sāf and Nā’ilah were brought, it was thought that this corner would be most appropriate for the altar. When Makkah’s citizens travelled out of the city, they would keep a stone from the House of God with them for blessings. Being away from the Ka‘bah, their attachment with the stone would be enhanced, and they would make them a source of prayer for help and success. In this manner, idol worship spread to other parts of Arabia.

Idol sculpture was never adopted as a craft among the Arabs. The stones mentioned above were not sculpted. As narrated by one of the companions of the Prophet (sws), Abū Rajā’ al-Attārdī (rta), they would take any stone and start to worship it. If they found something better, they would throw away the previous one and worship the second. From this statement it appears that polytheism was not fully established in Arabia, and if a few people had made efforts to eliminate it, there was possibility of overcoming any minor resistance that may have been offered and gathering the Arabs under the natural faith once again.

The other main idols were ‘Uzzā, Lāt and Manāt. ‘Uzzā was installed at Nakhlah and was accessible while coming from Tā’if to Makkah. Banū Hashims’ supporting tribe, Banū Shaybān was in charge of this idol. The idol for the tribe of Thaqīf, Lāt was in Tā’if. Manāt was placed in a worship house at the top of a hill in a district called Qadīd on the way between Yathrab and Makkah. These three statues were assumed to be those of angels. The polytheists declared that they were goddesses of the highest stature, and that they were fully convinced that their prayers to them would be answered. When idol worship expanded to other tribes too, the trustees of the House of God brought the statues that they worshipped inside, until their

total number reached 360. The keepers started seeing them as a source of their strength, and slowly the belief that the presence of these statues was essential to retain the political superiority of Makkah gained ground. If the statues were displaced, this would be seen as the political demise of the Arabs.

The Arabs did not believe that these idols were the creators of the earth or heavens, or that they had made the sun and the moon. They believed that they are beings that are beloved of God who listens to them. If they are served, they would bring blessings on earth. If there is a life hereafter, they would speak up for them and have them forgiven. Hence they were presented with offerings to please them, prayers were chanted to have wishes granted and sacrifices were offered in their names.

Observing this interest of the Arabs in statues, some self-serving people created sacred places, abodes and temples, making it known that gods, goddesses and ghosts reside there, and in order to appease them it was necessary to make offerings to them. Priests gave decisions on concocted religious grounds, and superstitious people would believe in them. Animals were also slaughtered at these places.

If anyone raised a voice against such a system, he was quickly silenced by the argument that the system is a legacy that has come from their ancestors, and hence could not be abandoned. Had it been disliked by God, He would have exercised His powers and stopped them from implementing it.

Sanctity and Religious Approval

Nations that follow polytheism also create a system of rules and regulations for practical life so that polytheism becomes strongly entrenched within their lives and they are unable to leave it. This is also what happened with the Arabs. According to the sharī‘ah of Abraham (sws), they were liable to taking out a certain proportion of their wealth from agriculture and livestock. Under the polytheist system, they began to share out a proportion for the idols too. If for some reason, they were unable to take out both, they would transfer the one they had put aside for God towards the idols, but never vice versa. Thus, it was possible to compensate the idols from what had been kept aside for God, but if God’s share was used up, the Idol’s share could not be used as compensation.

The Arabs would readily eat the things that had been declared prohibited from the days of Abraham (sws), but would refrain from eating those they had themselves given this status under polytheism. According to ancient sharī‘ah, it was necessary to slaughter with the name of God to ensure religious sanctity, and any animal slaughtered without this was prohibited. But animals were slaughtered without taking God’s name at the temples, and people would eat the meat with no hesitation. There were several restrictions placed on these offerings. Men could eat them, but women could not. If a sacrificial animal gave birth, men could eat its meat, whereas women could not, but if the baby was stillborn, both sexes could partake of its meat.

Some animals were left free. It was not considered legitimate to ride them or to use them for carrying burdens. These animals could graze anywhere or drink from any water place. They were considered so sacred that people would be frightened lest they be taken to be teasing them. The Qur’ān has mentioned bahīrah, sā’ibah, wasīlah and hām. Historians have differed on the characteristics of the animals, but this is of no significance here. It would be enough to understand the mentality of the polytheists to know that the bahīrah was the she camel that had birthed five babies and the last one had

been a male. Sā'ibah's owner should have made a vow that he would free her once she had grown well enough. Wasīlah was the goat or ewe that gave birth to both females and males simultaneously and its male children were not considered good enough as offerings for the idols. Hām was the camel that had sired 10 generations.

The Rituals of Hajj

The Arabs had retained all the worship rituals for hajj, but had made some changes according to their whims. As a result, the spirit that was desired was no longer existent. The original form of prayer existed, but in imitation of other polytheists, they had introduced whistling and clapping of hands. It is mandatory to recite the talbiyah during hajj and 'umrah travel, whose words negate polytheism entirely, but the Arabs changed the wordings to accommodate their idols. After the completion of the rituals, people are supposed to change from their ihrām, but the tribes from Aws, Khazraj and Ghassān would present themselves at the statue of Manāt while still dressed in the ihrām, and reciting the changed form of talbiyah. People from Yathrab would start their journey with the talbiyah for Manāt, and would not go under a roof until they had completed all the rituals. After putting on the ihrām, if they needed to go into any house, they would climb over the wall behind the house.

The greatest ritual of hajj is to go to 'Arafāt on the day of hajj, but the Quraysh did not think this was essential for them. Other pilgrims would stop at Muzdalifah on their way from Mina to Arafat. They believed that being the keepers of the Ka'bah, and residents of Makkah, they should not leave Makkah because the latter is more sacred than any other place. They had given this exception to tribes of their choice, such as Thaqīf, Ghatfān, Khuzā'ah, Aws and Khazraj. The tribes who were considered worthy of this were called hums and were eyed with great respect and envy.

The Quraysh had also placed the restriction on pilgrims that they would throw away their clothes after circumambulation and that they would not be worn again. If they did not wish to throw them away, they could borrow clothes from the people from the tribes of hums, or circumambulate naked. Thus they made nakedness a part of worship for both men and women and caused a situation for them to look at each other in front of the Ka'bah. However, no records are available for women who danced, sang or otherwise were responsible to keep the pilgrims happy.

Four months of the twelve, Dhū al-Qa'dah, Dhū al-Hijjah, Muharram and Rajab had been taken to be the sacred months since ancient days. The first three months were reserved for hajj, and Rajab for 'umrah. All Arab tribes would stop any fighting during these months. There would be complete peace everywhere and pilgrims came to Makkah without any fear. The managers of the Ka'bah did not maintain the sanctity of the sacred months either. They created a system whereby each month moved from its original place,. Additionally, sometime they made a year thirteen months long, adding the unnamed month before or after Muharram or even next to Rajab. Various opinions exist about the system that was created but it is necessary here to understand its basic principles.

We know that the lunar calendar is eleven days shorter than the solar one, and that is why one month is added to their difference after every three years. For example, if the lunar month of Dhū al-Hijjah is according to the solar calendar of September, after three years, this would fall in August. As the years advance, the lunar month will recede and in thirty three years, the difference between the two systems would be of one year. Because weather changes are according to the solar system, the months of hajj may fall in spring, autumn, summer or winter. The Arabs did not like this situation. They wanted hajj to come at a time when their quarterly trade related travels would not be affected, and they would start for hajj after cutting their harvests. Such was the month of September, which was then associated with Dhū al-Hijjah. After three years,

when hajj fell in August, one month would be added to the lunar year so that Dhū al-Hijjah would still come in September. In this way, the year was of twelve months. This prerogative of adding one month was given to the tribe of Banū Malik bin Kanānah. They would add three months in eight years, sometimes after two, and at other times after three years. The announcement of the additional month was made by a reputed man from the tribe. As a result of this innovation, not only did the month of hajj move from its original position, the status of the four sacred months was also affected.

The month of September was very appropriate for holding trade fairs and recreational activities. The real purpose of hajj and ‘umrah was relegated to the background, and the main interests became trade and entertainment. ‘Arafa#t, Muzdalifah and Mina# became places of interest. The Arabs were very fond of war challenges and boasts. They were often engaged in tribal wars. In their boasts, their poets and orators would exaggerate the feats of their respective parties and win over the others. During the days of Hajj, instead of focusing on God, their attention was on storytelling and boasting about their achievements on the battlefield.

Culture

Drinking and gambling were favourite pastimes among the Arabs. But the purpose was not always winning for personal gain or debauchery, but it had sympathy and provision of support for the poor and needy at times. During winter, sometimes there would be famine and the poor would find it difficult to meet their food requirements. Some of the more adventurous and generous leaders would hold gatherings for men to drink, and in a state of drunkenness, get hold of someone’s camel and slaughter it. They would then gamble atop the collected meat, distribute the winnings and the meat among the poor. The owner of the camel would be given the payment that he asked for. Such generous people were honoured greatly in society and were written about in poetry.

Interest-based trade was always common among the Jews of Arabia, and they played a hateful role in this, but it had also extended to most of Arabia. There were some people who fixed a time period by which the borrower would have to return the money. When this period ended, they would ask the borrower to pay an additional amount in the form of interest.

In some groups of the society, certain customs that were unjust and cruel to women had become a norm. For example, if a man died, his wife/wives would be transferred to his heir along with his property. His sons would leave their respective biological mothers, and take on his other wives as theirs. If a man said to his wife that she is as unlawful to him as his own mother, or compared any of her physical features with those of any females he was not allowed to marry, it would be considered the same as divorce, and there would be no possibility of any reconciliation. Such a form of divorce was called zihār.

There was no limit on the number of wives. Tribal leaders wed several times. Temporary marriages were also common. Women desirous of such marriages would raise flags at their houses so that candidates might approach them.

Marriage could be solemnized simultaneously with sisters, aunts and nieces. Adopted sons were considered real sons and their wives were treated as daughters-in-law. Adoptive fathers would never consider marrying them.

Some Arabs considered daughters to be hateful beings. When hearing the news of the birth of his daughter, a new father would hide his face from others. The reason was that in the tribal form of life, sons were assets by taking part in all the

battles and adding to the strength of the tribe, whereas daughters were merely a burden to these efforts. They were useless in competitions of boasting, and the parents had to bear additional burdens of marrying them off.

Infanticide was carried out for the following reasons:

1. The priests at the temples would frighten superstitious people that they are the target of some ghosts or the jinn who would get off their backs only if they sacrificed one of their children. They would then be safe.

2. During days of famine, people would go hungry and some would try to reduce the number of mouths to feed by killing their children.

3. It is commonly perceived that Arabs buried their daughters alive. This is not true generally of most of them. Only a few of the so called “honour” driven and hard-hearted fathers of the Banū Tamīm tribe did so that they did not have to give their daughters to others in wedlock. The entire Banū Tamīm tribe did not practice this; otherwise such a large tribe could not have sustained it on the basis of men alone. The bad acts of a few are generalized as the actions of all. Such acts of misguided honour are the result of a few mentally ill people and this is also what happened in Arabia.

It was possible to remove these weaknesses of the Ishmaelites through knowledge based arguments because Arabs were simple and clear headed by nature. When they understood something, they showed their generosity by accepting it fully. The positive aspects of their character distinguished them from the Israelites. Therefore, God answered the part of Abraham’s (sws) prayer in which he had asked for a prophet and the establishment of a Muslim nation, in favour of the Ishmaelites. The stage when the last Prophet would come and the world would be graced by the divine and final guidance had been reached.

(*Translated from Hayāt-i Rasūl-i Ummī by Nikhat Sattar*)

CHAPTER 5

Arrival of the Promised Prophet

Five hundred and fifty years after the departure of Jesus (sws) from this world, it was time for Abraham's (sws) prayer to be answered, for that individual to be born, who was to:

Achieve the highest status within the caliphate of God

Termination of the institution of institution of prophethood to which all prophets and messengers of God had aspired

Be presented by God not only to one nation, but to the entire peoples of the world as a human being of exemplary character for them to emulate

Preserve the divine guidance in such a manner that it would be impossible to either hide any part of it, or to distort it

Be waited for by the Jews, Christians and the Ishmaelites, all wishing for him to be born among them.

Finally, this honour fell to the Ishmaelites who, despite being polytheists, possessed several good qualities and were in control of the centre made by Abraham (sws) for worship of God. The great Prophet of God, Muhammed (sws) was born amongst them, and he was the harbinger of a great Muslim nation that became responsible to carry God's word to other nations of the world until its end.

<u>The Family Tree</u>

the Ishmaelites had special arrangements to preserve information related to their lineage. They remembered not only their own but also those of other tribes. This is why historical books include the family trees of both men and women dating back to several generations. Prophet Muhammad (sws)'s family tree is as follows:

Muhammad ibn 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hāshim ibn 'Abd Munāf bin Qussay ibn Kilāb ibn Murrah ibn Ka'b ibn Luyyī ibn Ghālib ibn Fahr ibn Mālik in Nadr ibn Kanānah.

His mother was Āminah bint Wahb ibn 'Abd Munāf ibn Zahrah ibn Kilāb ibn Murrah. Thus, from Kilāb ibn Murrah, both mother and father's lineage merge onwards. Beyond Kanānah, this reaches Adnān and

then Ismā'īl (sws) finally. This lineage is one of the most respected ones in Arab families. Families are the backbones of an individual. Just as a gold mine produces gold and a silver one produces silver, families with good ancestral background produce individuals with high integrity. The Prophet (sws) has said:

God selected the Banū Kanānah from the children of Ismā'īl, and the Quraysh from within the Banū Kanānah. He decided to dignify the Banū Hāshim from within the Quraysh, and chose me from the Banū Hāshim.[1]

His father, 'Abdullāh, was 24 years old when his father, 'Abd al-Muttalib asked for the hand in marriage of the daughter of Wahb ibn Munāf, who was the leader of the Banū Zahrah. According to historians, Wahb had died a few years ago, and Āminah's guardian was her uncle, Wuhayb ibn Munāf. The latter agreed, and the two were married. Sometime later, 'Abdullāh joined a trade caravan going to Syria and his father asked him to make an agreement on trade of dates in Yathrib on the return journey. He stopped at Yathrib to do so, fell ill and was unable to travel. When his caravan returned to Makkah without him, his father was worried and sent his elder brother Hāris to take care of him and bring him back. When Hārith reached Yathrib, he found that 'Abdullāh had already passed away. Hārith came back with the tragic news. Muhammad (sws) was yet to be born.

Date of Birth

Historians agree that Muhammad (sws) was born on a Monday during the second week of the month of Rabī' al-Awwal. There is some disagreement on the date. The accepted date is the 12th, but research shows that if this is accepted, it does not conform to a Monday. Most historians have agreed on 9th Rabī' al-Awwal according to the Egyptian astronomer Mahmood Pasha. Qādī Suleymān Mansūrpurī has also mentioned this date in his book, Rehmat li al-'Ālamīn. The date conforms to 22nd of April, 571, AD, and 1st Jeth, 628, Bakrami.[2]

Fosterage

The Prophet (sws) was initially breastfed by his mother and Abū Lahab's slave Thūbiyah. It was a custom among the Quraysh that they sent their new born infants to the Bedouin tribes of the desert so that they would be nourished in the open air, away from the pollution of the city. Makkah's language, too, had become tainted with other languages from incoming traders of other regions and countries, and the Quraysh had to give special attention to the protection of their original language and to gain mastery over its purity. The tribe of Banū Sa'd that lived between Makkah and Tāi'f was known for the purity and command over its language, and its women often came to Makkah to take children who would be gladly given in their safe keeping so that the latter would learn to speak the original Arabic language.

Following this custom, when the Prophet's mother attempted to make arrangements for a foster mother from the tribe of Banū Sa'd, the latter were found to be hesitant, probably because of his fatherless state. They may have thought that they may not get adequate compensation in return. In any

case, a woman called Halīmah agreed to take him. Halīmah was extremely poor, and the camel she was riding was also very undernourished, which was the main reason why no rich women of the Quraysh had been willing to give her any of their own children. Thus, when Halīmah was unable to find a suitably rich child, she settled on the orphaned child. As a result, her home was filled with plentiful blessings, and she was never sorry about her decision. The Prophet (sws) stayed in the Banū Sa'd until the age of five. He would say to his companions later:

I speak better than all of you because I am from the Quraysh and my language is the language of Banū Sa'd ibn Bakr.[3]

Although Makkah was an international city where the language of Arabia and Yemen was understood, yet special care was taken to preserve the language within the Quraysh.

Mother's Death

When the Prophet (swsh) had spent a few years in the desert, Halīmah Sa'diyah brought him back to Makkah and at last he was able to bask in his mother's love. When he was six years of age, his mother took him to Yathrib, her purpose being, ostensibly, to visit her husband's grave. She stayed with the maternal relatives of 'Abd al-Muttalib, Banū 'Adī ibn al-Najjār for about one month. During this period, the Prophet (sws) had an opportunity to get to know Yathrib and its environs. On the return journey, his mother fell ill, and at a place called Abwā' on the way, she passed away. Umm Ayman, who was 'Abdullah's slave and was travelling with Āminah, brought him back to Makkah and took him under her care.

Being a member of the Banū Hāshim family, He now came under the guardianship of 'Abd al-Muttalib who showered much kindness upon him. He would take him to the Ka'bah and seat him next to himself. This situation held only for two years and when the Prophet (sws) was eight years old, his grandfather too died. As the pall bearers led his coffin out, he too walked behind, and cried as he remembered his grandfather's love and kindnesses.

'Abd al-Muttalib had made his eldest son his heir, so the Prophet came under his uncle's guardianship. It seems that from childhood, he was closer to this uncle, and he too loved him most. Many books on the Prophet's life have recorded the lullabies that he would sing to him. The Prophet (sws) remained under his protection during his lifetime.

Of all his uncles, he was the kindest to him. It is also said that 'Abd al-Muttalib had instructed him to look after him after his death.[4]

A battle was fought between the Banū Kanānah and Hawāzin under Zubayr. This battle is known by the name of Harb al-Fujjār. Zubayr participated in this as the rich leader of the Banū Hāshim. The Hilf al-Fudūl of which he was the driving spirit was signed during his time. The Prophet (sws) had also been a part of this agreement and he had been 20 years old at the time. When he married at the age of 25, the sermon had been given by Abū Tālib as the head of the family. This means that Zubayr had died when

the Prophet (sws) was 23-25 years old, and he had no need for further support. Thus he had spent his entire guardianship years with Zubayr.

Interests of Adolescence

The Prophet (sws) took camels and goats out for grazing as a pastime. Some researchers believe that this statement does not fit well with the narration of his circumstances. According to them, the youth of Quraysh were not given to adopting the profession of grazing camels. This work was done by slaves. In our view, there should be no problem in accepting that just as young boys show interest in every new hobby and try to gain familiarity with it, so would the Prophet (sws) have been interested, although he would not have adopted it as a profession. In the tribe of Banū Sa'd, shepherding was a livelihood choice, not a hobby of the boys. It is not any wonder that the Prophet (sws) would have become interested. Other boys too were engaged in it. When 'Umar (rta) was the caliph, a woman from Makkah had a complaint and said: "O' 'Umar, I have seen your days when you shepherded goats the whole day in 'Ukkāz and people called you O' Umayr, O' Umayr. Now that you are the caliph of Muslims, fear God in matters related to the public."[5] 'Umar (rta) had the responsibility of the department of ministries and he was highly influential in Makkah. Obviously he had not chosen shepherding as a profession. He probably would go with a shepherd out of interest.

The young men of Quraysh also learnt the skills of warfare. The Prophet (sws) was an excellent archer, swordsman, fencer and wrestler. These skills were put to use against the disbelievers in later phases. He was also a great ware strategist and to this day, planners pay tribute to his battle strategies. Obviously he must have obtained such training during his youth.

Hilf al-Fudūl

In the days gone by, when the Banū Jurham were in control of Makkah, some people came to an agreement with the aim of protecting the oppressed. Of those making the agreement, three carried the name Fadl and thus the agreement was called Hilf al-Fudūl. The agreement had been in abeyance for centuries, but many people had remembered it, and it came to light when the Prophet (sws) was 20 years old.

A trader from the tribe of Zubayd came to Makkah with his produce. One of the Quraysh lords, 'Ās ibn Wā'il made a trade agreement under which he took the products in his custody, but when the questions arose of payment, he started to make excuses. When the trader sought help from people he knew, no one was willing to speak out against 'Ās because of the latter's status. Dejected, he climbed the mount of Abū Qubays, calling out: "O children of Fahr! A person away from his home and without any support has been robbed of his belongings. The poor, wretched man is still in ihrām and has not yet performed the 'umrah. O ye who present yourselves between the sacred stone of Aswad and the Hatīm, come to

his help; for who is worthy of such a sacred and pure place, he who is truthful and sincere, or he who is deceitful and a usurper of rights?"

Zubayr ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib and others ran to the trader. When he explained his plight, they gathered at the house of the Quraysh lord 'Abdullah ibn Jad'ān at the behest of Zubayr. It was agreed that they would create a new agreement on the lines of the previous Hilf al-Fudūl, that would aim to: protect travelers; support those who need help; protect those who are weak against oppression by those who are strong, and stand with the oppressed ones without any discrimination between locals or foreigners. The tribes of Banū Hāshim, Banū Muttalib, Banū Asad, Banū Zahrah and Banū Tamīm were party to this agreement.

After this, everyone got together to convince 'Ās ibn Wā'il to give the Zubaydī trader what he owed to him. The agreement proved to be useful in settling subsequent matters too.

The Prophet (sws) participated in this agreement in his youth. After prophethood, he would say: "The agreement reached at the house of 'Abdullāh ibn Jada'ān is dearer to me than red camels. If I were to be invited to be party to another such agreement today, I would accept immediately."[6]

Earning a Livelihood

When the Prophet (sws) was old enough to start earning his own living, he began to travel for trade related purposes, as any other young man from the Quraysh. Some narratives about his trade travels indicate that his early travels were undertaken to Syria in the company of Abū Tālib. The fact is, however, that Abū Tālib was not a rich man. He could barely afford to maintain his own family. He was also lame and so it must have been difficult for him to travel. His source of income was the selling of perfume, or trade of grain.[7] It is difficult to believe that his nephew could have gone with him on long tours. However, since the Prophet (sws) was under the guardianship of Zubayr who was well to do and a well known trader, he might have gone with him to Syria, Yemen and Bahrain once old enough to do so. According to Ibn Kathīr, he went to Yemen at the age of 14. Initially, he would have travelled merely for company. Later, as he would have found a trade caravan, he would have taken some produce and gone along. The life histories include travels to Syria and Yemen, but several Ahādīth indicate that he must have seen many Arab countries, and that his knowledge of the countries was not based on what he had heard, but what he had seen for himself. Even the companions were often surprised of the extent of his knowhow about countries that only the residents of these countries would have known. It is likely, therefore, that his trade related travels could have been many more than what have been reported in historical books.

After the initial training on trade, he started his own trade based on the principles of partnership of capital investment by others, and his own services. He would take products from various traders of the city and travel to markets with caravans, sell the products, and on his return, take his share from the profits. He gained so much repute on his ability for judgment, honesty, truthfulness, sincerity and trustworthiness that he began to be called by the names of Sādiq and Amīn. No one would ever regret

doing business with him. His dealings were always managed with the greatest sense of responsibility. When one of the companions, Sā'ib ibn Sayfī 'Ā'iz Makhzūmī accepted Islam, people spoke of his integrity and the Prophet (sws) said that he knew him from the old days when he was dealing in trade. At this the companion said: "Indeed, you always kept matters straight." The same was said by Qays ibn Sā'ib Makhzūmī. Sā'ib was Khadījah (rta)'s first husband 'Atīq ibn Makhzūmī's nephew.

Marriage

After the death of Zubayr ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib, the Prophet (sws) thought of getting married. He was around 22-23 years old at the time. He requested for Abū Tālib's daughter Umm-i Hānī Hind's hand in marriage. It was at the same time that Hubayrah ibn Abī Wahab Makhzūmī from Abū Jahal's family also did the same. Abū Tālib decided in the latter's favour. When the Prophet (sws) asked for the reason why someone else was preferred over his nephew, the answer was that the equals of those who have a high status in society must be of equally high status.[8]

Thus the orphaned state of the Prophet (sws) and his not being well off became a barrier for this marriage. Abū Tālib had his daughter married into a strong and influential family. Her husband Hubayrah remained a self declared enemy of the Prophet (pbuh) and did not accept Islam. After the conquest of Makkah, he escaped towards the sea.

When the Prophet (sws) was 25 years old, possibilities for his marriage began to arise. Khadījah bint Khawaylid ibn Asad ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzā ibn Qusayy was a reputable lady from the Banū Asad tribe of the Quraysh. She had been married earlier to 'Atīq ibn 'Ā'iz Makhzūmī, with no offspring. She then married Abū Hālah Hind ibn Niyash Tamīmī, and had three sons, Hālah, Tāhir and Hind who were all companions.[9]

Khadījah would invest her capital in trade. She would give funds to any trader who travelled to Syria or Yemen, and on his return, she would take her profit from his earnings. Since the Prophet (sws)'s profession was also trade, she requested him if he could take her products to the markets and sell it, and take whatever profit accrued to him. The business that the Prophet (sws) managed with Khadījah (rta)'s capital thrived so much due to his exceptional abilities that she was very impressed. It is likely that he may have gone several times and not just once. She had sent her slave Maysarah with him one occasion, and on his return he praised his manners, behavior and attitude. According to various narratives, she was so pleased with what she heard that she decided to marry him, and sent a friend called Nafīsah to inquire about his wishes. He agreed.

It appears from the manner in which historians have recorded this event that Khadījah (rta) was a stranger and she heard of the Prophet's (sws)'s reputation and sent him for trade related travel, was impressed with the reports of her slave and gave a proposal of marriage. This is not so. Various tribes of Quraysh kept marrying into each other, and were often visiting each other as well. The Prophet (sws)'s aunt Safiyyah bint 'Abd al-Muttalib was Khadījah's sister-in-law, married to her brother 'Awwām bin Khawaylid. Hence this potential relationship would have been well known. It is possible that Safiyyah

may have initiated the proposal, and Khadījah (rta) may have accepted it, and then sent Nafīsah to speak with the Prophet (sws). When they married, Khadījah's (rta) walī was 'Amr ibn Asad because Khawaylid bin Asad had died. Abū Tālib read the sermon. The Prophet (sws)'s uncle, Hamzah bin 'Abd al-Muttalib was also present at the occasion.

According to biographers, Khadījah (rta) was 40 years old at the time of her marriage. But not everyone agrees with this. Ibn Kathīr has stated her age as 35, and others as 25. They have categorically said that at the time of her death, she was 50 years old, and so she must have been 25 when she married the Prophet (sws). In support of this, Ibn Kathīr has quoted the narratives of Bayhaqī. Dr. Hamīdullāh states that she was 28 years old.[10] Compared with 40 years, the age of 25 or 28 seems much more tenable. It was common in Arabia to get girls married early after puberty, as had happened in case of the prophet's own children and 'Ā'ishah (rta) herself. After the birth of three children, and death of a husband, a woman of high societal status did not stay unmarried for long. In a society practicing polygamy, there were plenty of men ready for marriage, and divorced or widowed women made no difference. This is why even the companions married widowed and divorced women several times.

Apart from this, the couple had two sons and four daughters. Considering that a woman's capacity to bear children is reduced drastically after the age of 40, Khadījah (rta) is likely to be 25 or 28 years of age when she married the Prophet (sws). According to Qādī Sulaymān's research, the Prophet's youngest son 'Abdullāh was born after prophet hood. If Khadījah (rta)'s had been 40 years old at the time of her marriage, she would have been 56 years old when 'Abdullāh was born, which is medically difficult to accept. In our view, Bayhaqī's narrative and Dr. Hamīdullāh's opinion is correct.

According to known records, the Prophet (sws) freed his father's slave-maiden, Umm-i Ayman, and Khadījah (rta) gave her slave, Zayd ibn Hārithah (rta) to her husband who freed him and adopted him. Zayd ibn Hārithah (rta) began to be called Zayd ibn Muhammad, and was treated with much love and kindness by the Prophet (sws). Zayd (rta) was not a slave by race, but a member of the tribe of the Banū Kilāb. He was kidnapped when he was a child and sold as a slave in Makkah. His relatives were informed of his presence in the Banū Hāshim. When his father and other relatives came to Makkah to claim him, the Prophet (sws) said to them that if the child wishes to go, he will not stop him. When Zayd (rta) was asked, he preferred to stay under the protection of the Prophet (sws).

Construction of the Ka'bah

When the Prophet (sws) was 35 years old, heavy floods caused much damage to the Ka'bah. The Quraysh decided that it should be rebuilt. It should be raised above the ground to keep it safe from floods. The building was without a roof and its walls were low. It was decided to raise it high and to give it a ceiling. They also decided that all tribes would participate in its construction and would put in their share from wealth earned from legitimate means. There would be no input from wealth that was gained unfairly or through usurping another's right. When this decision was reached, it so happened that a ship from foreign lands loaded with construction material got stuck in the sandy sea shore of Jeddah. When all efforts to steer it clear back to the sea failed, the ship bearers wanted to get rid of the material.

When the Quraysh came to know of this, they purchased the wood and other material and brought it to Makkah. They divided the pulling down of the existing structure between the different tribes, and then reconstruction on the same foundations started. When the walls were a few feet above ground, the stage was reached to install the ‘Hajr-i Aswad. Each tribe wanted to have the honour of doing so. Several suggestions were made but no settlement could be reached. The matter became one of heated debate, but before people would draw out their swords to settle it, an elder from the Quraysh suggested that any person belonging to Quraysh who enters first from the entrance of the Banū Shaybah be deemed as the arbitrator who should decide the matter. Everyone accepted this and all eyes turned to this entrance. The person to make the first entry was Muhammad (sws) who was known as Sādiq and Amīn, and who was the most trusted of all individuals. All those present were relieved to see him, satisfied that he would resolve the issue justly and fairly.

After assessing the situation, the Prophet (sws) laid out a blanket on the ground and placed the Hajr-i Aswad at its centre. He then asked the leaders of all the Quraysh tribes to lift the blanket from its sides, and then climbed the wall himself. When the blanket was raised, he took the stone and put it in its place. In such a manner, the issue that had begun to develop serious proportions was addressed through his wisdom and farsightedness.

The Abrahamic design of the Ka‘bah had two corners at the southern wall, and the northern wall was in the shape of a half circle. The funds collected by the Quraysh were insufficient for this construction. The northern wall was therefore left incomplete after filling in the foundations. The remaining square part was roofed, and its door was raised to the level of the ground. The half circle that had been left out still remains without a roof, and is called the Hatīm . Pilgrims consider it a great privilege to enter it and offer *nawāfil* there.

(*Translated from Hayāt-i Rasūl-i Ummī by Nikhat Sattar*)

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1. Muslim ibn al-Hajjāj, *Al-Jāmiʿ al-sahīh*, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār Ihyā' al-turāth al-ʻarabī, n.d.), 1782 (no. 2276).

2. Qādī Sulaymān Mansūpurī, *Rahmah li al-ʻĀlamīn*, vol. 2, 16.

3. Muhammad ibn Saʻd, *Al-Tabaqāt al-kubrā*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-fikr, n.d.), 76.

4. Ahmad ibn Yahyā ibn Jābir ibn Dā'ūd al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1996), 85.

5. Ibn ʻAbd al-Barr, *Al-Istīʿāb*, vol. 2, 723.

6. Ibn Saʻd, *Al-Tabaqāt al-kubrā*, vol. 1, 86.

7. Ibn Qutaybah, *Al-Maʻārif*, 249.

8. Ibn Saʻd, *Al-Tabaqāt al-kubrā*, vol. 6, 112.

9. Qādī Sulaymān Mansūpurī, *Rahmah li al-ʻĀlamīn*, vol. 2, 173-176.

10. Dr. Muhammad Hamīdullāh, *Rasūl Akram kī Siyāsī Zindagī*, 65.

CHAPTER 6

The status of prophethood brings huge responsibilities with it. Whosoever God wishes to impart this status to is also given special training from his birth. A prophet is entrusted to deliver messages related to the obligations of human beings towards each other and towards their Creator, the remembrance of divine instructions, and warns his people of the guidance that he receives from God. Such messages strike at the worldly interests of the people of the time. Most people, in general, and a specific group of people in particular resent the prophets and ultimately revolt against them. If the prophet has not faced resistance or difficulties earlier, or is unaware of how human beings behave under different situations, he may find it difficult to perform his task of prophethood effectively. Training is provided to him under God's supervision, and He provides special support and assistance, making extraordinary arrangements to help the prophet emerge from exceptionally difficult challenges in life.

The Pharaoh of Egypt was an extremely cruel and merciless ruler, who had forced his people to worship him as their god. When Moses (sws) was assigned to preach faith to him, he had been brought into the world under very hard conditions. The Pharaoh had given orders to kill all new born males of Moses (sws)'s family. God put the idea in his mother's heart to place the new born in a basket and cast it adrift in the river, leaving it to its destiny. As the basket went by the Pharaoh's palace, the latter's childless wife saw it, ordered it to be taken out of the water, and seeing a beautiful baby inside, insisted that she would bring it up herself. Thus Moses (sws) had the opportunity to be brought up in the king's court, among the elite of Egypt and understand their ways, and their approach to life. He observed the conflict between the Coptic Egyptians and the tribes of the Israelites from Kananah who had settled in Egypt, the latter's oppressed state and the former's aggression. Once in the city he saw an Egyptian torturing a Kananī, and in an attempt to free the latter, he hit out at the Egyptian. Unknowingly, he hit a fatal blow. Moses (sws) was deeply affected and asked God for his forgiveness. On advice from a sympathetic courtier, he left the city and went to Madyan, where he stayed for some time. He took employment to look after someone's sheep and goats, and learnt from their owner the art of preaching good. All these experiences were such that they honed his personality and brought depth and a deep calm to his character. When this training was completed, he was given prophethood, was instructed to preach in the court of the Pharaoh, and also told that he had been specially trained for this purpose. (Qur'an, 20:41)

Joseph (sws) had been subjected to the cruelty of his half brothers since childhood. This had made him strong in the face of adversity. When his brothers threw him in a blind well, God protected him, and gave him into the slavery of a rich man in Egypt. Here he learnt to handle his master's estate and also farming, storage and management of agricultural yield. He experienced the problems of bondage, and of being in jail without being guilty. Thus his exposure to such travails of life helped him to develop piety, patience and steadiness of purpose. This training was of much use to him when he was finally released from prison.

Muhammad (sws)'s Orphanhood

This is exactly what transpired also with Muhammad (sws), according to the established practice of God. When he was born, his father had already died and so he was deprived of a father's love and kindness. Orphans were often mistreated in Arab

society. They were considered to be without any backing or support and were easy prey for relatives who would usurp their inheritance, leaving them poor and wanting in material wealth.

The details of the difficulties that Muhammad (sws) had to face due to his being an orphan are not known to biographers. It does seem that he had a hard life. When according to the Quraysh custom, his mother tried to arrange for a foster mother from among the Banu Sa'd tribe, none were ready to take him because he was an orphan. Finally a poor nurse took him in for breastfeeding.

He had some time with his mother when he was brought back to Makkah after spending a few years in the desert, but this peaceful period was a short one. His mother took him to Yathrab and, on their way back, she died at Abwa', and he was once again orphaned. Had she remained alive, she would have made efforts to bring him up and ensure that he got an opportunity to get proper status in society. Now this chance was also lost. His grandfather 'Abd al-Muttalib took him under his wing. This situation, too, only lasted two years and when Muhammad (sws) was eight years old, his grandfather passed away. On account of being a member of the Banu Hashim family, he was under the general trusteeship of the tribe as a whole, but then he faced the responsibility of standing on his own feet. His father had died in his youth and had left no inheritance. Perhaps it was with reference to this time, when people were talking about other prophets being shepherds, he mentioned that he too had been engaged in grazing the goats of his family in Makkah.

A shepherd pays full attention to each and every animal of his herd. If any of the sheep or goats becomes lame, or is ill and refuses to eat, he devotes his time and care to it. If any strays away from the herd, he searches for it and gets it back safely. If wolves are to be found close to the grazing area, and they attack the herd, he keeps the necessary equipment with him ready to drive them away. The same process is also used to build the character of a human being. It is likely that God enabled his would be prophets to obtain training of shepherding animals so that they would learn how to take care of their people and protect them against the onslaught of satanic forces. Muhammad (sws) also said:

Each one of you is a shepherd, and shall be questioned about your herd.[1]

Because of this training, the Prophet (sws) kept in contact with each one of his companions separately and participated in what was happening in their lives, congratulating them in happiness, and commiserating with them in sorrow. Thus he gave them individual attention and trained them accordingly.

The Search for a Livelihood

When the Prophet (sws) reached an age when he was required to earn a living, he started to travel for purposes of trade, as other young men of the Quraysh did. These travels gave him the opportunity to see new lands, observe the ways of living of their people and learn of new trading arrangements. This training which was available to him in his early youth was of great benefit to him. Through it, he not only obtained direct knowledge of various regions of his own country, but of other places and the behaviour, attitudes, customs and traditions of the people living here. This knowhow was of much use to him when he was appointed to preach the faith and called upon to discuss and debate with individuals and groups on several matters.

Support to the Oppressed

The Prophet (sws) had the company of good people from the very beginning. Young men with high integrity and sense of moral values were his friends. He also had the opportunity to be involved in consultations and decisions making on matters with elders holding exemplary character. When he was only 20 years old, he participated in the agreement called hilf al-fadul with a group of individuals having high standing in society. This agreement and the group had a very good effect on society, and people became more receptive to helping the poor. Later, the Prophet (sws) would often speak of how much he had learned by working for this agreement.

When God aims to train his messengers and subjects them to harsh trials, He also demonstrates His great glory whereby no ill befalls His prophets. All the despicable schemes and plans of the Pharaoh to kill Moses (sws) could not harm him. Similarly, despite losing both father and mother in childhood, the Prophet's grandfather 'Abd al-Muttalib, uncle Zubayr and Abu Talib gave him love and support, although normally orphans were rejected and deserted by relatives, and not allowed to rise in the world. They faced extraordinary challenges to earn a decent living. But the Prophet (sws) managed to do all this and barriers began to lift for him one by one. His real wealth was the inner contentment related to matters of the spirit, and not to material resources. Referring to these blessings, the Qur'an, addressing the Prophet (sws), says:

Did He not find you an orphan and give you shelter? And found you wandering and guided you? And found you in need and enriched you? (6-8)

The purpose was that the Prophet (sws) should adopt an attitude of supporting orphans, sympathizing with the poor and the needy and taking care of them. This is the reason why we see so much benevolence and sympathy with the weak, ways to free slaves and love for orphans in the life of the Prophet (sws).

Religious Leanings

Another aspect of the training of apostles was that God would make sure that they were fully informed of the environment in which they were to present His teachings. They were aware of their beliefs, objects of worship and love, the perceived good and bad features of their characters and their moral weaknesses. They understood well their way of thinking and and their psychological make up. For example, Shu'ayb (sws)'s nation was involved with trade, so he was a trader too, and knew all the honest practices. They blamed him for creating barriers for them so that he could benefit his own trading operation. The people played underhand tricks. This is why when he as a messenger of God exposed their wrongdoings, they blamed him by saying that by casting moral allegations on their character he wanted to further his own interest at their expense. They were aware of his trade acumen and his ability for assessment. They were expecting him to use his experience and sharp wit to benefit them all, and were disappointed to see that he was trying to prevent them from enhancing their own profits by unfair means.

Abraham (sws) was born amongst people who were not only worshippers of idols, but were their sculptors and trustees of idol houses. Brought up in such an environment, he became thoroughly familiar with every aspect of the extent of adulation

and love that people had for these statues. After his prophethood, when he called on his people to accept the oneness of God, he used his access to the idol house and smashed all the idols there, thus showing them the futility of their worship.

Since Muhammad (sws) was to be made a prophet amongst the Ishmaelites, and he was to revive the nation of Abraham (sws), he was born in the central city of the Ishmaelites, Makkah, in the dignified and ruling tribe of the Quraysh. Thus he had full information about their dependence on the idols and their beliefs. He was also knowledgeable about all of the wrongs done to the tribes by each other. He made use of this vast knowledge of the tribes in Arabia after he was granted prophethood.

The Qur'an says that when Abraham (sws) decided to break all the statues in the Ka'bah's as a conclusive argument to his plea, his nation had prepared a fire in which to burn him. God saved him from this and asked him to migrate from the place. While leaving, Abraham (sws) expressed his disgust openly at his people and at their polytheism. God liked this expression so much that He ordered it to remain as a tradition in his future generations forever. Good people continued to pass it on to their descendants. This is why although, with the passage of time, polytheism had become a way of life with the Ismaelites, there was still a group left who followed the faith of its original ancestor and kept firm to his hatred of shirk. This group was known as hanīf during the times of the jahilliyah. These people worshipped the Ka'bah and tried to follow only the traditions that came to them in their original form from Abraham's time, but criticized the innovations that had crept in later. They were honest, with high moral values, sympathetic to the poor, providing support in good deeds and staying away from immoral ones. The Prophet (sws) was a prominent member of this group before the divine revelation. He would never participate in the polytheistic customs and immoral activities of his people. His actions were always those of one with integrity, honesty and truthfulness. As such, people held him with a lot of respect and regard.

Search for the Truth

It should be remembered that the first source of guidance for man is the voice of his own conscience. The people who are chosen by God for prophet hood are blessed with the qualities of a nature that always follows the path of true morality from the beginning. Such individuals believe in the oneness of God and the Day of Judgment, and are well aware of the difference between good and evil, and wrong and right of human actions that have been ingrained within their nature. In spite of this, such a fire for knowledge burns inside them that they wish to arrive at the absolute truth so that they can accept it with an open mind and make it their guiding light. It has been stated in Surah Hud that Salih (sws) and Shu'ayb (sws) told their people that even before they had been made apostles, they were on the path of a "clear evidence," ie. the purity of their nature had directed them towards the path of their Lord, and their heart had given evidence that it was the true path. They were able to declare that assigning any partner to God and other criminal acts were wrong. Afterwards when God sent His wahī upon them, the voice of their nature was reinforced multifold. The knowledge that they had gained through the wahī caused it to become stronger and brighter. This was the addition of the light of the wahī over that of their nature.

This is also true in case of Muhammad (sws). His life was one of uprightness and highest morality. Despite living in the centre of idol worship, he remained aloof and untouched by the evils of polytheism. It has been narrated that the people belonging to the hanīf group of Makkah would lean against the walls of the Ka'bah, and pray thus: "Our Lord, we do not know how to worship You: if we did, we would have done so accordingly." Muhammad (sws) was in this condition of bewilderment and uncertainty, as is referred to in the Qur'an.

You did not know the Scripture before this, nor the laws of faith. (42:52)

The reason for this is that, whatever the concept of faith, unless a man is aware of the details, he remains concerned about whether what he is doing is right or not, if it is according to the truth and whether it is acceptable to God. He is only at peace when he is completely convinced of the true path that he is to follow. A divine Book meets this need. It clarifies the requirements and demands of faith and provides practical ways of practicing faith. After the revelation of the Book, man can use the guidance that his own nature provides judiciously and adopt a religious life style. It is a requirement of the status of prophethood that the prophet achieve the highest level of wisdom and understanding of faith and religious matters. Each and every matter should be as clear to him as if he sees it with his own eyes. Once he has fully accepted the faith, he is ready to preach to his addressees with full belief and certainty. Until the need for divine guidance through wahī is satisfied, the prophet is in constant search of the truth. The Qur'an mentions this state of mind of the Prophet (sws) in the following words:

Did He not find you perplexed, and show you the way? (93:7)

Worship at Night

In this search for truth, Muhammad (sws) would offer other Abrahamic rituals of worship such as the prayer, the fast, circumambulation, hajj and animal sacrifice and reflect deeply over what the truth could be. He became reclusive and he started to stay away from the city, spending time in meditation in a cave at the top of a mountain. He would take some edibles, stay in the cave of Hira and return to his family when his supplies were finished. This going and coming continued for a long time. There were others also who spent time away from their families and friends, praying and meditating, reflecting and thinking about God and the truth of life and their existence. This form of worship and deep reflection prepared Muhammad (sws) and purified his heart to receive the light of the divine revelation.

It will not be correct to say that this form of worship is similar to that which priests or soothsayers use to meditate or go into trances as a part of their training. Such individuals spend a lifetime in developing skills in their chosen profession and the world knows about their desires. People who know them are well aware of their training and see them build up their skill step by step. The situation with prophets is very different. They have no desire to acquire any skills. The status of prophethood is not an acquired one, nor is it skill oriented. It is a gift from God. A prophet is not a disciple; he does not obtain training on how to meditate from any teacher, and he has no thought in his mind that he is, in any way, eligible or worthy of being a prophet. Also, such an experience is not an ordinary one or one that one can learn from the example of others. Only those have experienced it to whom God wished to grant this lofty status. This is why the early experiences that a prophet goes through are completely novel, strange and unfamiliar to him. Hence, one of the features of his training by God is that he is subjected to some extraordinary situations that could familiarize him with certain aspects of prophethood.

Dreams giving Glad Tidings

After passing the stage of purification of his soul through solitary worship, another change that came upon Muhammad (sws) was that he started having dreams bearing good tidings. These were as bright as the light of dawn after a dark night. These had a powerful effect on him. It seems that the purpose of such dreams was to prepare him to be strong enough in heart and mind to bear the blessings of being one with the angels and being a recipient of the divine light.

Ray of Light

According to authentic books, once when Muhammad (sws) was engrossed in his prayers and spiritually linked to his Lord, an angel appeared suddenly, and said, “read.” He answered: “I cannot read.” At this, the angel embraced him so tightly that he started to hurt him. He let him go and asked him again to read. He replied again that he could not. The angel caught him in an even tighter embrace that hurt him extremely. He was once again instructed to read and he gave the same answer. The angel embraced him for the third time and said: “Read, in the name of your Lord, Who created man from a particle of blood. Read and your Lord is highly Merciful.” Having said this, the angel disappeared.

Muhammad (sws) was very perturbed by the entire episode and came home, trembling. In great fear and distress, he asked his wife to put a blanket over him. When he had recovered somewhat, his wife inquired about the reason for his anguish. He told her, and expressed fear for his life. She consoled him, reassuring him by saying that he maintained links with relatives, was truthful, bore the burden of the weak, was hospitable, took care of the poor and helped those affected by disasters; why should God put his life in danger? She was certain that this incident would bring good news for him, and suggested that her cousin, Warqah ibn Nawfal who was a scholar, a very righteous man and had knowledge of the holy books should be told and asked for advice. The Prophet (sws) liked this suggestion and went to Warqah ibn Nawfal, telling him the whole story. He said that he thought the same angel who had come to Moses (sws) had also come to him. Then he expressed the wish to be alive when the Prophet’s people would banish him from this city. Muhammad (sws) was astonished at this, and asked whether they would do this to him, at which he replied that whoever had brought such a message earlier had been treated to the same fate by his people.

Warqah ibn Nawfal was one of the people belonging to the hanīf group of Makkah. He was a truth seeking individual, who, after much research and thought, had realized that the true faith was with the Christians. He had converted to Christianity, learned Hebrew and was able to read and understand the Torah. Thus he was aware of God’s instructions and the predictions about the last prophet in the holy books. He had become old by that time and died soon after.

From this authentic narrative that appears with a little variation of words in both Sahīh Bukharī and Sahīh Muslim, we can deduce the following:

1. Muhammad (sws) himself does not say that an angel had appeared before him. This is a narration by a third person. The angel did not introduce himself. That is why the Prophet was curious to find out who he might have been from a more knowledgeable person. Warqah ibn Nawfal, having read of similar situations with other prophets, knew what may have happened to Muhammad (sws).

2. Even though he knew that the signs were those of a divine revelation, Warqah ibn Nawfal did not tell Muhammad (sws) that he has been made a prophet. That is, he did not accept his prophethood yet.

3. Warqah ibn Nawfal was a truthful man, and it was his search for the truth that had led him to adopt Christianity as his faith. If it had been clear to him that Muhammad (sws) was a prophet, he would not have hesitated to accept him and declare his faith, thus attaining the status of being the first one to do so. Instead, he assailed his ill health, and expressed a desire to be alive until the success of the Prophet (sws). Thus, in the incident of the cave, he saw signs of future prophethood for Muhammad (sws).

4.The only demand made by the angel was "read." This word is used in Arabic to read by oneself, as well as to read out aloud to others. The word has been used in the latter sense in the Qur'an several times. In this form, it would mean to read out aloud to others. This is thus an explanation of the responsibilities of a prophet to communicate the message of God to other people.

5. The angel gave an instruction, but did not explain what was to be read. He left this unsaid, and disappeared. Muhammad (sws) repeatedly told him that he was illiterate; what could he read out to others? In contrast, when Moses (sws) saw a bright light on a tree and went close, he realized that he was designated a prophet from the very first wahī, and that he was required to correct the beliefs of his people and establish forms of worship amongst them. He did not need to carry out any questioning or research to determine this fact.

6. The angel embraced the Prophet (sws) thrice, probably with the aim of opening up his chest so that he was able to read, but this did not happen. He was not able to do so in later life either. We need to determine another purpose for this act of the angel.

7. There is no evidence in biographical books or the Hadīth that the Prophet (sws) may have started preaching immediately after the incident of Hira. He was unsure of his own status, and did not have any message to pass on to others.

In view of the above points, we can conclude that this experience was a part of his training, and an introduction to the angel of wahī. The Prophet (sws) was thus informed that such an angel would come to him in the future to give him a message from God which he would be required to communicate to his people. It is not correct to claim that the incident in the cave was the beginning of prophethood, or that the first wahī was revealed here.

As far as the angel addressing and embracing Muhammad (sws) several times is concerned, Amīn Ahsan Islahī explains it thus:

It is an extremely delicate matter for a human being to come into contact with a spiritual force. It becomes necessary to make one's heart and mind ready and able by frequent meetings, frequent contact and frequent connections. The angel embracing him, and then letting him go many times could mean that he wished the prophet to become familiar with his being and voice and to be comfortable with him. The idea was that when the next meeting happened, the prophet would be reassured that it was not the devil but his old friend who had reappeared.[2]

This means that the wahī was only meant as an introduction to the angel, and the matter of the main wahī, and the designation of prophethood was left to a later date.

According to narratives, the angel did not reappear for a long time. This period is often called the breaking of the wahī, which is an incorrect term, in our view. How could the wahī be broken off when it had not begun in the first place? Actually, wahī began when the angel came for the second time, and this was after some time had lapsed.

The reason why the incident of the cave is cited as the revelation of the wahī is the narration that ascribes the first few verses of Surah ‘Alaq to the angel when he embraced Muhammed (sws). Some questions arise at this that remain unanswered:

1. If Muhammad (sws) had received the wahī, why was he doubtful about his prophethood and why did he go to Warqah ibn Nawfal and ask what had happened to him? He should have said with full conviction that he had received divine revelation in such and such words and been ordered to communicate it. But he did not.

2. When Moses (sws) received the wahī, he was explained the basic elements of faith and given instructions related to his responsibilities. In contrast, if Muhammad (sws) was given Surah ‘Alaq, he was told to read, but there was no message here. It contains only a few attributes of God.

3. The ummah has not unanimously accepted Surah ‘Alaq being the first wahī. Sahīh Muslim narrates from Yahya: “I asked Abu Salamah, which part of the Qur’an was revealed first?” He said: “Surah Muddaththir.” I asked: “Not Surah Iqra?” He said: “He had asked the same question of Jabir bin ‘Abdullah who had said “Surah Muddaththir.” When I asked: “Did Surah Iqra not come first?” He said: “I am saying what I have heard Muhammad (sws) say.”[3]

From this narrative it becomes clear that this difference of opinion had begun in the early days, when some people regarded Surah Iqra to be the first wahī, and others took Surah Muddaththir to be the first, with reference to the Prophet (sws). The latter surah includes some instructions for the Prophet (sws) and tells him to preach. This is not true for Surah Iqra.

It seems, therefore, that the narrative describing verses of Surah ‘Alaq to be the first wahī is not very dependable. Here, the opinion of Amin Ahsan Islahī is worth noting:

The instruction to read by beginning in the name of God is very significant. The predictions about Muhammad (sws) in ancient books say that the last prophet would preach in the name of His Lord (here the Mawlana has copied verses 8:18-19) of the Book of Exemption which is based on this prediction)…. If we accept that the angel had only said “read, in the name of your Lord”, this is an indication of the fulfillment of this prediction. In this case, it is correct for Muhammad (sws) to say that he does not know what it is that he has to read, and for the angel to say that he must read in the name of his Lord, He will tell him what to read. In my view, the angel had said: “Read, in the name of your Lord,” and his purpose was to prepare thes Prophet (sws) to read out the message of God to people.[4]

The Prophet’s Nervousness

A question arises as to why the Prophet was (sws) so nervous when faced with the angel that he left his prayers and went home in a state of fear and panic. It was only after some time that he was able to talk and relate to his wife what had

happened. We believe that he was fully occupied in his worship and his mind free of any other thought or plans. He had no foresight of any divine spirit appearing before him in such a manner. He was thus unnerved by this unfamiliar experience. It was not also made clear to him why the angel had appeared.

The Prophet (sws) was going through a training period here. On the other hand, Moses (sws) already knew that he had been made a prophet and was given his instructions. But when he implemented the miracle of his stick becoming a snake, he became frightened and ran away and did not look back. He had not foreseen that this would happen. He was reassured and told that prophets were not supposed to be frightened.

Such conditions faced by prophets are temporary. When they receive wahī again and again, they become fully satisfied that their experiences are from God and they are being appointed for a very special task.

(Translated from Hayat-i Rasul-i Ummī by Nikhat Sattar)

1. Muslim ibn al-Hjjaj, Al-Jami‘ al-sahīh, vol. 2, 125.

2. Amīn Ahsan Islahī, Taddabur-i Hadīth, Sharh Sahīh Bukharī, vol. 2 (Lahore: Idarah Tadabbur-i Qur’an u Hadīth, 2002), 28.

3. Muslim ibn al-Hjjaj, Al-Jami‘ al-sahīh, vol. 1, 80.

4. Amīn Ahsan Islahī, Taddabur-i Hadīth, Sharh Sahīh Bukharī, vol. 1, 29.

CHAPTER 2

The Beginning of *wahi*

It has been explained earlier that the issue of the first revelation of the Qur'an had been raised during the times of the companions. Some people considered these to be the first verses of Surah 'Alaq, but Jabir ibn 'Abdullah (rta) insisted that when he asked the Prophet (sws) himself, he said that the initial verses of Surah Muddaththir had been revealed first. The Prophet (sws) further explained that he had stayed in the cave of Hira for one month as usual. When this period was over, he came down to the valley and felt as if someone had called him. He looked sideways, in front and behind him but could not see anyone. Then he heard the voice again, he raised his head and saw the same angel who had come to him when he was in the cave, sitting on a throne with great dignity. The Prophet (sws) was so overcome that he started to tremble.[1] He came home and asked his wife to cover him with a blanket. Some narratives describe the event as the angel descending from the heavens and coming as close to the Prophet (sws) as a teacher is to a student. Then he bowed and revealed the verses gracefully and with full concentration.

The Qur'an has also mentioned the event when the Prophet (sws) was awarded prophet hood, and it explains that seeing the angel or experiencing the *wahi* was neither a hallucination nor a figment of his imagination. His wisdom and intellect was such that he immediately understood the message of the *wahi*. The angel communicated the message of God just as it was to be communicated,[2] and after this, the process of *wahi* continued with regularity.

It is difficult to be absolutely certain about the order of revelation of the verses. If we are to believe Jabir (rta), the first *wahi* was:

O you who covers himself [with a garment], arise and warn, and glorify your Lord and purify your apparel of the heart, and avoid the filth [of polytheism]. (74:1-5)

In our view these verses were such that they could have formed the beginning of the *wahi*. They include instructions to the Prophet (sws) to get up and face people with courage, preach the glory of God and stay away from the filth of polytheism, instead of shying away from responsibility and hiding under a blanket. It mentions clearly the real role of a prophet, that of bringing a warning. This means that the prophet would call people towards divine guidance and if they rejected it, he would warn them of dire consequences and instill fear of what might happen if they continued to refuse to accept his message.

The first *wahi* was revealed in the month of Ramadan during the night of the 27th (laylah al-qadr). This is also clear from the Qur'an, as is the fact that God has designated this night for the more significant matters regarding the universe. Since the revelation of the Qur'an was the most important event for the benefit of humanity, this night (that is more significant than 1,000 nights) was chosen to begin its

revelation. Additionally, arrangements were made to set up barriers against the entry of demonic forces, including jinn that could have attempted to prevent Gabriel from reaching the Prophet (sws).

The first appearance of the angel which was for the purpose of introduction and the second one to give the news of prophethood was spaced out by a few weeks. Some people have taken this to be a break in *wahi*, and have considered the period to be three years. If prophethood was to be suspended for three years, why would it have been initiated to begin with? There should have been some reason which is not at all obvious. We believe that Jabir's (rta) narrative is the correct one and that when the Prophet (sws) was designated as such, the *wahi* started on a regular basis and he began to preach to his people.

The State of *wahi*

According to various Ahadith, the Prophet (sws) would hear bells ringing or a sound similar to the buzzing of bees. When his attention was focused towards the sound, the *wahi* would exude from the same sounds. In such a state, he would perspire profusely and his limbs would tremble. When he calmed down, his mind would have registered the wording of the *wahi* fully.[3]

People around him saw the physical changes in his body, but no one could understand what was happening to his inner self. This was a matter between him and Gabriel. Only the Prophet (sws) could hear the bells or the buzzing of the bees while his companions would be unaware of the sounds. It is possible that these sounds were made to call him to attention and remained until the message of *wahi* was complete. As far as physical manifestations are concerned, they occurred because the Prophet (sws) was disconnected during that period from human beings and in communication with the divine world through the angel. This caused him much physical strain. Biased western historians have attributed this condition to a fit of epilepsy. They could not be more wrong in this claim. Epileptic patients faint during such fits and on gaining consciousness are unable to talk with any clarity. The Prophet (sws) not only did not faint after the *wahi*, but recited the verses that had just been revealed to those present, explained the same in detail, gave instructions on their implementation according to the guidance they provided and addressed the problems that were presented. The *wahi* was a source of strength and spiritual satisfaction for him and gave him renewed vigour for his work. He had been appointed as an emissary to deliver the message of *wahi* to friends and foes, supporters and enemies and waited eagerly for new revelations to arrive.

The Initiation of Preaching

When a prophet is designated within a nation, his first act is to address his people and give them the message from God to reject their wrong ways and submit themselves to their Creator. Towards this end, he makes a plea to their good nature, warns them about evil deeds, advises and exhorts them to follow the straight path according to God's instructions and guides the nation in its spiritual and intellectual development. None of this work is to be done in hiding. The responsibility of a prophet is not to cause a

revolution that requires him to go underground, keeping his efforts hidden from others, creating a rebellious group of people who would set up his new proposed system by destroying the existing one within the nation. The nature of a prophet's responsibility is such that although he may wish to have all of his people hark to his call, it does not really matter how many do listen to him, and which strata of society they belong to; how many they were before, and how many they are at present. This is the reason why only a few people were followers of some prophets; the rest of their people rejected their message, yet the prophets were successful in fulfilling their responsibilities.

A prophet does not meet any need of his own when he preaches to his people to come to the faith. This responsibility is bestowed upon him by the Lord of the Universe, who also gives him a plan to deliver His message. The messenger works within the boundaries of this plan. Whenever he tends to step beyond these boundaries, God guides him and brings him back. Because this work is full of danger to life, God takes responsibility for his safety and security, protecting and consoling him in difficult times. Hence the prophet is not afraid of the reaction of his people, and has no need to keep his preaching hidden from the public eye. When Moses (sws) was in Egypt, he inadvertently killed a Coptic. The Pharaoh was resentful of the Israelites, and hence held Moses (sws) guilty of the crime of murder. When God bestowed upon him prophet hood and gave him instructions to go to the Pharaoh and give him His message to correct his ways as he had become very wayward, Moses (sws) did not prepare any secret plan, but went to the King's court openly. The Pharaoh had referred to the killing and it was likely that he may have been arrested, but God had instructed,

Fear not. Indeed, I am with you both. I hear and see. (20:46)

It is surprising how biographers of the greatest of all human beings and prophets seem to have created an impression and Muslims have accepted it that for three years after prophet hood, he preached out of the public eye, secretly. This just does not match with the ways of prophets as we know them and is also against the facts as established. If he did so for fear of repercussions from the Quraysh, did he not have the promise of safety from God that had been available to all prophets before him? The question also arises as to whether when he started preaching openly after three years, had the resentment from his tribesmen died down? Or had he grouped so many individuals during this period that he could have faced the Quraysh if necessary? History is witness to the fact that none of these reasons is a valid one. If we accept that the Prophet (sws) was slow in bringing God's message to his people, this could be considered an oversight in meeting a responsibility given by God, and this is an absolutely baseless allegation against the dignity and character of the Prophet (sws). Biographers have not been able to provide any other reason for secret preaching. In our view, no part of the Prophet's struggle remained hidden. He worked exactly according to the plan that was given to him by God, and that was to be carried out in a phased manner.

And lower the kindness of your shoulder to your relatives and those who follow you of the believers. And if they disobey you, then say: “Indeed, I am disassociated from what you are doing.” And rely upon the Exalted in Might, the Merciful, Who sees you when you arise. (26:214-217)

According to this plan, the Prophet (sws) was to begin the invitation to faith with his close relatives, ie. the Quraysh. Those who would accept were to be treated with kindness and love and protected from any repression of the polytheists. In later stages, the preaching was to be carried out with full thrust, and an open declaration of action against those who would insist on remaining on the path of polytheism. Throughout this effort he was instructed to remain steadfast and trust in God who is All Powerful and has full control over His plans.

The Prophet (sws) started his work by following the principle of naturally communicating with those nearest to him. He first related his new responsibility to his wife, Khadijah (rta) who already held him with complete respect due to his purity of character and attitude. The news did not come as a surprise to her and she immediately accepted his invitation to the faith. Then it was communicated to his family, including his daughters Zaynab (rta), Ruqqayyah (rta) and freed slave and adopted son Zayd ibn Harithah (rta) who accepted Islam. The Prophet’s third daughter, Umm Kulthum was too young and according to the research conducted by Qadi Sulayman Mansurpuri, Fatimah (rta) had not been born yet. ‘Ali (rta) was only eight years old. In any case, the young ladies and ‘Ali (rta) were brought up in the cradle of Islam and as they grew older, made Islam their purpose in life. [4]

Outside his home the Prophet (sws) had a vast network of friends, admirers and well wishers to whom he now paid attention. As they realized the truth of the Islamic teachings, not only did they accept Islam themselves, but they also brought their families and friends within its fold. The fact that they belonged to all families of the Quraysh can be seen from the lists of those who were among the firsts to accept Islam, found in authentic biographies. These names are according to the Quraysh tribes:

Banu Hashim: Ja‘far ibn Abi Talib (rta) with his wife Asma’ bint ‘Umays (rta).

Banu Muttalib: ‘Ubaydah ibn al-Harith (rta).

Banu ‘Abd al-Shams: ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan (rta); Khalid ibn Sa‘id ibn al-‘As (rta); Sulayt ibn ‘Amr; Abu Hudhyafah ibn ‘Utbah ibn Rabi‘ah (rta).

Banu Asad: Zubayr ibn al-‘Awwam (rta); Khadijah bint Khawaylid (rta).

Banu Makhzum: Abu Salamah ibn ‘Abd al-Asad; ‘Ayyash ibn Abi Rabi‘ah with his wife Asma’ bint Salamah (rta); Arqam ibn ‘Abd Munaf (rta)

Banu Taym: ‘Abdullah ibn Abi Qahafah (Abu Bakr (rta)); Talhah ibn ‘Ubaydullah; Asma’ bint Abu Bakr (‘A’ishah (rta) had not reached maturity)

Banu Zahra': 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf (rta); Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, 'Umayr ibn Waqqas; Khubab ibn al-Arth (ally); 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (rta) (ally).

Banu 'Addi: Sa'id ibn Zayd (rta) with his wife Fatimah bint Khattab (rta)

Banu Jumh: 'Uthman ibn Maz'un (rta), Qudamah ibn Maz'un (rta) and 'Abdullah ibn Maz'un (rta).

Banu Sahm: Khunays ibn Hudhafah (rta).

Banu Asad ibn Khuzaymah: 'Abdullah ibn Jahash, Abu Ahmad ibn Jahash and Zaynab bint Jahash.

Banu Harith: Abu 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah.

Apart from the above, slaves are listed as 'Ammar ibn Yasir, Yasir with wife Sumayyah (rta), 'Amir ibn Fahira and Suhayb ibn Sanan (rta) among the earliest companions. According to the older biographies, the number of Muslims had reached 100-125 by the fifth year of prophethood. Was it possible that the teaching that touched the hearts and minds of the best among all tribes of the Quraysh could have been kept secret? Could the religion of so many people have remained under cover for three years that the leaders of the Quraysh had no idea so that they could make an attempt to stop it from spreading further?

Looking at it from another perspective, the Prophet (sws) was not only right in front of the Quraysh leadership, but also addressing them, because they were his tribe and people. The pace of accepting Islam by people was absolutely natural. They would come to see him, talk to him, listen to his viewpoint, and as they pondered over his invitation, there was nothing to stop them from accepting it. At the beginning, the leaders of the tribe did not create any resistance to the Prophet (sws), but tolerated what he was doing. Perhaps this is why some people believe that his preaching was conducted initially in a secretive manner. The reasons for such a response from the Quraysh are possibly the following:

Firstly, God's message was revealed to the Prophet (sws) in stages. Initially, its purpose was to awaken the inner goodness of man's nature, and create hatred for social evils. To do this, their attention was called towards gratitude to God, recognition of the rights of others, taking care of the poor and needy, kindness to orphans and attention to principles of morality. For example, note the following verses:

No! But you do not honor the orphan. And you do not encourage one another to feed the poor. And you consume inheritance, devouring [it] altogether, And you love wealth with immense love. (89:17-20)

Have We not made for him two eyes? And a tongue and two lips? And have shown him the two ways? But he has not broken through the difficult pass. And what can make you know what is [breaking through] the difficult pass? It is the freeing of a slave or feeding on a day of severe hunger, an orphan of near relationship, or a needy person in misery. And then being among those who believed and advised one another to patience and advised one another to compassion. (90: 8-17)

That your endeavour is for different ends. Yet he who gives to others and fears God, and affirms goodness, We shall ease the way of fortune for him. But he who does not give and is unconcerned, and rejects goodness, for him We shall ease the way of adversity. (92:4-10)

All pious Arabs were aware of and accustomed to the high moral principles that were expounded in the Qur'an and therefore this did not disturb anyone within the Quraysh. In fact, they considered these teachings as being desirable activities of a popular and well loved reformer.

Secondly, there was already a tradition of following the faith of Abraham (sws), and worshipping one God. The number of such people may not have been large, but they proclaimed their faith openly in front of the Ka'bah and society tolerated them. The Prophet (sws) was one such person, and additionally he was also the most upright, of the highest morals, with exemplary behavior towards others, integrity and conscientiousness and mentor of his people. They valued him and had confidence in him. When he began his teachings, their nature was such as to extenuate his virtues in their eyes, and hence created no problems. This was the same situation as it was with Abraham (sws) when he had begun to warn his nation against worship of idols, they had not resisted him. Even when he had demolished the idols in the Ka'bah, the priests wondered who the culprit might have been, and instead of naming him with certainty, only expressed a vague suspicion, saying:

We heard a youth talk about them. He is called Abraham. (21:60)

In other words, the man who had been criticizing idols may have been responsible for this act. It was only when the Prophet (sws)'s teachings brought forth aspects that had a direct negative bearing on the interests of the Quraysh, and they felt that their established religious system could be impacted that they changed their response to his preaching.

Thirdly, the Arabs led a tribal life. Each family was responsible for protecting and providing for its members. Other tribes and families would be wary of causing any harm to any member of another tribe, for fear of how they would circumvent the wrath and desire for revenge of his family, and what would be the recompense. Whenever the Quraysh thought of crushing the movement for conversion to Islam among its tribes by force, they were faced by the problem of addressing the anger of affected families. The tradition of supporting their own and avenging any wrong to their members was so strong among Arabs that when the tribes of Aws and Khazraj of Yathrab accepted Islam and offered to take the Prophet (sws) with them, they took an undertaking from him first that those individuals who had already converted to Judaism would not be harmed. And so the Prophet (sws) agreed to the same rights for Jews as for the Muslims.

(*Translated from Hayat-i Rasul-i Ummi by Nikhat Sattar*)

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1. Muslim, Al-Jami‘ al-sahih, vol. 1, 80.

2. The Qur’an, (53:1-10).

3. Al-Bukha#ri#, Al-Jami‘ al-sahih, vol. 1, 4.

4. Qadi Sulayman Mansupuri, Rahmah li al-‘Alamin, vol. 81; Ibid. 123.

CHAPTER 8

Instructions to Warn the Quraysh

The tolerance towards the Prophet (sws) by the Quraysh was only a temporary phase. As soon as the Qur'an began to criticize the trustees of the Baytullah and their wrongdoings were publicized, they started to openly condemn his teachings and create barriers to further his work. The Qur'an instructed the Prophet (sws) to warn his relatives and other members of his tribe. This meant that he was to ask them to give up their previous ways and accept the teachings of Islam, or else be ready to face the consequences. Close members of the family were not just the Banu Hashim but all the families who were in charge of the management of the Baytullah, including its security and religious arrangements. This, in fact, covered all the tribes of the Quraysh. The purpose of this warning was to enable the trustees of the Baytullah to take benefit from it, correct their ways and pave the way for other Arabs too to accept Islam because they were deemed to be the religious leaders in the region. When they accepted a religious invitation, others followed soon. And until they did, they continued to create confusion and chaos among others through negative propaganda.

We must remember that Abraham (sws) had built the Baytullah as the centre for the worship of one God, and assigned responsibility for prayers, *a'tikaf*, *hajj* and animal sacrifice as well as care of pilgrims to his children. The situation now was that his progeny had stood up to protect polytheism and crush the voice for the oneness of God within the same Baytullah. Had these people accepted the invitation from the Prophet (sws), the Baytullah would have been reverted to the same condition that Abraham (sws) had desired and prayed for with such fervour.

The Prophet (sws) adopted all possible ways to obey the above instruction in the Qur'an, including one that was very commonly used among the Arabs. It was a custom amongst them to appoint a guard who would stand on a hill and keep a lookout for any approach from enemies. If he sensed a hostile approach, he would give a loud shout: *ya sabaha*! that meant the oncoming of danger. Hearing this, people would run out from their homes, ask the guard what was amiss and what the nature of the danger was. If an attack was imminent, they would prepare for it accordingly. One morning, when the Prophet (sws) stood on the mountain of Safa' and called out, *ya sabaha*! everyone wondered who was warning them. When they found out, they gathered around Safa'. The Prophet (sws), addressing them, said "I am giving you a warning. I am similar to a guard who keeps a watch out for the enemy, and when he sees that the enemy is near, calls out the warning. I am warning you against a fearful repercussion. O' Banu Ka'b, save yourselves from Hell; O' Banu Murrah ibn Ka'b save yourselves from Hell; O'Banu ibn 'Abd Shams, save yourselves from Hell; O Banu 'Abd Munaf, save yourselves from hell; O' Banu 'Abd al-Muttalib, save yourselves from hell; I have no powers with God about you but I am related to you and I shall continue to fulfil my obligations to you." The voice that was raised against him was that of Abu Lahab, who said, "May you perish. Was this why you called us?"[1]

The second time he warned them was when he invited them all to a meal. When they had finished, he tried to address them but Abu Lahab intervened and said that he was trying to cast his spell over them. He stood up to leave and others also stood up with him. The Prophet (sws) did not get the opportunity to present his invitation. However, from then onwards, he started to discuss the warning in public and this disturbed the leaders of the Quraysh considerably.

The Nervousness of Quraysh and their Repression of Muslims

The Phase of Torture on Muslims

The leaders of the Quraysh saw that the message being presented by Muhammad (sws) was extremely appealing; it was linguistically unique and held great wisdom. It brought forth new requirements for thought and fresh demands for reflection, and soon began to strike at the roots of the polytheist way of life. People were beginning to listen to these teachings and were being influenced by them, and the leaders were afraid that there could be a general rebellion against them in the society. The quickest way to prevent this was to inflict hardships on people and make life difficult for them. However, the barrier to this was the tribal system itself that did not allow any individual to harm anyone from another tribe. The decision was taken, therefore, for each leader to discipline those who had been influenced from within their own families. In this, the first targets were the slaves. When one reads of what Yasir (rta), his wife Sumayyah (rta), ‘Ammar ibn Yasir (rta), Bilal (rta), Khabab ibn Art (rta), ‘A%mir ibn Fahīrah (rta), Abu Fakīh (rta), Lubaynah (rta), Zunayrah (rta) had to go through, one shudders with the sheer inhumanity of the torture inflicted on them. They were kept hungry and thirsty, standing in the blazing sun for hours on end, made to lie on the burning desert sand and beaten mercilessly. But the light of faith that had been kindled in their heart could not be extinguished. Yasir (rta) and his wife Sumayyah (rta) died in this torture, and Abu Bakr (rta) purchased many slaves and gave them their freedom, thus taking on his father Abu Qihafah’s displeasure.

From a study of the ages of those who accepted Islam in the early days, it seems that the young were mostly influenced through the Prophet’s teachings. He himself was 40 years old when he was called to prophethood. Abu Bakr (rta) was three years younger, but was known as an elder among the Muslims. This means that the other Muslims must have been younger. When leaders of the Quraysh warned the heads of families to control their youngsters who were keeping company with Muhammad (sws), the force of their anger was turned towards these young people too. History names ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan (rta), Zubayr ibn ‘Awwam (rta), Mus‘ab ibn ‘Umayr (rta), Khalid ibn Sa‘īd ibn al-‘A%ss (rta). They were tortured so heavily that they could no longer bear it. Others were also subjected to similar treatment. Even the soft spoken, kind and compassionate Abu Bakr (ra) was not spared and he too was wounded.

It was impossible for the Muslims to fight the situation with force. The only factor that could help them in their resistance was their faith in God, belief in rewards to follow if they remained true to their religion and belief in the Day of Judgment. Several verses were revealed in the context of these

circumstances. Human beings learn from the example of others, hence these early Muslims were given the examples of how some young men of Israelites had supported Moses (sws) despite fear of being tortured by the Pharaoh. When they complained to him about the Pharaoh's excesses, he asked them to remain steadfast in their belief in God and to pray to him for help:

فَمَا آمَنَ لِمُوسَىٰ إِلَّا ذُرِّيَّةٌ مِّن قَوْمِهِ عَلَىٰ خَوْفٍ مِّن فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِمْ أَن يَفْتِنَهُمْ وَإِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ لَعَالٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَإِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الْمُسْرِفِينَ. وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ يَا قَوْمِ إِن كُنتُمْ آمَنتُم بِاللَّهِ فَعَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلُوا إِن كُنتُم مُّسْلِمِينَ فَقَالُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا فِتْنَةً لِّلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ. وَنَجِّنَا بِرَحْمَتِكَ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ وَأَخِيهِ أَن تَبَوَّآ لِقَوْمِكُمَا بِمِصْرَ بُيُوتًا وَاجْعَلُوا بُيُوتَكُمْ قِبْلَةً وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ. (١٠: ٨٣-٨٧)

But no one believed Moses, except [some] youths among his people, for fear of the Pharaoh and his establishment that they would persecute them. And indeed, the Pharaoh was haughty within the land, and indeed, he was of the transgressors. And Moses said: "O my people, if you have believed in Allah, then rely upon Him, if you should be Muslims." So they said: "Upon Allah do we rely. Our Lord, make us not [objects of] trial for the wrongdoing people. And save us by Your mercy from the disbelieving people." And We inspired to Moses and his brother: "Settle your people in Egypt in houses and make your houses [facing the] *qiblah* and establish prayers and give good tidings to the believers." (10:83-87)

It seems that in the light of this instruction to designate a few houses for prayer, the Prophet (sws) had selected the home of Arqam ibn 'Abd Munaf (rta), where all Muslims would gather, perform collective prayers, learn the Qur'an and seek strength and guidance from the Prophet's teachings. Thus the house of Arqam became the first teaching centre of the People of the Faith.

The reason to select the house of Arqam seems to be that it was located towards the mount of Safa' from the Baytullah, in the south. While praying inside the house, it was possible to face both the Baytullah (the Abrahamic *qiblah*) and the Bayt al-Maqdas simultaneously. No instructions about the *qiblah* had yet been revealed and the Prophet (sws) adopted the Bayt al-Maqdas in consultation with others. He was loath to leave the Abrahamic *qiblah* too, and so he gathered the two together. He adopted the same approach inside the Baytullah as well, where he faced the wall between the Rukn Yamanī and Hajr-i Aswad while saying his prayers so that the two *qiblah*s would come together.

The Qur'an states at another place:

قُتِلَ أَصْحَابُ الْأُخْدُودِ. النَّارِ ذَاتِ الْوَقُودِ. إِذْ هُمْ عَلَيْهَا قُعُودٌ. وَهُمْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَفْعَلُونَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ شُهُودٌ. وَمَا نَقَمُوا مِنْهُمْ إِلَّا أَن يُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ. الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ. إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَتَنُوا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَتُوبُوا فَلَهُمْ عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابُ الْحَرِيقِ. (٨٥: ٤-١٠)

Cursed were the companions of the trench. [containing] the fire full of fuel, when they were sitting near it and they, to what they were doing against the believers, were witnesses. And they resented them not except because they believed in Allah, the Exalted in Might, the Praiseworthy, To whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. And Allah, over all things, is Witness. Indeed, those who have tortured believing men and believing women and then have not repented will have the punishment of Hell, and they will have the punishment of the Burning Fire. (85:4-10)

When young people were forced by their fathers to renounce the religion of Muhammad (sws), the Qur'an gave clear instructions to the effect that while God wishes human beings to be kind and well mannered to their parents, this does not mean that they can force them to accept polytheism. People did not need to obey their parents in these situations. The elders would also claim that they knew what is good and bad, right or wrong better than the youngsters, and hence they should follow their guidance. The Qur'an said:

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حُسْنًا وَإِن جَاهَدَاكَ لِتُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ. وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ فِي الصَّالِحِينَ. (٢٩: ٨-٩)

And We have enjoined upon man goodness to parents. But if they endeavor to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them. To Me is your return and I will inform you about what you used to do. And those who believe and do righteous deeds - We will surely admit them among the righteous [into Paradise]. (29:8-9)

The followers of Islam not only had to bear the torture of the Quraysh, but also underhand dealings by them. Those who were traders were barred from selling their produce in the market; others who earned through labour were not given their wages. For example, Khabab (rta) made arrows and spears. The Quraysh leader 'As ibn Wa'il owed him payment but he kept it back. When Khabab (rta) asked for it, he refused to pay until he refuted Muhammad (sws)'s teachings. Khabab answered that he would never do that, even until the time when 'A%s died, or when he would be raised again, to which the latter replied: "Leave me then; until I die, then am raised and am rewarded. When that happens, I shall pay you back."[2]

When the Prophet (sws) presented the argument from the Qur'an that polytheism is a man made system that carries no background either in the religion of Abraham (sws) or any intellectual basis, and that it is merely an ignorant belief that has been adopted by people in the past, the Quraysh were very upset. They thought that if such a concept were to spread among common people, their entire power base would be lost. They decided that if they remained silent while Muhammad (sws) continued his teachings, their cause could be damaged beyond repair, and agreed to take effective steps to stop him.

A select elite group from the leaders went to the leader of Banu Hashim, Abu Talib and complained to him of his nephew's activities. The charges were that he abused their gods; declared their religion to be false; considered their ancestors to have been misguided and conveyed these views openly. Abu Talib, they demanded, should either keep him under control, or allow them to stop him and not interfere in whatever they did to him. Abu Talib managed to calm them down without making any firm promises.

When the Prophet (sws)'s preaching continued with the same fervor, the Quraysh came again to Abu Talib, this time warning him that if Muhammad (sws) (sws) did not stop, they would think that Abu Talib too was his companion, and threatened him with dire consequences. Abu Talib was considerably worried by this ultimatum and placed the issue before his nephew. He implored him to burden him only to the extent that he was able to bear it. The Prophet (sws) realised that his uncle was weakening, but expressed his resolve, saying that he could not abrogate this responsibility: he would either carry it through until he gained success, or would die in the process. When his uncle saw this determination, he asked him to go ahead and do what he must, promising to stand by him, come what may.

The Quraysh also offered to Abu Talib to give Muhammad (sws) to them in exchange for a person from one of theirs, to do what they would with him. In other words, they would kill the Prophet (sws) and offered one of their people to be killed. Mut'am ibn 'Adī, who was from the tribe of the Banu Nawfil, the same as of 'Abd Munaf, agreed on this with the Quraysh. Abu Talib, however, found the idea repugnant and insulting, that of relinquishing the best person from Banu Hashim to the Quraysh to be killed by them. He refused to do so. Thus the sons of Banu Munaf were also divided. Only Banu Hashim (except for Abu Lahab) and Banu Muttalib remained with the Prophet (sws).

Even under the fear and repression thus created by the Quraysh, the slaves and the young men and women who had accepted Islam remained true to their new faith, and Muhammad (sws) continued to propound new facets of his religion. This situation caused increasing worry for the Quraysh leaders. They deliberated long and hard, but could not find a way to address this problem. Each individual would make an attempt but fail to make any impact. Such an effort was also made by one of the more important leaders, 'Utbah ibn Rabī'ah. He asked his friends to allow him to go and talk to the Prophet (sws) and make him some offers. Perhaps he might agree and desist from his struggle. They gave him permission and he went to see the Prophet (sws).

He made a strong appeal: "Nephew, you are well aware of the respect and status you carry within our tribe, but you have caused much grief to your people. You have created disunity amongst them, and clouded their wisdom by questioning their belief on their gods and their faith. You call their ancestors kafir. If you require wealth, we shall collect as much wealth as you need and give it to you; if you need status, we will designate you as our leader: we will not take any decision without your permission. If you want a throne, we will make you our king. If you are under the spell of someone, we will summon someone to exorcise you." The Prophet (sws) listened to him in silence, then recited Surah Sajadah (32) and said: "Do you mean, this teaching?" 'Utbah returned to his friends and told them that what he had heard from Muhammad (sws) had no parallel. "It is not poetry, not magic, not a story. O'Quraysh, if you would listen to me, leave this man to his devices. This text will reach a great climax. If the Arabs create a problem for Muhammad (sws), your ends would be achieved without participating in this activity. If he overcomes them, his power will be your power and his status will be yours." Hearing this, the Quraysh reprimanded him, saying: " O' Abu al-Walīd, this man has cast his spell over you through his recitation." 'Utbah said: "I have given you my opinion. Do what you wish."

When Hashsham ibn Walīd's brother Walīd ibn al-Walīd accepted Islam, some people from Banu Makhzum went to Hashsham to ask for al-Walīd to be handed over to them so that they could punish him and show him as an example to other young men of their families such as Salamah ibn Hisham, 'Ayyash ibn Abī Rabī'ah who had also converted. Hashsham told them that they could take him, but they should protect him at all costs. He said: "As Allah is my witness, if you kill him, I will kill someone of a higher status from within your elite families." On hearing this, the Banu Makhzum group turned back.[3]

So far, the Quraysh used to torment the Muslims, but now they started to target the Prophet (sws) himself. When he advised people to say: "There is no God but One God," they abused him and threw dust at him. Once when he was praying in the Baytullah, one of leaders 'Uqbah ibn Abī Mu'īt put a cloth around his neck and tightened it so that he could hardly breathe. Abu Bakr (rta) saw this and pulled

‘Uqbah away. Once when the Prophet (sws) was circumambulating the Baytullah, ‘Uqbah ibn Abī Muʿīt, Abu Jahal and Ummayah ibn Khalaf were sitting in the hatīm. Whenever he passed them they would call him names. After three times, he paused and asked them to fear God’s retribution, at which they were stunned into silence.

Hamzah (rta)’s Acceptance of Islam

Once Abu Jahal picked up a quarrel with the Prophet (sws) close to the mount Safa’. He abused him verbally and called him names. The Prophet (sws) remained silent and did not answer. Abu Jahal went inside and sat among the other leaders. One of the freed slave girls of ‘Abdullah ibn Jud‘an saw the whole incident and, as the Prophet’s uncle Hamzah bin ‘Abd al-Muttalib entered, carrying a bow, intending to perform circumambulation, related it to him. He was enraged at this indecent treatment of his beloved nephew, went to Abu Jahal, and hitting him on the head with his bow, said: “you have abused my nephew; I am also of his faith. I say what he says. If you are brave enough, come and fight with me.” The Banu Makhzum stepped in and prevented the situation from accelerating any further. But Hamzah (rta) proved to be a great follower of Islam who gave his life for his faith. This proved to be also an unusually severe disappointment for the Quraysh for Hamzah (rta) was an exceptionally brave and fearless warrior.

One day Abu Jahal boasted to his companions that he would assault the Prophet (sws) during his prayers. When he went to the mosque, he would throw a large stone at his head. He would not care whatever Banu Munaf would do to him afterwards. The next day he took a large stone inside the mosque and waited for the Prophet (sws) to arrive. As he did and stood to offer his prayers, the Quraysh were all keenly observing, eager to see what happened next. As the Prophet (sws) prostrated, Abu Jahal got up and carrying the stone, went up to him. He was just a few steps away when he suddenly turned back, white in the face and dropped the stone. The Quraysh leaders ran to support him and asked what had happened. He explained that as soon as he went close to Muhammad (sws), a huge camel came between them. He had never seen as big a camel as this one, with a hump, teeth and neck of such huge proportions. The camel came towards him as if to devour him and he was terrified. Another narrative describes a pit of fire instead of a camel. Whether a camel or a pit of fire, it was clearly something that prevented Abu Jahal from approaching the Prophet (sws) and harming him, and was thus a God sent arrangement to protect him.

Once ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud (rta) decided to go to the Baytullah to recite the Qur’an loudly. Fellow Muslims asked him not to, but he was adamant. He went and began to recite Surah Rahman. The polytheists started to beat him up. He was badly wounded but did not stop.

The Hypocrites

As the prophet's message gained acceptance, there were many among the general public who were interested in hearing him, in addition to his initial followers. Those who had been searching for the truth did not find anything strange in this call. In fact, it appealed to their hearts, they accepted it gladly and protected their faith with all their strength, even if they had to sacrifice everything they held dear in life. Those who sought logic and reason reflected on the arguments presented by the prophet, deliberated on his past and present life and thought about the consequences of accepting his message before they took a decision. When they did finally decide, they abided by their decision. There was a third category of people who may have come near the prophet due to external influences, but were really unaware of the demands that his message imposed on them. They did not know how the situation may change in the future; whether society had the capacity to accept the truth or not and to what conditions the people who were accepting Islam at that time may be subjected and how they were likely to respond to the same.

When the Prophet (sws)'s message spread across Makkah, several young men who did not really understand the associated responsibilities were also influenced. When they accepted Islam, initially they faced no problems, but when confronted with resistance from relatives, they became nervous. Parents counselled them, asking them to leave the new religion. Doing so would cause no harm. If it was a sin, the parents would be harmed. If the children did not listen, parents would torture them and beat them. 'Uthman (rta) was a married man and independent, but his uncle tied him with ropes and beat him. Zubayr ibn al-'Awwam (rta)'s uncle wrapped him in a mat of reed and put smoke up his nose. When young people were subjected to such pain and agony, their raw minds were assailed with doubts: if we have adopted the right path of God, why is it proving to be so difficult? Why are our lives in danger because we believe in the Prophet of God? It is clear that such questions arose because of ignorance of what seekers of truth must go through. Hence the Qur'an explained in great detail that God has always taken his believers through severe trials. If people fear the pain and torment given by other human beings in the same way that they should fear retribution from God, they should realize that the pain in this life is but for a few days. But if they gave up their faith and obedience to God for fear of this temporary trial, eternal torment will await them. They should remember that God will differentiate between those who have faith from those who were hypocrites:

وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ. (٢٩:١١)

And Allah will surely make evident those who believe, and He will surely make evident the hypocrites. (29:11)

The Qur'an has said at another place about the same people with weak faith that when things are going well, they remain with the faithful. Whenever any trial comes, they stagger, lose faith in God and start worshipping others. However, in the hard life of Makkah, this divisiveness among the faithful did not become prominent. The Qur'anic style is such that it warns people of the longer term consequences of their potential attitudes so that they are able to protect themselves against all evils. Here also, it made the fact obvious that such attitudes are adopted by hypocrites.

New schemes by the Quraysh

When the Quraysh were unsuccessful in convincing the Banu Hashim in providing support to the Prophet (sws), Abu Talib, as head of the tribe, remained his key supporter, his brothers who, although did not accept Islam, continued to protect their nephew and the young people who had promised allegiance to the Prophet (sws) remained true to their new faith despite the difficulties and the torture inflicted on them, the Quraysh began to think of other measures to meet the challenges. Muslims were becoming stronger by the day, and were increasing in number. Most households in Makkah now had a few members, father, son, brother, husband, wife who had forsaken the religion of their ancestors and accepted Islam. Every house had started a debate which it was no longer possible to ignore.

One way out from the situation created by the message of the Prophet (sws) and the steadfastness of his followers was for the Quraysh to analyze the real demands of their status, their own weaknesses and their attitudes, and accept the need for reform. They should have then looked at the mismanagement of the Baytullah and what needed to be done to address the problems. They should have changed their system that was both unnatural and immoral and that had created dissatisfaction among the common people. But this was not the way of the Quraysh and did not conform to their arrogant style. This would have hurt their ego and affected their material benefits. Hence they did not adopt this measure.

Another way could have been to find different methods to oppose the Prophet's message. And this is what they did. After analyzing the situation, they concluded that people were accepting Islam because of two reasons: one, because there was an unusually strong appeal in the message; anyone who listened was attracted towards it. He became so attached to it that no amount of pain or other attraction could influence him away from it. Muhammad (sws) called it divine revelation, and people were further impressed by this statement.

The second reason for accepting Islam was that people were influenced by Muhammad (sws)'s claim that he was a representative of God and had been designated by Him to communicate His message to them. The Quraysh thought that in order to dilute the influence of both, they should show that the message was not to be believed and was unacceptable, so that people would think that it was not from a divine source but had been made up by the Prophet (sws) himself. Secondly, they should declare his claim to prophethood to be false. If people started thinking of him to be just like one of them, they might stop being impressed by him.

(*Translated from Hayat-i Rasul Ummī by Nikhat Sattar*)

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1. Muslim, *Al-Jami'al-Sahih*, vol. 1, 193 (no. 208).

2. Bukhari, *Al-Jami'al-Sahih*, vol. 2, 736 (no. 1985).

3. Ibn Hisham, *Al Sirah al-nabawiyyah*, vol.1, 321.

CHAPTER 9

Objections on the Prophet's Personality

Observing the interest and the manner in which people belonging to all walks of life were impressed by the message being preached by the Prophet (sws), the leaders of the Quraysh began to see clear evidence of its success. Deeply concerned, on the one hand, they tried to create doubts about the authenticity of the Qur'an, and on the other, attempted to cast a shadow over the fact of Muhammad (sws) being God's prophet. They put across various arguments aimed at turning people against the Prophet (sws).

The Taunt of being Human

The Prophet (sws) was born in the tribe of Banu Hashim. His ancestors were well known and respected. He was brought up among the people of Makkah. He adopted trade as his profession, set up partnerships with several traders of Makkah and created a name for himself as an honest and trustworthy tradesman. He married within one of the tribes of Makkah and had children. He thus had the same needs as those of any other human being, and went through similar upheavals in life. He faced the same problems ordinary men faced. Seen from this perspective, his life was no different from any other human being's. The Quraysh used this argument as propaganda against him, saying that he was a human being just like any of them. He went to the market to meet his needs, faced problems related to his wife and children and got sick, and was likely to die: how could he then claim to be a representative of God? He was the same as the rest of them, and therefore his assertion of being a prophet was absolutely false.

It is obvious that this argument from the Quraysh could not find any ground for intelligent minds who questioned the Quraysh on this point further. The latter then had to offer additional arguments: such as that Muhammad (sws) was not able to succeed as well as he had wished to as a trader and as a family member, and as he had wanted to become one of the elite of the Quraysh, he had claimed prophethood, the authenticity of which could never be proved. If they were to be awed by this and accept this claim from someone who was just another ordinary human being, they would only harm themselves by submitting to him. According to historical records, some people saw this situation in the context of rivalry between the tribes of the Quraysh; one leader of the Banu Ummayah had said that they had fought the Banu Hashim in every field of life, and now one of them was claiming prophethood and thus superiority over others – were they to become their servants?

At times, the Quraysh would negate the possibility of any divine revelation being sent to a human being. They would question the selection of Muhammad (sws) as the person to whom the divine message was being revealed: why was it not being revealed to any of the others? If Muhammad (sws) was telling the truth, then they expected to receive the same message that other prophets had received. If they received the same divine revelation, they would not hesitate in believing Muhammad (sws); otherwise not. They would also say that a human being could not be the medium to spread the message

of God; this should be a job performed by angels, since they were made of light, and were closest to God. Had God desired to enlighten and guide people, He would have sent His angels. Unless He made these arrangements, they would continue to believe that Muhammad's (sws) claim was based on lies.

The people of Makkah would often ask their leaders about the message being preached by the Prophet (sws); the incidents related to previous prophets that were quoted in the Qur'anic passages and the predictions therein of the terrible end of those who disbelieved in the Prophet (sws). The leaders would reassure them that Muhammad (sws) was making up these stories: they were concocted tales related to people of yester years that were being presented under the name of God. To some extent, the People of the Book were also involved in this conspiracy, as some of them conveyed information from their books to Muhammad (sws) which he then presented as divine revelation. The Quraysh also used the loyalty of their people to their ancestors as an instrument against the truth. They would pitch the knowledge being communicated by the Prophet (sws) against that of their forefathers, saying that there could be no comparison between the two. Real knowledge was what had been passed on from their forefathers, whereas this individual (the Prophet) was trying to get people away from their gods and had taken on the guise of a prophet. Therefore, they argued, the need of the day was to stay away from Muhammad (sws), not to listen to what he said and to remain strictly loyal to their gods and to the religion of their ancestors.

While several leaders propagated this idea, among the most prominent were Abu Lahab and Abu Jahal who shadowed the Prophet (sws) incessantly. Whenever the Prophet (sws) preached to an individual or a group and called them towards belief in one God, they would immediately negate his teachings by referring to their ancestors and their religion, telling people that the Prophet (sws) was talking against their forefathers and that he thought that they were against the truth. So, they must not accept his teaching. Abu Lahab's rant is quoted in history in the following words:

O! Banu such and such! This person is calling upon you to throw off the yoke of the supporters who love Banu Malik ibn Uqaysh and Lat and 'Uzza, and instead accept the innovation and deviation from the right path that he preaches. Do not listen to him, and do not believe in what he says.[1]

These people had also instructed their hooligans to make as much noise as possible when the Prophet (sws) was talking to others, and to create so much trouble that it would become impossible for him to communicate with others. They would try to satisfy their audience that their stance was correct by reassuring them that they had the backing of God when they worshipped so many idols and branded various items *halal* and *haram* in their names. Their argument was that if they were wrong, God would have stopped them by using His powers. They considered the concept of the Day of Judgment merely an illusion used to frighten people and said that it was impossible to be raised once again to life after being dead and reduced to dust and ashes. According to them, Muhammad (sws) was introducing this idea to merely increase the number of his followers.

The objection of the Quraysh of the Prophet (sws) being a human being was totally baseless. They knew well enough that Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws) were both the ancestors of the Arabs. Their family lines could be traced to the beginning of the Quraysh and the latter were proud to be linked to these respected personalities. They also knew that the two were prophets of God and it was the same religion that they had taught, the remains of which were dear to the Quraysh and the basis of their sovereignty among the Arab tribes. It was not hidden from the Quraysh that God's prophets were human beings, and like other people, they married, ate and drank, lived with their families and got involved in the same activities of life as others did. The Quraysh also knew about the prophets of the Israelites, who were all human beings, none being angels. Being a human being was never a barrier to prophethood.

Linking prophets to other creations was incomprehensible. Only a human being could guide and educate other human beings, because he possessed similar emotions and feelings, desires and needs as well as abilities. If this had not been the case, it would have been impossible for the guide to explain any issue in a manner they could understand, or produce a practical example. Had there been angels living on this earth, and God had desired to guide them, He may well have sent an angel to be a prophet amongst them. The Qur'an clarified this point thus:

قُل لَّوْ كَانَ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَلَائِكَةٌ يَمْشُونَ مُطْمَئِنِّينَ لَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِم مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ مَلَكًا رَّسُولً وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ أَن يُؤْمِنُوا إِذْ جَاءَهُمُ الْهُدَىٰ إِلَّا أَن قَالُوا أَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ بَشَرًا رَّسُول (١٧: ٩٤-٩٥)

And what prevented the people from believing when guidance came to them except that they said: "As Allah sent a human messenger?" Say: "If there were upon the earth angels walking securely, We would have sent down to them from the heaven an angel [as a] messenger." (17:94-95)

Sending angels individually to people was also inappropriate because prophet hood suits only the person who is the best example of trustworthiness, peace loving and pure of heart and of the highest morality of character within society. Such a human being has the capacity to absorb the light of divine guidance within himself because of his inner nature, whereas people who are immersed in worldliness are unable to grasp the real essence of such guidance. This is why the Qur'an says: "God knows well on whom to bestow the responsibility of prophethood?" (6:124)

In answer to the demand from the Quraysh of sending angels to them, the Qur'an, on the one hand clarified that not everyone was worthy of being chosen by God of achieving the exalted status of prophet hood, and on the other, also explained that angels could descend on other human beings, but this could be very dangerous for the person concerned. In such instances, angels came with a final purpose, and in case of those who refused to believe in prophets, their purpose was to destroy them. One such example had been stated in the Qur'an of the people of Lot (sws) thus:

وَقَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِي نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الذِّكْرُ إِنَّكَ لَمَجْنُون لَّوْ مَا تَأْتِينَا بِالْمَلَائِكَةِ إِن كُنتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ مَا نُنَزِّلُ الْمَلَائِكَةَ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَمَا كَانُوا إِذًا مُّنظَرِينَ إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونٌ (١٥: ٦-٩)

And they say: "O you upon whom the message has been sent down, indeed you are mad. Why do you not bring us the angels, if you should be among the truthful?" We do not send down the angels except with truth; and the disbelievers would not then be reprieved. Indeed, it is We who sent down the Qur'an and indeed, We will be its guardian. (15:6-9)

In reality, all prophets who had come before Muhammad (sws) had to face the same objection of being human by their detractors. This objection from the Quraysh was nothing new. People of all ages had the same difficulty in accepting prophets and they had declared the claim of their prophets as an attempt to gain superiority over them. This becomes clear also from the following verses of the Qur'an:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فَقَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ فَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِن قَوْمِهِ مَا هَٰذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُرِيدُ أَن يَتَفَضَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَأَنزَلَ مَلَائِكَةً مَّا سَمِعْنَا بِهَٰذَا فِي آبَائِنَا الْأَوَّلِينَ (٢٣: ٢٣-٢٤)

And We had certainly sent Noah to his people, and he said: “O my people, worship Allah; you have no deity other than Him; then will you not fear Him?” But the eminent among those who disbelieved from his people said: “This is not but a man like yourselves who wishes to take precedence over you; and if Allah had willed [to send a messenger], He would have sent down angels. We have not heard of this among our forefathers.” (23:23-24)

ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَا مِن بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا آخَرِينَ. فَأَرْسَلْنَا فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ وَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِن قَوْمِهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِلِقَاءِ الْآخِرَةِ وَأَتْرَفْنَاهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا مَا هَٰذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يَأْكُلُ مِمَّا تَأْكُلُونَ مِنْهُ وَيَشْرَبُ مِمَّا تَشْرَبُونَ وَلَئِنْ أَطَعْتُم بَشَرًا مِّثْلَكُمْ إِنَّكُمْ إِذًا لَّخَاسِرُونَ أَيَعِدُكُمْ أَنَّكُمْ إِذَا مِتُّمْ وَكُنتُمْ تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَنَّكُم مُّخْرَجُونَ هَيْهَاتَ هَيْهَاتَ لِمَا تُوعَدُونَ (٢٣: ٣١-٣٦)

Then We produced after them a generation of others. And We sent among them a messenger from themselves, [saying]: “Worship Allah; you have no deity other than Him; then will you not fear Him?” And the eminent among his people who disbelieved and denied the meeting of the Hereafter while We had given them luxury in the worldly life said: “This is not but a man like yourselves. He eats of that from which you eat and drinks of what you drink. And if you should obey a man like yourselves, indeed, you would then be losers. Does he promise you that when you have died and become dust and bones that you will be brought forth [once more]? How far, how far, is that which you are promised.” (23:31-36)

As far as information regarding previous prophets is concerned, the Quraysh knew well enough that the Prophet (sws) had been unaware of their history initially. He was not an educated man, nor had he heard of what had been written of them in the holy books. Despite his ignorance, he spoke with authenticity after the Qur’an was revealed to him. If the People of the Book had distorted any facts, he corrected them and each fact that was related also included a lesson to be learned by the Quraysh. Thus, the historical facts were not told as stories, but were contextualized to the situation of the Quraysh. Often, the Prophet (sws) was questioned on a specific historic incident, and the Qur’an answered it with full clarification. Even if we assume that the Prophet (sws) had someone who was feeding him the information, how was it possible to provide such complete facts immediately? Obviously this knowledge was coming to him through divine revelation because he was God’s prophet, and God Himself was guiding him at every step. Thus, Moses’ (sws) stay in Madyan and the events at the mount of Tur; the birth of a son to Zakariyya (sws); the care being taken of Mary (sws); the details of Joseph’s (sws)’s life; Zulqarnayn’s victories and events related to several other prophets are explained in detail in the Qur’an. God transmitted this information to the Prophet (sws), although he had been completely unaware of it before prophethood. After giving these facts to him, the Qur’an said:

تِلْكَ مِنْ أَنبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهَا إِلَيْكَ مَا كُنتَ تَعْلَمُهَا أَنتَ وَلَا قَوْمُكَ مِن قَبْلِ هَٰذَا (١١:٤٩)

That is from the news of the unseen which We reveal to you, [O Muhammad]. You knew it not, neither you nor your people, before this. (11:49)

The teachings of their forefathers that the Quraysh were so proud of were also very different and had been completely distorted from what had been transferred originally from Abraham (sws) to his subsequent generations. The greatest damage had been done by ‘Amr ibn Luhayy Khazarji, when he installed statues within the Ka‘bah. Later, the managers of the House of God created a comprehensive system based on idolatry and innovation. The true followers of Abraham (sws), called Hanif, continued to protest against the new idolatrous religion, and the group had managed to retain its identity until the prophet hood of Muhammad (sws). The Quraysh had no real problems with the moral teachings of the Prophet (sws). But when he spoke against their idolatry, this was an attack against their vested interests which they were ready to protect these at all costs.

Similarly, they could find no basis to object to the Prophet being human. Whatever they said were flimsy excuses.

The Taunt of Lack of Worldly Goods

Holding the Prophet’s humble lifestyle in contempt, the Quraysh would also say that if God had to bestow prophethood on a human being, He would have given him worldly goods and riches so that his status in this society was elevated, and he could have stood with the other leaders with his head high. Muhammad (sws) was not even well to do, whereas there were several other leaders who were not only financially well placed, but possessed a strong personality and were thus more prominent than Muhammad (sws). These individuals, according to the Quraysh, were more worthy of becoming God’s representatives in the world. No one among Muhammad’s companions was near comparable. They were impetuous youth and slaves who had gathered around him, but no wise leader had joined him. Hence, his teaching influenced only those who were of a low mental level and who were not able to distinguish between falsehood and the truth.

The Quraysh would make certain demands of the Prophet (sws), asking him to perform miracles. They would ask him to create a freshwater spring in the water scarce land if he was a true representative of God; obtain for himself an oasis and a garden with water ways running in its centre; such a garden would provide him with riches and thus prove that God thought him worthy enough; or ask God to make a palace of gold for him that would visibly demonstrate his wealth. They expected him to perform some extraordinary feats to prove his identity as a messenger of God. So, if it was true that everything came from God, why could he not make some pieces of the sky fall on them? Or make God and a few angels come and become visible to them? Or could he not climb up to the heavens in front of them, have the revelation written and bring it to them, which they could read for themselves? If he could do any of this, they would accept him as a prophet of God. The Quraysh believed that since they were better than Muslims in worldly riches, this was proof of being better also in the eyes of God. Had they incurred God’s wrath, He would not have left them to enjoy life in the manner they were living it.

They also held the Prophet’s companions in great contempt. They refused even to sit close to them, and told the Prophet (sws) that they would listen to him only if they were not there. History tells us that they made fun of the poor Muslims, teased and abused them and taunted the Prophet (sws) on being close to them. The Prophet (sws) would often worry how to handle such arrogant leaders and how to preach to them.

When he talked about the Day of Judgment and the punishments that would be meted out to those who denied the message preached by him, the leaders were outraged. They were not ready to understand that the poor and humble companions of

the Prophet might be rewarded with the blessings of Paradise, and the leaders of the Quraysh would be thrown into hell. They formed groups to threaten the Prophet (sws) and force him to give up his preaching.

The lack of worldly possessions of the Prophet (sws), or the fact that his companions were poor and humble were both ludicrous objections from the Quraysh. Material possessions have absolutely no relationship with moral or spiritual guidance. The two are different situations altogether. If a person is rich, it is not tantamount to his being morally strong. Often, it is seen that such people may become involved in evil deeds that people with less resources normally do not indulge in. In any case, guidance is given by God, and He decides who to bestow His guidance upon. Worldly goods and riches, are, in fact a trial and are mentioned in the Qur'an with contempt thus:

وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنُ عَلَىٰ رَجُلٍ مِّنَ الْقَرْيَتَيْنِ عَظِيمٍ أَهُمْ يَقْسِمُونَ رَحْمَتَ رَبِّكَ نَحْنُ قَسَمْنَا بَيْنَهُم مَّعِيشَتَهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَرَفَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِّيَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُهُم بَعْضًا سُخْرِيًّا وَرَحْمَتُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ وَلَوْلَا أَن يَكُونَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً لَّجَعَلْنَا لِمَن يَكْفُرُ بِالرَّحْمَٰنِ لِبُيُوتِهِمْ سُقُفًا مِّن فِضَّةٍ وَمَعَارِجَ عَلَيْهَا يَظْهَرُونَ وَلِبُيُوتِهِمْ أَبْوَابًا وَسُرُرًا عَلَيْهَا يَتَّكِئُونَ وَزُخْرُفًا وَإِن كُلُّ ذَٰلِكَ لَمَّا مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةُ عِندَ رَبِّكَ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ (٤٣: ٣١-٣٥)

And they said: "Why was this Qur'an not sent down upon a great man from [one of] the two cities?" Do they distribute the mercy of your Lord? It is We who have apportioned among them their livelihood in the life of this world and have raised some of them above others in degrees [of rank] that they may make use of one another for service. But the mercy of your Lord is better than whatever they accumulate. And if it were not that the people would become one community [of disbelievers], We would have made for those who disbelieve in the Most Merciful – for their houses – ceilings and stairways of silver upon which to mount And for their houses – doors and couches [of silver] upon which to recline And gold ornament. But all that is not but the enjoyment of worldly life. And the Hereafter with your Lord is for the righteous. (43:31-35)

Just as all prophets have faced objections of being human, they have also been ridiculed for attracting people from the poor and humble strata of society. Referring to the times of Noah (sws), the Qur'an says:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ إِنِّي لَكُمْ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ أَن لَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ أَلِيمٍ فَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِن قَوْمِهِ مَا نَرَاكَ إِلَّا بَشَرًا مِّثْلَنَا وَمَا نَرَاكَ اتَّبَعَكَ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ هُمْ أَرَاذِلُنَا بَادِيَ الرَّأْيِ وَمَا نَرَىٰ لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا مِن فَضْلٍ بَلْ نَظُنُّكُمْ كَاذِبِينَ (١١: ٢٥-٢٧)

And We had certainly sent Noah to his people, [saying]: "Indeed, I am to you a clear warner. That you not worship except Allah. Indeed, I fear for you the punishment of a painful day." So the eminent among those who disbelieved from his people said: "We do not see you but as a man like ourselves, and we do not see you followed except by those who are the lowest of us [and] at first suggestion. And we do not see in you over us any merit; rather, we think you are liars." (11:25-27)

We see, therefore, that the attitude of the Quraysh towards the Prophet (sws) was very similar to that of the nations of all previous prophets. Whenever he was asked to perform a miracle, he would answer that God had all power; he was merely a human being like them, but that he had been entrusted with the responsibility of prophet hood. If they wished to test him,

they should do so from the criteria of prophethood. He had nothing to say to the demands they were making merely to frustrate him. The Qur'an says:

قُل لَّا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِندِي خَزَائِنُ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ إِنْ أَتَّبِعُ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ (٦:٥٠)

Say: "[O Muhammad], I do not tell you that I have the depositories [containing the provision] of Allah or that I know the unseen, nor do I tell you that I am an angel. I only follow what is revealed to me." (6:50)

The Accusation of being a Poet, Magician Sorcerer and Madman

An effective tactic to divert attention from someone's real status is to create propaganda about his mission in such a manner so as to project it in an entirely different mode. Because the Prophet (sws) had the Qur'an which he recited and explained, thus presenting his status as a prophet, the Quraysh used this to accuse him sometimes of being a poet, other times of being a sorcerer who was trying to divide society. At times, they would say that he had lost his senses because someone had cast a spell on him. By branding him as a poet, they expected him and his "poetry" to end with the passage of time. If it was madness that was creating such a furore, it was not necessary to take it seriously. This was merely delirious talk that had no basis in reality.

The objections on the personality of the Prophet (sws) were addressed by God. He explained very clearly that the prophet was not a stranger to any of the Quraysh leaders. He had been born, bred and brought up among them. They had observed him at each stage of his life, from childhood to youth, and each of them was witness to his purity of character, high morals, goodness, integrity, honesty, trustworthiness and truthfulness. For forty years, they had trusted him implicitly, but now that God had given him His guidance, they had begun to hound him, forgetting their testimony to his character. His preaching had nothing to do with any falsehood or ego, nor was the divine revelation a figment of his imagination. Whatever he was presenting was not fortune telling, and it was not a means of obtaining money. Why was it that people were unable to observe that God was removing falsehood through His words and setting into place the real Truth? Such a message as the Qur'an that provided enlightenment and opened up hearts and minds to the truth had never been brought by false and illegitimate sources.

The fact was that the Quraysh had no basis to revile the Prophet's character, nor did they have any arguments to convince anyone. They would merely swear and confuse simple minded people through their vehemence. They also created misunderstandings and spread rumours among Muslims so that they may become divided and weak, and begin to resent the Prophet (sws).

In answer to the accusation that Muhammad (sws) presented the text as coming from God and thus claim superiority, God clarified that the Prophet (sws) conducted his responsibility under strictest supervision. Just as no satanic force could take divine revelation from the Divine Angel (Gabriel), who delivered it to the Prophet (sws) in its pure form, it was kept with the Prophet intact such that he could not make any alterations to it either. If ever anyone dared to do this, God promised: "We will catch him with Our Arm. Cut his jugular vein, and no one can then save him from Our wrath."

The Qur'an, asked the Prophet (sws) to announce that if he was in the wrong and that was the reason for them not joining him, he would be punished and they would be protected. But if he was right, and was receiving this guidance from his Lord, then they would be declared deniers of this guidance. This would not be taken as a simple offence. Hence, they were to think seriously before taking a decision.

The Qur'an also reassured the Prophet (sws) that he had not asked to receive divine revelation. He could not have done so. The Being Who sent it to him was the Only One who could continue or discontinue it. If He had thought it fit to bestow it upon him, He would also give him the wherewithal to fulfill his responsibilities, and keep him safe from the conspiracies of his enemies. Thus, he was to continue to keep doing what he was doing with patience, and disregard his foes. God was enough to deal with his enemies. Very soon they would meet their fate.

All efforts made by the Quraysh to lower the esteem in which the Prophet (sws) and his companions were held by people were in vain. The Prophet's character suffered no blemish, and no misunderstanding about the authenticity of the Qur'an could be created. The followers of the Prophet (sws) increased in number day by day, and each and every tribe of the Quraysh had a mix of Muslims and disbelievers. In this situation, the leaders of the Quraysh had no option but to torture the Muslims even more, target the Prophet (sws), make it almost impossible for people to listen to the Qur'an and create such a reign of terror so as to stop further spread of Islam.

(*Translated from Hayat-i Rasul-i Ummi by Nikhat Sattar*)

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1. Ibn Hisham, Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah, vol. 1, 423.

CHAPTER 10

Objections of the Quraysh on the Qur'an

Poetry and Story Telling

When the Qur'an began to be revealed, the initial verses that are included in the latter part of the Book were in the form of concise, short but extremely powerful sentences. This text was, and is, most eloquent, linguistically sublime, a miraculous example of articulation, full of depth of meaning, majesty and dignity. It possesses grandeur and glory which is not of this world. Additionally, it also rhymes. The verses repeatedly mention the end of this worldly life, the events that will occur afterwards, the accountability that human beings will face for their actions, and subsequent reward and punishment. These matters are all related to future happenings in another world. Consider for example the following:

كلَّا وَالْقَمَرِ وَاللَّيْلِ إِذْ أَدْبَرَ وَالصُّبْحِ إِذَا أَسْفَرَ إِنَّهَا لَإِحْدَى الْكُبَرِ نذِيرًا لِّلْبَشَرِ مَن شَاءَ مِنكُمْ أَن يَتَقَدَّمَ أَوْ يَتَأَخَّرَ (٧٤: ٣٢-٣٧)

No! By the moon and [by] the night when it departs. And [by] the morning when it brightens. Indeed, this is from among great matters. A warning to humanity: to whoever wills among you to proceed or stay behind. (74:32-37)

Note the repeat of the letter ر at the end of each verse.

اذَا السَّمَاءُ انفَطَرَتْ وَإِذَا الْكَوَاكِبُ انتَثَرَتْ وَإِذَا الْبِحَارُ فُجِّرَتْ وَإِذَا الْقُبُورُ بُعْثِرَتْ عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ وَأَخَّرَتْ (٨٢: ١-٥)

When the sky breaks apart and when the stars fall, scattering, and when the seas are erupted and when the [contents of] graves are scattered, a soul will [then] know what it has put forth and kept back. (82:1-5)

In these verses almost all sentences are equal and end on تْ.

إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ خُلِقَ هَلُوعًا إِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوعًا وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مَنُوعًا (٧٠: ١٩-٢١)

Indeed, mankind was created anxious: When evil touches him, he becomes impatient. And when good touches him, he becomes stingy. (70:19-21)

Here the sentences are of equal length and end on وُعًا.

كَلَّا إِذَا بَلَغَتِ التَّرَاقِيَ وَقِيلَ مَنْ رَاقٍ وَظَنَّ أَنَّهُ الْفِرَاقُ وَالْتَفَّتِ السَّاقُ بِالسَّاقِ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْمَسَاقُ (٧٥: ٢٦-٣٠)

No! When the soul has reached the collar bones And it is said: “Who will cure [him]?” And the dying one is certain that it is the [time of] separation. And the shank shall embrace the shank. To your Lord, that day, will be the procession. (75:26-30)

All verses here are ending on اَق.

The verses appear to be poetry, given their rhyming nature, but they do not possess the balance that is found in poetry. This is text in prose. Short sentences that rhyme with each other were often the style of magicians and fortune tellers, but the Qur’anic text is purposeful, full of wisdom and gives a clear message, while that of the magicians used to be merely rhymes that were difficult to comprehend. The Qur’anic verses are pointing to a future in unequivocal terms, explaining an unseen reality, while the predictions of the fortune tellers were vague and carried double meanings. As far as eloquence and beauty of language is concerned, the text is of such noble quality that is not to be found in the speech or writings of any human being, including that of the Prophet (sws). It does not contain any of the meaningless words that are usual in a magician’s incantations. Each point is full of meaning, pointing to realities of human existence and appealing to the heart. The entire Qur’an consists of text that is as eloquent and thoughtful. Perceiving these characteristics, it was not an easy task to criticize it and aim to create feelings against it among the people. But the Quraysh decided to target the Qur’an for the sake of propaganda, and started to belittle its significance by calling it poetry, fortune telling, human effort or magic.

The Arabs were great critics of literature and could discern between the good and bad. Declaring the Qur’an a form of poetry was to admit to their foolhardiness. But there was one point which the Quraysh could give in support of their claim. Arabs believed that poets presented their work under the influence of a jinn. Since the Prophet (sws) had said that an angel had brought the wahi to him, the Quraysh attributed this to a misunderstanding, saying that the angel was in reality a jinn, who brought poetry to people.

The Arabs were also great admirers of sorcerers who claimed to predict the future. When people approached them to take advice on any matter, they would pretend to go into a trance in order to contact jinn and devils. Then they would speak in a form of poetry that had short lines that rhymed. Their claim about such poems that ended with rhyming words at the end of both verses was that these

had been revealed to them. It was always possible to interpret more than one meaning from what they said which held some predictive elements too. Whenever the Quraysh compared the Qur'an to fortune telling, they had in mind the initial verses that were short, their rhyme and the manner in which they foretold of the future. Thus they declared it to be the result of contact with jinn.

This propaganda was completely baseless. The reasons are obvious. Firstly, poetry is based on the emotions, thoughts and experiences of the poet. The poet moulds whatever affects his heart into a unique form of verse and presents it to his audience. Poets are not concerned with the fact that if they had said something with a clear conscience in the past, why are they now presenting poetry with obscene messages today? If one looks at the works of the greatest of poets, one realizes that they have expressed the best and the vilest human feelings when under their passing influence. There is a clear difference between what they wrote in their youth, and in their old age. At one stage, they appear to be overly fond of wining and whoring, and at another stage, they seem pious and true believers in God. Secondly, poets are masters of the language; they are least concerned with character. Their poetry may contain the message of obedience to God and His prophet, but their own acts belie their word. They may expound the details of mysticism, but much of their time might be spent in drunken stupor. In their martial poetry, they exaggerate to create scenes of courage and chivalry, but may be such cowards in their own lives as to cringe on seeing a house lizard. Thirdly, all kinds of people find topics of their interest in the work of poets, and they become their fans. Some good people are among their followers, as well as those who are misguided, who create problems for others and are corrupt.

As opposed to characteristics of poetry and the character of poets, the text that was being revealed to the Prophet (sws) had a very clearly identified target audience. The message that he gave the very first day was clarified in different ways subsequently without wavering. In actual fact, this was the greatest cause of worry for the Quraysh. For example, if the theme of tawhid, or the Oneness of God had been incidental, and came occasionally, they might have tolerated it. It was the consistent repetition of the theme that hammered at their system, and this was what was so painful for them. Then, the Prophet (sws) was practicing what he preached, and so were his companions. Consequently, a large group of people was emerging within the society that had no contradiction between its word and action. They were ready to sacrifice everything for their belief. This was the reason that others sought also to follow in their footsteps. No wayward or immoral person could join the Prophet's followers because he and his companions valued a strict moral code of belief and action. The Qur'an often asked the Quraysh to reflect on the fact why so many honest and pious individuals of society were becoming believers and followers of the Prophet (sws). Why did this message not appeal to dissolute individuals and people with loose morals? The only reason was that the Prophet (sws) was establishing the highest codes of ethical values in society. He was placing submission to one God, a sense of sacrifice for others, feelings of benevolence and kind heartedness for the poor as the target for life for others, and strove to achieve this target himself while presenting the case for it with substantive arguments. This was the basis of the strong appeal of Islam for the individuals who are already inclined towards goodness and piety. Had the Prophet (sws) been a poet, he would not have been different from other poets.

Calling the Qur'an a collection of poems divined through the jinn and the devils was a shot in the dark by the Quraysh. Text such as that of the Qur'an is so pure, meaningful, God conscious and replete with calls

to mankind to serve its fellow creatures that it cannot have any relationship with satanic aims. Why would evil forces bring such a message to mankind and create problems for themselves? The message of God was also very different from that of the practitioners of the occult. The latter were totally incapable of creating such eloquence of content and word. Devils do not send their messages down to human beings with deep rooted morality. Only liars and cheats are influenced by Satan, because the sorcerers themselves make fools of people through fraudulent means. Such people also possess poor ethical values. The predictions made by sorcerers are often a mix of truth and lies, because the jinn and the devils do not have access to matters related to God. They possess much that is nonsensical and filthy, messy information based on untruths that they pass on to those who believe in them. In contrast, a prophet obtained his information through divine sources (the Angel Gabriel), and possessed unparalleled honesty and moral values.

Human Endeavour

When the Qur'an presented evidence for its message, and people reflected on it, wondering on the improbability of any human being able to do so without divine guidance, and came to the leaders of the tribe to raise their doubts, the latter attempted to convince them otherwise, saying that it was, in fact, Muhammad (sws) who was fabricating the message, but that he was not doing it alone. He was being helped by some non-Arabs and some People of the Book who developed it together. When they were ready with a piece, Muhammad (sws) came and delivered it, and in order to give it authenticity, claimed it to have come from God. Had it been from God, it would not have come down in pieces, but in one whole piece at one time.

This objection from the Quraysh, too, was unfounded and lacked a basis. The Qur'an is worded in the purest form of Arabic. It was impossible for any non-Arab or even the Prophet (sws) to have created such a text. Had the Qur'an been a human effort, the Quraysh had no lack of excellent poets or orators. It would not have been difficult to gather scores of individuals who could have been charged with creating such text. That it proved to be impossible to do so was evident when the Quraysh were asked to create just one surah, they did not take up the challenge. The Qur'an was not revealed in one piece because it is not advisable to reveal a message so serious and full of such wisdom when its purpose is to provide guidance and the knowledge of the truth to people. A work of fiction may be read in one sitting, but it is not possible to read and comprehend a book of science or philosophy thus. The manner in which the Qur'an was revealed is not related to the power of God, but to the capacity of human beings to absorb and understand.

Magic

The manner in which the message of the Qur'an was attracting people was evidence to the fact that not only was it unique in beauty and eloquence, but held great impact and influence on the human heart and mind. When one heard it, one was spellbound and would not pay heed to one's family or tribe's

protests. This is why the Quraysh attributed the Qur'an to magic. Such kind of influence was not limited to the Qur'an only. Moses' (sws) call to his people was also branded magic by his adversaries. This opinion of the Quraysh was also wrong. Divine revelation and magic spells have absolutely nothing in common. The latter is a temporary condition that can never be successful over the long term, and is quickly dispersed. The Qur'an has the power to change the hearts and minds of people completely. Magic is based on lies and proves to be baseless when faced with the truth. The Qur'an is truth to the core, and has come to destroy every falsehood. The Quraysh were witness to their falsehoods being crushed constantly by the Qur'an. Magic does not create people with lofty characters, whereas the Qur'an was instrumental in character building of a large number of people. The propaganda generated by the Quraysh may have satisfied the simple minded, or sycophants, but the more intelligent among them were not influenced.

The Status of the Qur'an

The propaganda of the Quraysh was answered within the Qur'an itself in various ways, and the status of the message being delivered by the Prophet (sws) was clarified again and again to remove the confusions in their minds. The purpose was to assist those with a pragmatic turn of mind to give up their racial and tribal prejudices and open their minds to the Prophet's message. Several verses explained the source of the Qur'an, the characteristics of the angel who brought it and the Prophet (sws) who received it and propagated it:

فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِمَا تُبْصِرُونَ وَمَا لَا تُبْصِرُونَ إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ وَمَا هُوَ بِقَوْلِ شَاعِرٍ قَلِيلًا مَّا تُؤْمِنُونَ وَلَا بِقَوْلِ كَاهِنٍ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُونَ تَنزِيلٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٦٩: ٣٨-٤٣)

So I swear by what you see. And what you do not see [that] indeed, the Qur'an is the word of a noble Messenger. And it is not the word of a poet; little do you believe. Nor the word of a soothsayer; little do you remember. [It is] a revelation from the Lord of the worlds. (69:38-43)

فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالْخُنَّسِ الْجَوَارِ الْكُنَّسِ وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا عَسْعَسَ وَالصُّبْحِ إِذَا تَنَفَّسَ إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ ذِي قُوَّةٍ عِندَ ذِي الْعَرْشِ مَكِينٍ مُّطَاعٍ ثَمَّ أَمِينٍ وَمَا صَاحِبُكُم بِمَجْنُونٍ وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ بِالْأُفُقِ الْمُبِينِ وَمَا هُوَ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ بِضَنِينٍ وَمَا هُوَ بِقَوْلِ شَيْطَانٍ رَّجِيمٍ فَأَيْنَ تَذْهَبُونَ (٨١: ١٥-٢٦)

So I swear by the retreating stars – those that run [their courses] and disappear, and by the night as it closes in and by the dawn when it breathes [that] indeed, the Qur'an is a word [conveyed by] a noble messenger [who is] possessed of power and with the Owner of the Throne, secure [in position], obeyed there [in the heavens] and trustworthy. And your companion is not [at all] mad. And he has already seen Gabriel in the clear horizon. And Muhammad is not a withholder of [knowledge of] the unseen. And the Qur'an is not the word of a devil, expelled [from the heavens]. So where are you going? (81:15-26)

وَإِنَّهُ لَتَنزِيلُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ.عَلَىٰ قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُّبِينٍ وَإِنَّهُ لَفِي زُبُرِ الْأَوَّلِينَ أَوَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُمْ آيَةً أَن يَعْلَمَهُ عُلَمَاءُ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ (٢٦: ١٩٢-١٩٧)

And indeed, the Qur'an is the revelation of the Lord of the worlds. The Trustworthy Spirit has brought it down. Upon your heart, [O Muhammad] – that you may be of the warners – In a clear Arabic language. And indeed, it is [mentioned] in the scriptures of former peoples. And has it not been a sign to them that it is recognized by the scholars of the Children of Israel? (26:192-197)

These verses make it clear that the Lord of the universe made elaborate arrangements to send His message for the guidance of His subjects in this world. The angel He selected for this purpose was extremely powerful, wise and honest and true in his character. He took his responsibilities seriously and fulfilled them to the last level of detail. He was bestowed with the best of qualities and no one except the Lord Himself has any power over him. No one could ever take advantage of him, and he could never be tempted by anything. Thus the mixing of any falsehood in the message from God could be ruled out completely. This confidant angel taught the divine revelation to the Prophet (sws) with full attention, focus and kindness. The Prophet himself had no desire for revelation; such a responsibility came upon him suddenly and he fulfilled it to the best of his capabilities. It was not a creation of his mind. The revelation was of the very highest of standards and clear, of which there was no example available anywhere. The message it carried had no distortions or unclear ideas: its guidance was natural, appealed to human intellect and pointed in the right direction. Its arguments were rooted in wisdom, nature, the universe and human psychology. If the Quraysh resisted the message despite these facts, it was due entirely to their prejudice, arrogance and personal interests.

Similar views of the Quraysh about Pilgrims

Makkah was the religious centre of all Arab tribes, and offering hajj and 'umrah were popular rituals, due to which there was regular inflow of pilgrims to the city. The Quraysh were worried in case they came to learn of the prophethood of an individual and were curious to know the details. They might wish to meet the Muslims and thus cause Islam to spread more widely. Steps had to be taken to curb this possibility. When Walid ibn Mughirah, one of the older and more intelligent leaders realized this, he suggested that instead of giving different opinions to the pilgrims when meeting them and creating in them a desire to meet the Prophet (sws), they should present a single view of what they think of him. It was decided that each one of them would think about what should be said and meet again. At the next meeting, some suggested that Mohammed's verses be called the poems of those who practiced the occult. Walid responded by saying that they had seen such practitioners and heard them too. Mohammed's message was not all similar to the rhyme of their poetry. Some suggested that Mohammed (sws) be presented as a madman. Walid disagreed, saying that Mohammed (sws) did not have any symptoms of madness, such as fears and confusion of mind. Other people wanted the Prophet (sws) to be shown to be a poet. Waleed rejected this idea too, since all of them recognised all forms of poetry, and the Qur'an did not possess any of the characteristics. Yet another suggestion was to say that

the Prophet (sws) was a magician. Walid said that magicians speak mantras, blow on and make knots. Muhammad (sws) does nothing of the sort. Finally, the people asked him to give his opinion which they would then follow. He said: "By God, Mohammed's message has sweetness in it. It is like a tree that is growing deep down in the pit, whose branches bear fruit. Whatever you say about Muhammad (sws) will be considered a falsehood. However, if you declare him to be a sorcerer, that is one possible way out. We can say that his message carries the impact of a spell. Just as spells have the power to create feelings of love, hatred and animosity, so does this message that creates divisions between a man and his father, between brothers, between a husband and wife and between members of a tribe". Thus it was decided that if anyone coming to Makkah asked about the Prophet (sws), he would be told that the latter's message was in reality magic and he would be frightened away from its impact. Although the Quraysh implemented this suggestion, the results were not encouraging.[1]

Biographies of the Prophet (sws) mention Tufayl ibn 'Amr, a very able leader of the tribe of Daws. When he went to Makkah for 'umrah, and heard that a man had claimed prophethood, and people were listening to him, he made inquiries. Everyone from the Quraysh spoke ill of the Prophet (sws) and warned him to stay away. They told him that the Prophet (sws) possessed such a magic that divided a husband and wife. Tufayl avoided the Prophet (sws) for a few days. When he came to the mosque, he would put cotton in his ears, in case he might hear whatever the Prophet (sws) was saying. One day, the Prophet (sws) was offering prayers when Tufayl heard a few verses of the Qur'an. He realised that he was being immature, since he was himself capable enough, had seen the world and could distinguish between good and evil. He could also tell the difference between good and bad poetry since he was a poet too. How could another man lead him astray? He waited until the Prophet (sws) had finished his prayers and followed him to his house, where he requested a meeting. He then introduced himself and asked if he was spreading a spell inducing message. He was very truthful and told the Prophet (sws) clearly why he had been avoiding him, and that he now wanted to hear the Qur'an. When the Prophet (sws) recited a few verses, Tufayl was so impressed that he accepted Islam immediately. Upon his return, he also converted his father and wife. Later, several members of his tribe accepted Islam. [2]

(*Translated from Hayat-i Rasul-i Ummi by Nikhat Sattar*)

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1. Ibn Hisham, Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah, vol. 1, 270.

2. Ibid., vol. 1, 382.

CHAPTER 11

The Migration to Abyssinia

As Muslims continued to face difficulties put in their way by the Quraysh, the Qur'an impressed upon them to counter these with fortitude and firm belief, and predicted rewards in exchange for their sacrifices, far in excess of any expectations and dreams. The Qur'an also asked them not to despair even if they found that their own country had been made tough for them to live in. God's earth was extensive, and if conditions were intolerable for them in that city, God would guide them towards another place where they might live in peace, and worship Him without fear, and where He would provide for them and for their safety. Did they not see how so many other living beings did not carry their provisions with them, but God gave them sustenance wherever they went, and they returned to their nests at night? Thus they should also rely upon God Who would make their trials easier to bear.

يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ أَرْضِي وَاسِعَةٌ فَإِيَّايَ فَاعْبُدُونِ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ثُمَّ إِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُبَوِّئَنَّهُم مِّنَ الْجَنَّةِ غُرَفًا تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا نِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ وَكَأَيِّن مِن دَابَّةٍ لَا تَحْمِلُ رِزْقَهَا اللَّهُ يَرْزُقُهَا وَإِيَّاكُمْ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (٢٩: ٥٦-٦٠)

My servants who have believed, indeed My earth is spacious, so worship only Me. Every soul will taste death. Then to Us will you be returned. And those who have believed and done righteous deeds, We will surely assign to them of Paradise [elevated] chambers beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally. Excellent is the reward of the [righteous] workers, who have been patient and upon their Lord rely. And how many a creature carries not its [own] provision. Allah provides for it and for you. And He is the Hearing, the Knowing. (29:56-60)

When the oppression by the Quraysh became so severe that the faithful could no longer bear it, Makkah's space began to shrink for the latter in reality. Anyone who mentioned Islam could no longer protect himself against the terrible onslaught from society. During this period, the Prophet (sws) made a request to God to strengthen Islam either through 'Amr ibn Hisham or 'Umar ibn al-Khattab. 'Amr ibn Hisham was the real name of Abu Jahal, who was always in the forefront when opposing the Prophet (sws); 'Umar ibn al-Khattab was well known for his strength and bravery, and enjoyed taunting weak Muslims. When the latter would complain to the Prophet (sws), he consoled them by saying: "Be

patient, God will find a way out for us. Before you, nations have been oppressed by their opponents to the extent that they have had their heads cut off, but they did not give up their faith."

When the situation became untenable, the Prophet (sws) allowed those who had been particularly targeted by the Quraysh, to migrate to Abyssinia, because the Christian ruler, Ashama was well known for his kind heartedness and sense of fair play and justice, and peace reigned in his country. The country was also close to Arabia, just west of the Red Sea. It was strange that almost all the Muslim youth of the Quraysh tribes were eager to migrate. The first group that did so included 11 men and five women. They were:

Banu Ummayyah Uthman ibn 'Affan (rta), with wife Ruqayyah, daughter of the Prophet (sws)

Banu 'Abd Shams Abu Hudhayfah ibn 'Utbah (rta), with wife Sahlah, daughter of Suhayl ibn 'Amr

Banu Makhzum Abu Salamah ibn 'Abd al-Asad (rta), with wife Umm Salamah (rta)

Banu Asad Zubayr ibn al-'Awwam (rta)

Banu 'Abd al-Dar Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr (rta)

Banu Zahrah 'Abd Rahman ibn 'Awf

Banu Jumh 'Uthman ibn Maz'un (ra)

Banu 'Adi 'Amir ibn Rabi'ah (rta), with wife Layla bint Abi Hathmah (rta)

Banu 'Amir Abu Sabrah ibn Abi Rahm (rta), with wife Umm Kulthum bint Suhayl (rta) Hatib ibn 'Amr (rta)

Banu Harith Suhayl ibn Bayda' (rta)

We learn, therefore, that while these young people suffered the pain of separation from their relatives for the sake of their faith, several tribes of the Quraysh, too, were affected. According to the biographers of the Prophet (sws), this migration took place during the month of Rajab, the fifth year of prophet hood.

When the first group reached Abyssinia safely, and word got around that they had been received well, many people started to move out of Makkah. Some known names are:

Banu Hashim Ja'far ibn Abi Talib (rta) with wife Asma' bint 'Umays (rta)

Banu Umayyah Khalid ibn Sa'id ibn al-'As (rta)

	‘Urwah ibn Sa‘id ibn al-‘As (rta) with wife Fatimah bint Safwan ibn Umayyah (rta)
Banu Asad	‘Ubaydullah ibn Jahash (rta), with wife Umm Habibah bint Abi Sufyan (rta)
Banu ‘Amir	Sakran ibn ‘Amr (rta) with wife Sawdah bint Zam‘ah (rta)
	‘Abdullah ibn Suhayl ibn ‘Amr (rta)
Banu Harith	Abu ‘Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah (rta)

Other than these, ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud (rta), ‘Utbah ibn Mas‘ud (rta) and Abu Musa al-Ash‘ari (rta)’s names are also mentioned. The total exceeded 80 people who had migrated at this time. Only those migrated who had suffered greatly at the hands of the Quraysh. The others remained behind with the Prophet (sws) to continue to gain spiritual benefit from their closeness to him.

Pursuit by the Quraysh

When the Quraysh saw that Muslims had found refuge in Abyssinia and were leading a peaceful life there, they decided to follow them and prepared two men, ‘Amr ibn al-‘As and ‘Abdullah ibn Abi Rabi‘ah to present their case in front of Ashamah. They went there, fully instructed, but also with presents for Ashamah and his religious leaders. They first met with the latter, to elicit their support, and then appeared before Negus, the king. They said: “O King, a few silly young men have come to your country. They have left the faith of their ancestors, and have not accepted your faith. They present a new religion which neither we, nor you are familiar with. Their elders have sent us to you, to request you to send them back to them, because only they can keep an eye on them.” Negus took counsel from his courtiers, all of whom agreed with the men from the Quraysh, but Negus hesitated. His argument was that when a group of people had come to him for protection, and chosen him and his country in preference to all others, how could he hand them over without listening to their point of view?

The king sent his steward asking the Muslims to come to his court. The Muslims decided that come what may, they would speak the truth, as they had been taught by God’s Prophet (sws). When Negus put forward the situation as described by the Quraysh, Ja‘far ibn Abi Talib (rta), speaking on behalf of the Muslims, said: “O’ King, before we accepted this new faith, we were idol worshippers, consumed dead meat, cut off connections with our blood relations and were engaged in obscene activities. We were in such a poor condition that God sent His messenger toward us. We were already well aware of his dignified lineage, his truthfulness, his piety and honesty. He gave us a call to worship one God and to stop praying to manmade idols. He taught us to speak the truth, deal with others with honesty, have mercy on our fellow human beings, be kind to our neighbours, perform our prayers, pay zakah and stay away from polytheism. He instructed us to abstain from all forms of lying, cheating, usurping the rights of orphans and obscene acts, and all other actions that could obstruct us from living a pious life. We witnessed that what he said was the truth, confirmed our faith in his message and are following his

instructions. Our country men brought great tribulations upon us; they tortured us, penalized us and tried their utmost to turn us away from our faith. When it became impossible to live in our own country, we came to yours, selecting your country as a safe haven. We hope that we shall not find any injustice here." On hearing this, Negus rejected the plea of the Quraysh.

When 'Amr ibn al-'As and 'Abdullah ibn Abi Rabi'ah returned unsuccessful from the court, they decided to incite Negus' religious sentiments. They requested permission to come back the next day to his court and submitted to him that the new prophet presented wrong ideas about Jesus (sws), son of Mary. Negus again called the Muslims to clarify the situation. Ja'far (rta) began to recite Surah Maryam, which contains the entire story of Jesus (sws) as well as the Qura'nic instructions related to him. Tears rolled down Negus' cheeks as he heard the recitation. When it had ended, Ja'far (rta) said: "According to this, Jesus (sws) was God's servant, His prophet, His spirit and His word, which were entrusted to Mary." Negus said: "By God! What you have just recited, and the guidance that Jesus had brought are light emanating from the same source."

The Quraysh delegation had to return without meeting their objectives. The Muslims in Abyssinia had inspired the light of Islam within Negus, who accepted Islam soon after. Negus, it seems, belonged to the group of Christians who were against the innovations introduced by Paul and who had adopted the actual Jesuit faith. These were the same people about whom the Qur'an states that when they received the message from the Prophet (sws), they would start to cry, because they would instantly recognize the truth of Jesus's prediction in it. They were the ones who accepted Islam by and large.

The acceptance of Islam by the Abbyssinian delegation

Those who were believers in the original form of Christianity did not accept Jesus (sws) to be the son of God, or one of the trinity elements. They awaited the fulfillment of Jesus' (sws) prediction about the last prophet, so that they would accept him when he gained prophethood. The arrival of the Muslims in Abbyssinia confirmed Jesus' (sws) predictions. The Christians questioned the Muslims further about the Prophet (sws)'s prophet hood and his teachings, heard about what they had suffered at the hands of the Quraysh and observed the character of the Muslims themselves. A group of 20 individuals visited Makkah to make their own assessment and meet the Prophet (sws) in person. After questioning him in a meeting, they satisfied themselves that he met the criteria that had been conveyed to them in their books and by scholars through the ages. After answering their queries, the Prophet (sws) recited Qur'anic verses according to the situation. This convinced them even further. The truth was now clear to them. The fortunate group did not wish to waste a single moment. They immediately accepted Islam and returned to Abbyssinia[1], since their purpose was not to stay in Makkah. It is obvious that they must have gained further knowledge of Islam from the Muslims who were already living in Abbyssinia. This was such a fruitful result from the migration that the Quraysh would never have dreamt of it. The Prophet (sws) wrote to Negus after this, inviting him to come within the fold of Islam, and the latter gladly accepted the invitation. The Prophet (sws) always prayed for him.

The disbelievers of Makkah were livid with anger when the Christians of Abbyssinia accepted Islam. Abu Jahal and his friends called them fools, to have come to review the situation, and gone back having converted to the same faith.

This event caused much agitation among the Quraysh. If people went to Makkah and became impressed by Muhammad (sws), his message would spread to other tribes, and if it reached beyond Makkah, it was likely to create even greater problems for them. They began to keep an eye on anyone coming from outside and if there was any attempt to meet the Prophet (sws), they did not hesitate to beat him up.

'Amr ibn 'Absah al-Sulami's Acceptance of Islam

'Amr ibn 'Absah was one of the Hanafis. He believed that those who worshipped idols were wrong and that this practice had no logical basis. When he heard that a person was preaching a new faith in Makkah, he was curious to know more, and arrived in Makkah. On arrival, he found that no one was allowed to meet the person concerned because his countrymen were his enemies. He recounted that he found a way to meet the Prophet (sws) in secret, and asked him: "Who are you?" He answered: "I am God's messenger." I asked: '"Who is a messenger?" He answered: "God has sent me with a message." I asked: "What message is this?" He said: "The message to worship one God, keep good relations with relatives and destroy idols." I asked: "Who is with you in this?" He answered: "Both the free and the slaves." I wanted to become his follower, but he told me to wait because I was not strong enough. He said: "Do you not see how people behave? You should go back now. When you hear that I have gained the upper hand, come back to me." 'Amr says that he returned to his tribe, but kept himself informed of what was happening in Makkah. Finally, some people came from Madinah and told him that the Prophet (sws) had migrated to Madinah and that people were flocking to him and converting to Islam in large numbers. His nation had tried to kill him, but was unsuccessful. 'Amr went to Madinah and met the Prophet (sws) who recognized him immediately. The former obtained knowledge of prayer and ablution from the Prophet (sws) on this occasion. [2]

This shows that it had been made extremely difficult for anyone to meet the Prophet (sws) in Makkah. 'Amr ibn 'Absah may have wished to stay with him in Makkah, but he was advised to return to his tribe and wait for Islam to rise to power.

Acceptance of Islam by Abu Dharr (rta) Ghifari

Abu Dharr (rta) of the tribe of Banu Ghifar had come to know that someone in Makkah claimed prophethood. He sent his brother Anis to Makkah to gather information. Anis returned after conducting research, having found out that the man taught morality and good dealings with others, and presented a text that was neither poetry nor a story. Abu Dharr, dissatisfied with these details, travelled to Makkah to see for himself. He got down in the Ka'bah, and looked for the Prophet (sws), but could not locate him. He did not think it appropriate to ask anyone. 'Ali (rta) took him to his house, as a mark of

hospitality to a traveler. He returned to the mosque early in the morning, and repeated the routine the second and third day. Finally ‘Ali (rta) asked him what he was looking for and promised that he would not share this information with anyone else. When Abu Dharr (rta) finally divulged the reason for his arrival in Makkah, ‘Ali (rta) confirmed that the Prophet (sws) was indeed the prophet of God. He took him to meet the Prophet (sws) the next morning, at which time Abu Dharr (rta) accepted Islam, and was instructed by him to return to his tribe and instruct them accordingly and remain there until he heard otherwise. Abu Dharr (rta) took an oath upon God that he would make a public declaration of his new faith before departing. He went to the mosque and proclaimed loudly: “I am a witness that there is no God but Allah and that Mohammed is the Prophet of Allah.” As soon as he had spoken, people attacked him and began to beat him up. ‘Abbas ibn Muttalib warned the crowd that he was a member of the Banu Ghifar that lived on their trade route towards Syria. On hearing this, the attackers moved away and Abu Dharr (rta) was allowed to leave safely. [3]

This incident also shows that the Quraysh had created such an environment of fear and intimidation for outsiders that no one could pronounce the Prophet’s name or meet him. If, by chance, anyone did meet him, he would be thrashed without any hesitation. During this period, the Prophet (sws) had advised people to stay away, and to make contact only after they had heard news of the Muslims gaining power over the disbelievers.

God’s Acceptance of the Prophet’s Prayer and Conversion of ‘Umar (rta)

The migration of Muslims from Makkah in large numbers merely so that they could practice their faith in peace, leaving the comfort of their homes in a manner as if they were thorns in their backs, was such an extraordinary event that it shook the core of the Quraysh who were forced to re-examine the emotional approach they had been taking so far. Among these people was ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab (rta) who came within the fold of Islam in the 6th year of prophethood, after the migration to Abyssinia.

There are two versions of his conversion narrated in history.

The first version that has gained the most currency is that ‘Umar (rta) left his home intending to kill the Prophet (sws). He met Na‘im ibn ‘Abdullah (rta) on the way, who asked him where he was going. ‘Umar (rta) told him that he wished to decide about Muhammad. Na‘im ibn Abdullah (rta) asked him to take care of his household first, as his own sister and brother in law had accepted Islam already. ‘Umar (rta) enraged, went to his sister’s house, where she and her husband were studying the Qur’an from Khabab ibn al-Art (rta). When they heard him enter, they hid the papers. Since ‘Umar (rta) had heard them recite the verses, he insisted that they recite them to him too. When they refused, he beat them mercilessly. Their answer was to say that he could do whatever he wanted; he could never remove the love of Islam from their hearts. As ‘Umar (rta) calmed down, his sister placed the papers of Surah Taha, (according to some narratives, it was Surah Hadid) in front of him. As soon as he had read these, his heart went through a complete change. He asked Khubab (rta) where the Prophet (sws) was, and was told that he was in a house close to the Mount of Safa’. Putting his sword in its sheath, ‘Umar (rta) went across to the place. Someone inside the house saw him coming and warned the Prophet (sws), who

asked for the door to be opened for him. On entering, he immediately accepted Islam. This version was passed on from the people of Madinah to Ibn Ishaq. [4]

Despite the fact that this version is the more commonly accepted one, several questions arise about its authenticity.

1. It was a matter of far reaching consequences in the tribal life in Arabia if a person belonging to another tribe were to be killed. Had this been easy, the Quraysh tribes would not have impressed upon the Banu Hashim to restrain the Prophet (sws) from preaching. They were afraid that if they were to take any action against him directly, a long battle would begin within Makkah, and it would then be difficult for anyone to disentangle from it.

2. ‘Umar (rta) was a wise and far sighted man. He was aware of what might happen if he were to attempt the murder of the Prophet (sws), because his own tribe, Banu ‘Adi was weak as compared to the Banu Hashim.

3. Sa‘id ibn Zayd (rta) and Fatima bint al-Khattab (ra) belong to the earliest group of companions, and were among the first to accept Islam after prophet hood. Their faith was not hidden, and their family members must have known about it. Every Muslim became known within a period of five years. This is the reason why the entire Quraysh were bent upon teaching a lesson to the Muslims, and the latter were ready to migrate to Abyssinia. The story seems to indicate that they had just recently accepted Islam, in the 6th year of prophet hood.

4. ‘Umar’s (rta) insistence that his sister read out to him what they were reciting indicates that he was unfamiliar with the Qur’an. Yet, it was the responsibility of the Prophet (sws) to recite the Qur’an to his people. He had read it out to the Quraysh several times, and when offering the salah next to the Ka‘bah, would read its verses loudly so that people would hear them. The version as stated, therefore, contradicts this fact.

5. It is also difficult to accept that Fatimah (rta) would read from the papers and hide them. In those days when Muslims were in a particularly repressed state, it was impossible for them to arrange for the Qur’anic verses to be available in a written form, and then to read from them. Very few people from within the Quraysh knew how to read and write, and there were hardly any women amongst these. Similarly, Khubab (rta) was a slave. His literacy is questionable.

6. Surah Hadid is a Madani surah. It had not been revealed in the 6th year of prophet hood.

7. Dar Arqam was a house that had become a centre for the Muslims and was known to all Makkans. The narrative mentions it as if it was an unknown place and ‘Umar (rta) was hearing about it for the first time.

8. The story gives an impression that the Prophet (sws) was hiding inside the house. To the contrary, he moved freely, not only to the Ka‘bah, but also to the meetings of the Quraysh. According to several

narratives, the Prophet (sws) recited the Qur'an loudly in his prayers, and members of the Quraysh listened to him from behind curtains. This also happened when resistance against the Prophet (sws) was at its peak. It was never difficult for anyone to meet the Prophet (sws). God's apostles always did their work openly. They were assigned to their responsibilities by God and He took care of their safety. They were not required to protect themselves.

The second version is narrated from Umm 'Abdullah bint Abi Hathmah (rta). 'Amir ibn Rabi'ah was a supporter of 'Umar's (rta) family. His family was preparing for migration to Abyssinia when 'Umar (rta) came and saw what was happening. Until now, his attitude had been very harsh towards them and he had caused then great pain. 'Umar (rta) asked: "Umm 'Abdullah, are you leaving?" She answered: "Yes, your people have hurt us and tortured us. We will now spread out on Allah's earth, until He opens a way out for us." 'Umar (rta) answered: "May Allah be with you," and in so saying, his voice had faltered, and he left. It was clear that the departure of that family had hurt him deeply. Umm 'Abdullah told her husband that if he had seen 'Umar (rta), he would have noticed the signs of sorrow and pain on his face. She felt that it was very likely he would accept Islam soon. [5]

This narrative appears true and natural. Here was a family with which one had had years of close relations, and with whose members one was emotionally attached. On what one judged as a temporary matter, one was excessively cruel and unfair, and the family decided to leave home and country, rather than give up on its new beliefs. The most hard hearted man would be forced to rethink his attitude, and wonder if he was not the one who was wrong, and the others who were on the right path? Events such as these change the course of our lives. It seems this is what happened to 'Umar (rta), and after some thought, he accepted Islam.

According to a narrative from 'Ata' and Mujahid, 'Umar (rta) went to the Ka'bah one night and found the Prophet (sws) reciting the Qur'an in his prayers. He approached the Ka'bah from the hatim, hid behind its cover, and listened to him. When the salah ended, the Prophet (sws) proceeded towards his home. As he came close, 'Umar (rta) made himself known. When the Prophet (sws) asked him his reason for being there, he answered that he had come to accept Islam. The Prophet (sws) prayed for steadfastness in his faith, and this great hero of Makkah became a servant of Islam.[6] The next day he announced in the mosque that he had become a Muslim and that he would offer his salah publicly. He dared anyone to stop him from doing so.

Thus the supplication of the Prophet (sws) made in 'Umar's (rta) favour was accepted by God. The Muslims were greatly reassured, and the Quraysh felt defeated.

'Umar's (rta) acceptance of Islam soon after the migration to Abyssinia is proof of the fact that the latter had shaken the Quraysh, as well as most of the youth. Contrary to their expectations, conversions to Islam continued at a rapid pace and the numbers of Muslims increased exponentially.

Revelation of Power to Muslims

The migration to Abyssinia affected the Quraysh in another way. The manner in which Muslims had been accepted by Abyssinians, and the bent of their King towards Islam had created hatred and resentment in the hearts of the Quraysh for the Christians. Muslims, on the other hand, were deeply grateful to Christians and spoke well of them.

Outside the Arab world, but adjacent to them were the great empires of the Persians and Romans. The Persians were polytheists, but the Romans, despite the introduction of Paul's new concepts of the holy trinity, were believers in the Oneness of God. The Quraysh were not interested in the controversies between various sects of the Christians. They considered them to belong to the same religious group. The Persians and Romans often had skirmishes along the borders of Syria, which at times reached the level of a full scale war. In 616 A.D, Persia invaded a part of what was Rome and gained a strong foothold there. The Persian ruler, Khusru Parvaiz started dreaming of overpowering the whole of Rome. When this news reached Makkah, the Quraysh taunted the Muslims about the fate of their co-religionists. They made fun of the Prophet (sws) who had spoken of the power of the Muslims, saying that were he right, why would God have given victory to the polytheist Khusru over the monotheist Caesar? Now the situation was that the Romans could not find a place to live, and the Persian army was invading deep into their land. The Muslims, according to the Quraysh, were bound to suffer a similar fate. Since Muslim sympathies were with the Romans, they were embarrassed and had little to say. It was then that Surah Rum was revealed:

الم غُلِبَتِ الرُّومُ فِي أَدْنَى الْأَرْضِ وَهُم مِّن بَعْدِ غَلَبِهِمْ سَيَغْلِبُونَ فِي بِضْعِ سِنِينَ لِلَّهِ الْأَمْرُ مِن قَبْلُ وَمِن بَعْدُ وَيَوْمَئِذٍ يَفْرَحُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ بِنَصْرِ اللَّهِ يَنصُرُ مَن يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ لَا يُخْلِفُ اللَّهُ وَعْدَهُ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (30: 1-6)

This is Surah Alif Lam Mim. The Byzantines have been defeated. In the nearest land. But they, after their defeat, will overcome. Within three to nine years. To Allah belongs the command before and after. And that day the believers will rejoice. In the victory of Allah. He gives victory to whom He wills, and He is the Exalted in Might, the Merciful. [It is] the promise of Allah. Allah does not fail in His promise, but most of the people do not know. (30:1-6)

These verses reassured the Muslims that the victories gained by the Persians were temporary. The situation would change soon and in a few years, the Romans would gain dominance over their enemies. That would be the time when Muslims would rejoice and the polytheists of Makkah would be thwarted.

The Arabic term used for a few years is بِضْعِ سِنِينَ which means nine or less years. In reality, this is what happened. In the second year after migration to Madinah, the Romans overpowered the Persians completely. At the same time, in the battle of Badr, a mere 300 Muslims defeated the 1000 iron clad army of the disbelievers. The key leaders of the Quraysh who led the enmity campaign against the Prophet (sws) were slain. Thus, the prediction made at the time of the migration to Abyssinia came true and the faithful were given several reasons to celebrate their victory.

Return of Migrants from Abyssinia

After staying in Abyssinia for some time, 33 Muslims, including some wives, returned to Makkah. According to Ibn Ishaq, this return was caused by misinformation they had received. On coming back, they were worried on whose responsibility could they enter the city. The doors of their own home had been closed on them. Unless they gained the protection of some strong individuals, they would be vulnerable if they attempted to live on their own. Some Muslims, therefore, took protection of tribes other than their own. ‘Uthman ibn Maz‘un (rta) took refuge with Walid ibn Mughirah. When he saw that he was enjoying full safety because of Walid’s protection, while the Prophet (sws) and other Muslims remained in difficulty, he wanted to return his protection. Walid said that since he had given him protection in the mosque, it could be returned in the same place. ‘Uthman went to the mosque, and while appreciating Walid’s protection and his kindness, announced that he was returning it, and that from now on, he would be relying on God’s protection alone.

Abu Salamah took protection from Abu Talib, at which Abu Lahab was very angry and resisted it. Abu Talib answered that Abu Salamah was his nephew and therefore under his protection.

Those who had migrated forever to Abyssinia, migrated again to Madinah, and gained blessings from God for a double migration in the way of God. It is probably only among Muslims that some companions of the Prophet (sws) have been blessed twice through two successive migrations.

(*Translated from Hayat-i Rasul-i Ummi by Nikhat Sattar*)

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1. Ibn Hisham, Al-Sirah al-nabawiyyah, vol. 1, 391-392.

2. Ibn Kathir, Al-Sirah al-nabawiyyah, vol. 1, 281.

3. Muslim, Al-Jami‘ al-sahih, 388.

4. Ibn Hisham, Al-Sirah al-nabawiyyah, vol. 1, 343-346.

5. Ibid., vol. 1, 342.

6. Ibid., vol. 1, 348.

CHAPTER 12

The Unlettered Prophet (12)

Biography
Khalid Masud
(Tr. by:Nikhat Sattar)

Reasons for Fearing the Qur'an by the Quraysh

The Quraysh were afraid of the message of the Prophet (sws) because the religion that they had established in Makkah on account of their trusteeship of the Ka'bah was not the same that had been taught by Abraham (sws) The teachings of Islam criticized this self constructed religion, thus challenging the basis of the control of the Quraysh over the House of God. The Quraysh thought that if this message gained roots, it might become popular, in which case the system of their religious supremacy would be destroyed and their prominence in the country would be lost forever.

The benefit that the Quraysh obtained by replacing the Abrahamic concept of the Oneness of God with idol worship was that they could give a place to the idols of all the Arab tribes in the Ka'bah, and thus ensure their loyalty to them. This was the same strategy that was used by the Hindus in India for followers of Buddha. They had allowed the statues of Buddha to be placed in their temples, and thus eliminated the chance for the Buddhist religion to develop independently. With all their idols finding a place in the Ka'bah, Arabia viewed the Quraysh as keepers of the system of polytheism, and in exchange, allowed them extensive trade and travelling facilities en route to other destinations. If they were to adopt monotheism, these benefits could be endangered. The message given by the Prophet (sws) highlighted each and every deviation and religious aberration of the Quraysh, due to which they had become thoroughly disgruntled. We examine here briefly the elements inherent in the Prophet's message, which were critical of the views held by the Quraysh.

Opposition to Polytheism and Idol Worship

Since the Quraysh related their religious ideals and practices to those of Abraham (sws), the Qur'an emphasised at several places the deep hatred Abraham (sws) held for polytheism and idols, and related how he fought his people because of their idol worship, and left his country when they refused to listen to him.

And mention in the Book [the story of] Abraham. Indeed, he was a man of truth and a prophet. [Mention] when he said to his father: “O my father, why do you worship that which does not hear and does not see and will not benefit you at all? O my father, indeed there has come to me of knowledge that which has not come to you, so follow me; I will guide you to an even path. O my father, do not worship Satan. Indeed Satan has ever been, to the Most Merciful, disobedient. O my father, indeed I fear that a punishment shall touch you from the Most Merciful so you would be to Satan a companion [in Hell].” [His father] said: “Have you no desire for my gods, O Abraham? If you do not desist, I will surely stone you, so get away from me forever.” (19:41-46)

These verses declare idol worship to be useless, and the same as worshipping Satan. By so doing, man is liable to be punished severely by God. The true path is attained only by following the message of the prophet.

And [mention, O Muhammad], when Abraham said: “My Lord, make this city [Makkah] secure and keep me and my sons away from worshipping idols. My Lord, indeed they have led astray many among the people. So whoever follows me - then he is of me; and whoever disobeys me - indeed, You are [yet] Forgiving and Merciful. Our Lord, I have settled some of my descendants in an uncultivated valley near Your sacred House, our Lord, that they may establish prayer. So make hearts among the people incline towards them and provide for them from the fruits that they might be grateful. Our Lord, indeed You know what we conceal and what we declare, and nothing is hidden from Allah on the earth or in the heaven.” (14:35-38)

Abraham’s (sws) aversion to idolatry is evident from every word he spoke in these verses. He also reminded his sons of their responsibilities towards the Ka‘bah, which the Quraysh had not only forgotten, but had introduced bizarre additions to, as traditional practice. How could then the Qur’anic verses be accepted easily by the Quraysh? When the Prophet (sws) explained these verses, the Quraysh must have felt deeply threatened.

The Reality of Monotheism

The Qur’an also clarified that the only Being to Whom thanks should be given is Allah because mankind is reaping the benefits of blessings bestowed by God. The Qur’an gave several examples of the gifts of God and asked if there was anything in which a partner could be ascribed to God, or on the basis of which some other being could be thought worthy of worship:

Say, [O Muhammad]: “Praise be to Allah, and peace upon His servants whom He has chosen. Is Allah better or what they associate with Him?” [More precisely], is He [not best] who created the heavens and the earth and sent down for you rain from the sky, causing to grow thereby gardens of joyful beauty which you could not [otherwise] have grown the trees thereof? Is there a deity with Allah? [No], but they are a people who ascribe equals [to Him]. Is He [not best] who made the earth a stable ground and placed within it rivers and made for it firmly set mountains and placed between the two seas a barrier? [No], but most of them do not know. Is He [not best] who responds to the desperate one when he calls upon Him and removes evil and makes you inheritors of the earth? Is there a deity with Allah? Little do you remember. Is He [not best] who guides you through the darkness of the land and sea and who sends the winds as good tidings before His mercy? Is there a deity with Allah? High is Allah above whatever they associate with Him. Is He [not best] who begins creation and then repeats it and who provides for you from the heaven and earth? Is there a deity with Allah? Say: “Produce your proof, if you should be truthful.” Is He [not best] who begins creation and then repeats it and who provides for you from the heaven and earth? Say: “None in the heavens and earth knows the unseen except Allah, and they do not perceive when they will be resurrected.” (27:59-65)

When traditional beliefs of polytheism were challenged by the Qur’an in such clear terms, and were declared baseless, it is obvious that the Quraysh must have been seething with rage.

The Status of Angels and the Jinn

The people of Arabia considered angels and jinn to be either a part of deity, to be worshipped as God, or gave them attributes that were God’s alone. They related them with the power to be beneficial or hurtful to mankind, and made great efforts to appease them, thus expecting them to grant their prayers and wishes. Angels were considered God’s daughters, while a direct connection was believed to exist between the jinn and God. The Qur’an destroyed the entire fabric of these superstitions, making it very clear that both angels and jinn were well aware of their status in God’s universe. They would not ever dream of being partners with God. They were as dependent on God, and could gain His mercy only by submitting to His will, as mankind:

So inquire of them, [O Muhammad]: “Does your Lord have daughters while they have sons? Or did We create the angels as females while they were witnesses?” Unquestionably, it is out of their [invented] falsehood that they say: “Allah has begotten,” and indeed, they are liars. Has He chosen daughters over sons? What is [wrong] with you? How do you make judgement? Then will you not be reminded? Or do you have a clear authority? Then produce your scripture, if you should be truthful. And they have claimed between Him and the jinn a lineage, but the jinn have already known that they [who made such

claims] will be brought to [punishment]. Exalted is Allah above what they describe. Except the chosen servants of Allah [who do not share in that sin]. So indeed, you [disbelievers] and whatever you worship, You cannot tempt [anyone] away from Him, Except he who is to [enter and] burn in Hell. [The angels say]: "There is not among us any except that he has a known position. And indeed, we are those who line up [for prayer]." (37:149-165)

The Concept of the Day of Judgement

The people of Arabia were dismissive of the Day of Judgement, and believed that it was very unlikely to occur. The Qur'an gave appealing arguments and also described the fate that would befall those who disbelieved prophets and refuted the fact that a day of reckoning would come:

Allah begins creation; then He will repeat it; then to Him you will be returned. And the Day the Hour appears the criminals will be in despair. And there will not be for them among their [alleged] partners any intercessors, and they will [then] be disbelievers in their partners. And the Day the Hour appears - that Day they will become separated. And as for those who had believed and done righteous deeds, they will be in a garden [of Paradise], delighted. But as for those who disbelieved and denied Our verses and the meeting of the Hereafter, those will be brought into the punishment [to remain]. (30:11-16)

And the disbeliever says: "When I have died, am I going to be brought forth alive?" Does man not remember that We created him before, while he was nothing? So, by your Lord, We will surely gather them and the devils; then We will bring them to be present around Hell upon their knees. Then We will surely extract from every sect those of them who were worst against the Most Merciful in insolence. Then, surely it is We who are most knowing of those most worthy of burning therein. And there is none of you except he will come to it. This is upon your Lord inevitability decreed. (19:66-71)

The noblemen of the Quraysh who would not consider anyone else worthy enough of their attention, on hearing that they would be presented before God as criminals and would be punished for their sins were overcome with fear and outrage. Every word of this message must have been intolerable for them.

Instructions for Hajj

The Quraysh were responsible for all arrangements of the mosque and for the pilgrimage of the hajj and 'umrah. They discharged these with full commitment, but their deviation from the original prayer rituals caused them to stray from God's instructions. The Qur'an warned them to be careful in being

careless in such matters. New instructions were given that rekindled the path that had been darkened for centuries:

And [mention, O Muhammad], when We designated for Abraham the site of the House, [saying]: “Do not associate anything with Me and purify My House for those who offer tawaf and those who stand [in prayer] and those who bow and prostrate. And proclaim to the people the hajj [pilgrimage]; they will come to you on foot and on every lean camel; they will come from every distant pass - That they may witness benefits for themselves and mention the name of Allah on known days over what He has provided for them of [sacrificial] animals. So, eat of them and feed the miserable and poor. Then let them end their untidiness and fulfill their vows and perform tawaf around the ancient House.” That [has been commanded], and whoever honours the sacred ordinances of Allah - it is best for him in the sight of his Lord. And permitted to you are the grazing livestock, except what is recited to you. So avoid the uncleanliness of idols and avoid false statements, Inclining [only] to Allah, not associating [anything] with Him. And he who associates with Allah - it is as though he had fallen from the sky and was snatched by the birds or the wind carried him down into a remote place. That [is so]. And whoever honours the symbols of Allah - indeed, it is from the piety of hearts. (22:26-32)

The Qur’an says that the purpose for which Abraham (sws) had constructed this House had been defeated by the polytheists. They were to get rid of the filth that they had heaped upon themselves due to these idols, and refrain from declaring things halal or haram on the basis of their own whims. The rites of the pilgrimage were to be purified of all aspects of polytheism. The customs of the House of God were not to be respected merely superficially; they required piety of heart.

The Qur’an declared nudity during circumambulation a satanic addition, and called it an immoral act. It instructed pilgrims to come fully dressed to mosques.

And when they commit an immorality, they say: “We found our fathers doing it, and Allah has ordered us to do it.” Say: “Indeed, Allah does not order immorality. Do you say about Allah that which you do not know?”

O children of Adam, take your adornment at every mosque, and eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess. Say: “Who has forbidden the adornment of Allah which He has produced for His servants and the good [lawful] things of provision?” Say: “They are for those who believe during the worldly life [but] exclusively for them on the Day of Resurrection.” Thus do We detail the verses for a people who know. (7:28, 31-32)

We must remember that these comments relate to the rituals that had been instituted by the Quraysh which included nude circling of the Ka'bah. The Quraysh claimed that this religion was a legacy that had been handed down to them through several generations from Abraham (sws). The Qur'an clarified that this was a false allegation and that God never demands immorality and obscenity. Any such reference to Him would be a complete breach of respect.

The Halal-Haram Differentiation of Animals and other Goods

The polytheists had adopted several innovations regarding what was acceptable or not for them in terms of edibles, and considered these to be also religious edicts. The Qur'an stated that such restrictions were totally baseless. They were allowed to consume all meat that had been produced through animals slaughtered in the name of Allah, but those that were killed as sacrifice in the name of any other deity were haram.

And why should you not eat of that upon which the name of Allah has been mentioned while He has explained in detail to you what He has forbidden you, excepting that to which you are compelled. And indeed do many lead [others] astray through their [own] inclinations without knowledge. Indeed, your Lord - He is most knowing of the transgressors. And leave what is apparent of sin and what is concealed thereof. Indeed, those who earn [blame for] sin will be recompensed for that which they used to commit. And do not eat of that upon which the name of Allah has not been mentioned, for indeed, it is grave disobedience. And indeed do the devils inspire their allies [among men] to dispute with you. And if you were to obey them, indeed, you would be associators [of others with Him]. And is one who was dead and We gave him life and made for him light by which to walk among the people like one who is in darkness, never to emerge there from? Thus it has been made pleasing to the disbelievers that which they were doing. (6:119-122)

Addressing the polytheists, the Qur'an says that they had developed a vast net of innovations according to which they do not take Allah's name when slaughtering animals, and instead name fake deities to whom they assign a partnership with Allah. Obviously Abraham (sws) had never taught them to do so. And there were many animals that were to be revered, but because they were haram according to the beliefs of the polytheists, even if Allah's name was taken and they were slaughtered, they refused to eat their meat. All this was just the result of a man made religion and a blatant disobedience of God's instructions.

And they say: "These animals and crops are forbidden; no one may eat from them except whom we will," by their claim. And there are those [camels] whose backs are forbidden [by them] and those upon

which the name of Allah is not mentioned - [all of this] an invention of untruth about Him. He will punish them for what they were inventing. (6:138)

The views that the Prophet (sws) held in all such matters were so widely different from those of the Quraysh that there was no point where the two could meet. The Quraysh were incensed with this. They thought that the message of Islam was not only negating their ancestral beliefs, but was also striking at the roots of the religious system that formed the basis of their leadership in Arabia. If this message was successful they would lose their priesthood and trusteeship of the House of God. Similarly, their worldly benefits would suffer a terrible blow. These thoughts would create further severity in their efforts to curtail the activities of the Prophet (sws) and his followers, but to no avail. In such situations, the Qur'an referred to previous nations that had faced similar oppressions. The Prophet (sws) would talk about prophecies of future victories that were to be gained by the Muslims, and helped them develop courage and fortitude in meeting the increasing resistance from the Quraysh. The promise of God's mercy and kindness and the exalted status to be awarded to people of strong faith gave the Muslims so much strength that they seemed to be impervious to the pains inflicted upon them.

(*Translated from Hayat-i Rasul-i Ummi by Nikhat Sattar*)

CHAPTER 9

The Unlettered Prophet (13)

Biography
Khalid Masud
(Tr. by:Nikhat Sattar)

The Call for Help from the Quraysh to the Jews

The Qur'an was delivering a series of attacks on the beliefs, worship rituals and religious concepts of the Quraysh and the Prophet (sws) was communicating these in totality to his followers. The Quraysh tried to find convincing answers to the questions raised and thus to satisfy the people, but they soon realized that their efforts were puny in front of the majesty of the divine text. They sent one of their leaders, Nadr ibn Harith to the Jewish elders of Madinah to convince them to resist the Prophet (sws) and to give the Quraysh some additional information which they could use as a reference against the Qur'an. The Jews had so far either remained indifferent, or given some occasional advice to their Makkan friends that they used to raise as objections, but after Nadr ibn Harith's visit, were fully mobilized. This is the reason why there is little mention of the People of the Book during the early days of Prophethood in the Qur'an, but the activities of these enemies of Islam has been disclosed openly in later years. This shows that these people were not only fully aware of the message of the Prophet (sws), but they provided the Quraysh with the necessary moral, intellectual and political support to stand up to him.

The purpose of Nadr ibn Harith's mission appears to be to assess the views of the People of the Book about the Prophet (sws): was he really a prophet as he claimed, or was he merely attempting to impose upon them by declaring himself as one? What were the signs by which a prophet could be recognized? How should they behave towards him? It is obvious that the birth of the promised prophet among the Quraysh was an event that must have been highly vexatious for the People of the Book. They knew from the predictions contained in the holy books that a great prophet was to arrive, and they had assigned expectations of rewards from God and power over other nations of the world to him. They had hoped that the last prophet would be from the long line of prophets, within the Israelites. It was a faint hope because the predictions made by earlier prophets were not specific about the promised prophet being from the Israelites.

The Jews had always viewed the Ishmaelites with contempt, so news of the last prophet from their people was not a happy one for them. On the other hand, it was a fact that the Quraysh were the leaders of the Arabs, and if the Prophet (sws) was to be resisted openly, it was likely that the innate nationalism of the Arabs might have made them resentful. The People of the Book seem to have planned with great care. They adopted a two-fold strategy during the Makkan phase. One was to keep a watchful eye on how the new prophet hood stages developed, and the other to incite the Quraysh to act against the message of the Qur'an, but refrain from becoming one of the parties as far as possible.

Objections on the Qur'an being a Wahi

Whenever the Prophet (sws) presented a message of the Qur'an, he clarified that it was a wahi from God and that he had been ordered to communicate it to the people. The People of the Book at first tried to convince the Quraysh that anyone who made such a claim was false because there was no reason for God to send his wahi through a human being. The Qur'an itself revealed this villainy thus:

And they did give true appreciation to Allah when they said: "Allah did not reveal to a human being anything." Say: "Who revealed the Scripture that Moses brought as light and guidance to the people? You [Jews] make it into pages, disclosing [some of] it and concealing much. And you were taught that which you knew not - neither you nor your fathers." Say: "Allah [revealed it]." Then leave them in their [empty] discourse, amusing themselves. (6:91)

It is surprising that they thought of such a meaningless objection since their own identity was based on the fact they could understand and recognize wahi and spiritual revelations. They were probably trying to take advantage of the naiveté and lack of knowledge of matters related to wahi. This is why the Qur'an asked about the source of the Book (Torah) that was revealed to Moses (sws). If mankind needed divine guidance at that time, did it not need it now? Had God retired from His responsibility to guide human beings? If the people to whom the Torah had come had decided to hide parts of the revealed message, would God leave his creation to falter in the dark? These claimants of God consciousness understood Him so poorly, that they neither knew His attributes, nor were they aware of His graciousness and blessings.

The other ludicrous objection raised by the People of the Book was that the language of all divine revelations was Hebrew; all earlier books were sent down in that language, whereas the Qur'an was in Arabic. Had it been really from God, it would have been in Hebrew. After all, God would not change His language with the passage of time. The Qur'an answered thus:

And if We had made it a non-Arabic Qur'an, they would have said: "Why are its verses not explained in detail [in our language]? Is it a foreign [recitation] and an Arab [messenger]?" Say: "It is, for those who believe, a guidance and cure." And those who do not believe – in their ears is deafness, and it is upon them blindness. Those are being called from a distant place. (41:44)

In other words, if the audience was Hebrew speaking, the heavenly books were in Hebrew; the addressees of the Qur'an were Arabs, thus it was revealed in Arabic. Had it not been so, no one would have understood it, and people would have objected to the sense of having a divine Book in a non Arabic language for Arabs. The reality is that the People of the Book had shut their eyes to the guidance given to them in their own Books, and had become habituated to darkness. Now that they were faced with the light of the Qur'an, they were blinded by its brightness and could not bear to open their eyes. Would they prefer to turn a deaf ear to the Prophet's message, and be called by God's steward on the Day of Judgement to answer for their refusal to pay heed to God's instructions, and thus taken towards hell?

The Accusation of Support from People of the Book

The People of the Book faced a challenge when the Qur'an presented facts that were already given in their own books. When this happened, they would say that Muhammad (sws) was compiling the Book (the Qur'an) with help from some members of

their own group. They worded this accusation vaguely so that it would not be possible for anyone to probe deeply enough. They would claim that some people gave a few sentences in writing to Muhammad (sws) which he read out, and this process continued throughout the day. Incidentally, the people who were close to the Prophet were non-Arabs, and they were the ones mentioned in this connection. The Qur'an commented:

And We certainly know that they say: "It is only a human being who teaches the Prophet." The tongue of the one they refer to is foreign, and this Qur'an is [in] a clear Arabic language. (16:103)

Before making such a baseless claim, they should have at least considered the power, majesty and flawlessness of the language of the Qur'an. Could a non-Arab ever produce such text? If this was a human effort, why had the Quraysh failed to produce a similar sample from the People of the Book by using their vast resources?

There is another aspect which completely destroys the view that some People of the Book may have supported the Prophet (sws) in creating the Qur'an. If this were the truth, the Qur'an would have followed the Torah. When copying something, a clever person would never take the risk of creating something untested, because people could refuse it immediately. The Qur'an did not give importance to its conformity with what had been stated in the Torah. Instead, it stated the truth. The result is that themes evolved naturally in the Qur'an, whereas this is not evident in the Torah. At places, the Qur'an has corrected the Torah, assuming an authoritative position. Why would a few members of the People of the Book have done this for the Prophet (sws)? There are some topics discussed by the Qur'an that were not included in the Torah at all. Who brought these in?

The same centuries old objection of assistance from the People of the Book is still raised by some Western Orientalists. This objection remains clouded with the same vague claims even after much research. After spending considerable resources, Western scholars have not succeeded in identifying factual, evidence based arguments in support of their accusations. Their intellect does not seem to have risen above that of the Quraysh, or of the People of the Book, at the time of Prophethood. The Qur'an had managed to remove doubts from the minds of its detractors, and they became its avid followers subsequently, but some Western Orientalists still believe that they can prove it to have been written by a man. Observe the helplessness of William Muir, when he refers to various probabilities in a manner that leaves the process of research lamenting itself!

The general outline of the Christian story in the Coran, having a few salient points in accordance with the Gospel and the rest filled up with wild marvels, is just such as we might expect an enquiring Jew to learn from the traditions amongst the lower classes in Judea. Something might be learned too from the Christian slaves of Mecca; but they had generally been carried off from their homes in boyhood, and would remember little more than a few Scripture stories, with perhaps some fragments of the creed. Either the Jew or the Christian may also have heard the opening of the Gospel of Luke, and communicated to Mahomet the outline of the births of John and Jesus, which he transferred to the Coran. It is also possible that someone may have repeated to Mahomet from memory, or read to him from a manuscript, the verses of the Gospel containing these details;-but this is mere conjecture.[1]

As far as the presence of the People of the Book in Makkah is concerned, Jews and Christians were not strangers in the city. Khadijah's uncle, Warqah ibn Nawfal read the Bible in its original language; Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Tufayl, Salman Farisi and Abu Fakihah Rumi were Christians. The Prophet's adopted son, Zayd belonged to the Banu Kalab, among whom Christianity was well known. It is a historic fact that the elite elders of the Jews were friends with leaders of the Quraysh. Some influential

Jews had come from Madinah to Makkah and had settled here. The Jewish leader, Ka'ab ibn Ashraf used to stay in Makkah for several weeks. Quraysh leaders travelled to Madinah and stayed at the Jew Banu Nadir's place.

The People of the Book may or may not have participated in the pilgrimage rites during the hajj during the times of the Prophet (sws), but their presence in the congregation at this time is indicated in history. Western Orientalists have stated that once the Prophet (sws) listened to the speech of the archbishop of Najran, Quss ibn Sa'idah at Mina. It was not possible for Jews and Christians to ignore this national gathering of the Arabs that was also the centre of trading, social and economic activity.

Was the presence of Jews and Christians in Makkah and its environs sufficient evidence of their assistance to the Prophet (sws) in writing the Qur'an is something a reasoning mind cannot accept. Here are a few arguments in support of this:

1. The research undertaken by Orientalists on the presence of Jews and Christians shows them to be mainly slaves or labourers. The level of knowledge they had could not have been adequate enough to be considered representative of that of the People of the Book. The Qur'an conducts a wide ranging debate into both the history and beliefs of these groups which would not have been possible based on information gleaned from hearsay. The Qur'an has also corrected the wrongly held beliefs of both the Jews and Christians.

How could the followers of other faiths be instrumental in setting up a parallel religion, similar to their own? Why would they have thus harmed their own interests? One can understand their resistance, but it is difficult to comprehend that they would have provided their help to the Prophet (sws). At the time of prophet hood, his was a single voice. Taking his side and standing with him was an action likely to put one's life in danger. How would the Jews and Christians have benefitted from helping him? There was nothing they were to gain from this act. In later years, both the groups fought bloody battles with the Muslims. Why would they have been so supportive of Islam during its earlier phase?

2. The Qur'an does not contain too much content about the people of the Book. Even if one assumes that the part that relates to them had been prepared with help from them, who provided the assistance to write up the remaining part that is six or seven times as large? The question still remains: who wrote the Qur'an? It is surprising that our intellectuals claim that scores of writers together cannot produce a play of the calibre of a Shakespearean one, which was, after all, the product of a human mind; similarly they find it difficult to imagine that a team of scientists could be behind the genius of Einstein who came up with his revolutionary Theory of Relativity. But it is relatively easy to spread such nonsense about the Qur'an, of which not a single verse could be created over centuries that it was written by Muhammad (sws), with help from a few Jews and Christians. This is despite knowing that the Prophet (sws) was never anyone's student, and he was completely illiterate.

The Qur'an's point of view is that as an argument for the prophet hood of Muhammad (sws), it is enough to recognize the fact that he had neither read any of the earlier books, nor did he know how to write, and yet he was suddenly and very eloquently able to communicate similar themes, and had full knowledge of what had happened to nations and prophets hundreds and thousands of years ago.

And you did not recite before it any scripture, nor did you inscribe one with your right hand. Otherwise the falsifiers would have had [cause for] doubt. (29:48)

It follows, therefore, that the presence of the People of the Book in or around Makkah is of no consequence as far as the revelation of the Qur'an is concerned.

The Objection of Differences between the Qur'an and Ancient Books

When the Jews and Christians saw that the new Prophethood relied upon the Qur'an, which was communicated to the people as a divine revelation and they were automatically impressed by its content, they adopted the stance of pitching the earlier books against the Qur'an. When the Torah was already available, they said, there was no need for a new book. In answer to this, the Qur'an put forward the attitude they had taken towards the Torah:

Just as We had revealed [scriptures] to the separators Who have made the Qur'an into portions. (15:90-91)

This is a reference to the Jews when they divided the Torah into sections so that they could hide some parts and reveal others. The result was that the entire message was not accessible to all people. Jewish scholars made changes in the Torah according to their whims and kept the common man away from the God given guidance it provided. At this act of the Jewish scholars, Jesus (sws) is known to have said that light is given to be placed on the sconce so that it could illuminate its surroundings, not to be covered with darkness. Because of this act of the Jews, some parts of the Torah were destroyed, and a stage was reached when it was completely lost. It was then recompiled through memory. Thus, at the time of revelation of the Qur'an, what was available with the Jews in the name of the Torah were a collection of some contradictory and debatable narratives. Even today, a reading of the Torah gives a sense of a narrator explaining something in his own words. There are only a few places where one can feel the grandeur and majesty of a heavenly text. If, after this despicable treatment the Jews had accorded to the Torah, God had not arranged for an alternative guidance for his servants, they would have suffered greatly.

To support this argument, the Jews put forward their concern about instructions in the Qur'an about eating and drinking being different from those in the Torah. For example, the instruction related to the Sabbath which was a basic tenet of Judaism had been totally neglected in Islam. Had the Qur'an been a heavenly book, it would have had the same instructions as those in the Torah. God would not change his injunctions with the passage of time. Hence, they said, the Qur'an was only a fabricated text. To this, the Qur'an explained thus: God has sent down His law (shari'ah) for mankind in a sequential and phased manner. This step wise strategy now demands that His instructions shall no longer be valid for a particular nation, but for all human beings, and shall be according to human nature. The instructions in the Qur'an were according to the progeny of Abraham (sws), whereas those in the Torah held some consideration of the characteristics of the Jews. The latter had imposed some laws upon themselves, and God retained these upon them as a form of punishment. The Jews were so headstrong that they had to be brought under control by bringing them under additional restrictions. However, they were promised that when the last Prophet (sws) came, he would relieve them of these burdens. Hence, now the Qur'an was removing the additional instructions of the shari'ah given in the Torah, and removing the constraints that the Jews had been living under so far.

Demand for Miracles

In addition to objections related to wahi and the Qur'an, the people of the Book also raised the issue of miracles. The prophets who had come amongst the Israelites had demonstrated miracles as proof of their divine messages, and their take was that a prophet could be identified only through the miracles that he was capable of. Hence if Muhammad (sws) was a true prophet, he should show them some miracles. The Qur'an answered that the real need was for people to listen carefully with an open mind to the prophets, and enable themselves to heed the voice of their inner conscience. If people kept their reason locked up, it was useless to show them miracles of any kind. The history of the Israelites is witness to the fact that Moses (sws) showed nine grand miracles to the Pharaoh at his demand, but because the latter was mentally not ready to listen and accept, he accused Moses (sws) of magic.

And We had certainly given Moses nine evident signs, so ask the Children of Israel [about] when he came to them and Pharaoh said to him: "Indeed I think, O Moses, that you are affected by magic." (17:101)

It was clarified through the Prophet (sws) that God had given him the Book which reflected and highlighted the true nature of mankind, and presented its message through reasoning. This was the miracle Book that was evidence of his Prophethood. If they used their intellect and listened to their conscience, they would believe in the divinity of his message. However, it seems that the Jews and Christians did not abandon their position even after this clarification. They insisted that an angel should descend from the heaven, carrying pure and untouched papers as the divine message, that would contain clear and consistent instructions and the papers should not have been touched by any human hand or by any jinn. Only then would they believe the Prophet (sws). The Qur'an said:

Those who disbelieved among the People of the Scripture and the polytheists were not to be parted [from disbelief] until there came to them clear evidence – A Messenger from Allah, reciting purified scriptures within which are correct writings. (98:1-3)

Possibly the driving force behind this demand may have been the fact that the Ten Commandments of the Torah were revealed to Moses (sws) directly in a written form, and a group from Israelites were witness to this. The Qur'an always discouraged people from making such demands and asked them instead to concentrate on using their intellect to ponder over the arguments and evidence presented.

Questions to Test

The Qur'an is witness, and it is borne out by historical facts that both Christians and Jews had raised some questions for the Quraysh that were related to the relatively less well known aspects of their history in order to, in their view, expose the claim of the Prophet (sws). They were under the impression that he would not be aware of these details, and if he did try to make these up, this would give them the opportunity to come out as the winning party and declare that he was airing false stories. He presented fictionalized statements and had no divine basis for his claims. However, the Qur'an answered their questions in depth, and also chided them for treating these events as mere stories and their failure to learn and correct their mistakes from them. The Qur'an presented these events of their history in their true perspective. Thus the questions that were raised to tease the Prophet (sws), created an opportunity for the Quraysh to criticize him and test his prophet hood claim turned into a training tool for the faithful and a prediction of dire consequences for the Quraysh. Three of such questions were related to Ashab-i Kahf (People of the Cave), Zulqarnayn and the settlement of Israelites in Egypt.

The Ashab-i Kahf were people who belonged to followers of the true Christian faith. God had put them under a long spell of sleep which was in itself a miracle for other Christians. Some Christians considered this a gift from their spiritual leaders and others believed that it was a manifestation of the greatness of God as a result. On demand from the People of the Book, the Qur'an related this incident and highlighted the fact that the People of the Cave were a few young men who were firm believers in the Oneness of God and demonstrated their dislike of the polytheism their nation had fallen into. When they publicly denounced the gods of their nation, the latter could not tolerate their open rebellion. Fearing for their lives, the young men left their city and hid in a cave where God decided to bestow upon them a special status, as a testimony for their nation, due to their integrity and honesty of purpose. He put them to sleep, and their faithful dog kept a watch over them at the cave's entry. During this time, the number of people who believed in One God increased continuously, and a time came when they were in majority. God awakened the young men, now that the same nation that was after their blood had developed feelings of veneration and esteem for them. Whereas it was initially fond of shows to celebrate idol worship, now it wanted to erect a mosque in memory of the People of the Cave. This incident was very inspiring for the Muslims who had suffered greatly at the hands of the Quraysh in Makkah. They realised that as a consequence of their honest sacrifices, God would show them His glory in the form of victory. They would, however, have to demonstrate a great deal of determination and firm resolution. The Qur'an therefore, lighted up a forgotten chapter of people who had followed the right path, so that others could take a lesson and follow in their footsteps.

The Jews were interested in the conquests of Zulqarnayn (Torah's Khawras), and they considered him their king who had done them a great favour. Khawras had freed them from the slavery of Romans, and had rebuilt Jerusalem for them. Answering a question from the Jews about Khawras, the Qur'an highlighted the aspect of his personality that focused on his complete belief on God and the Day of Judgement, despite being the conqueror of most of the known land in the world. He protected himself from arrogance and oppression and was a very close friend of those he ruled over. He considered it his duty to redress their concerns, sought the ability to seek and find truth in others and facilitated them on choosing the right path. The message that the Qur'an spelt out, contained within the story of Zulqarnayn, was not only a lesson for the Jews, but also for the cruel and oppressive leaders of the Quraysh.

The Qur'an related the story of the entry of the Israelites into Egypt in a very interesting manner, and highlighted the majesty of God that revealed itself in this at every stage. Prophet Jacob and his children belonged originally to Canan. Prophet Joseph, his son, was the most beloved and very honest and truthful. His half brothers held a special grudge against him. In order to separate the son from his father, they took him to the forest and put him inside a well. As far as they were concerned, they had forsaken him for good. A tribe of the Ismaelites was passing through and stopped by for water. They dug Prophet Joseph out, took him to Egypt and sold him there as a slave. The buyer was a senior officer at the royal court and treated him as a son. He also entrusted him with all his responsibilities. Those were the days of slavery, and some royal women had him thrown into prison without reason, but he gained release in a most unexpected and God given manner. Subsequently, he gained access to the king and obtained wide ranging control over the country's production resources. Egypt went through a severe famine, and his long range planning came in very useful during these trying times. Canan was also facing a similar situation, and when his brothers heard of his fame in managing the crisis, they came to Egypt to obtain grain. Here they came face to face with Joseph who recognized them and loaded them with whatever they wanted. It was much later that the brothers came to know that the person to whom they owed so much was their brother. They asked him to forgive them, accepting that they were the wrong doers, and that God had rewarded Joseph for his good conduct. At this stage, Joseph called his entire family from Canan to Egypt. The comparison between this narrative with the role that the Quraysh were playing vis a vis Prophet Muhammad (sws) was evident. By relating this matter, the Prophet (sws) was consoled that his path

was difficult and full of troubles, but God would show His miracles and throw his adversaries at his feet, in the same way that Joseph's brothers fell at their honourable brother's. Nothing is impossible for God.

The Debate over Details of Prophets

One way to hurt an enemy is to attempt to lower the worth of the attributes and qualities that he is claiming over others, so that people at large begin to have doubts about him. The Jews used this strategy. They talked about the qualities of the Israelites, to lessen the Prophet's impact. The purpose was to shake those who were leaning towards Islam, claiming that the Prophet did not have any of the features that earlier prophets had. Thus, Muslims would be engaged in a useless debate, and would lose sight of their real goal. They would also gain by creating prejudices amongst the Muslims. The Qur'an warned the Muslims that this was a satanic attempt to confuse and entangle them. They were told to protect themselves from this, and not to say anything that may be untruthful about prophets. They were also told to highlight the specific features of the Prophet's personality, but to remember at the same time that other prophets also possessed distinctive characteristics, which they could not deny:

And your Lord is most knowing of whoever is in the heavens and the earth. And We have made some of the prophets exceed others [in various ways], and to David We gave the book [of Psalms]. (17:55)

Making Fun of Qur'anic Guidance

The People of the Book taught the Quraysh ways and means to taunt the Prophet (sws) and also criticized and made fun of the teachings of the Qur'an, in which they included the Idolaters. They said that such ludicrous teachings could not have come from God, and so must be made up by this individual who claimed to be a prophet. The description of the Day of Judgement was chosen for ridicule in particular. For example, when the Qur'an said that God had assigned 19 angels for the oversight of Hell, and that a cactus tree would grow from the base of hell, the fruit of which would be given as food to the dwellers there, The Jews ridiculed this, and spread their propaganda against it among the Idolaters. They said that they did not believe that it served any purpose for God to send such messages. It must be Muhammad (sws) who was spreading such impossible things. Had the Idolaters said this, they could have been excused, because they were unaware of any heavenly book. But the Jews had been exposed to divine messages, and it was an unforgivable crime for them to talk in such a manner. They should have verified the message of the Qur'an because they had the secret of heavenly knowledge, but, by decrying it, they brought ill fate to themselves and were also the cause of misleading others. When the Qur'an explained the number of angels guarding Hell, it explained its reasons by referring to this attitude of the Jews:

And We have not made the keepers of the Fire except angels. And We have not made their number except as a trial for those who disbelieve - that those who were given the Scripture will be convinced and those who have believed will increase in faith and those who were given the Scripture and the believers will not doubt and that those in whose hearts is hypocrisy and the disbelievers will say: "What does Allah intend by this as an example?" Thus does Allah leave astray whom He wills and guides whom He wills. And none knows the soldiers of your Lord except Him. And mention of the Fire is not but a reminder to humanity. (74:31)

It was the misfortune of the People of the Book that, they were unable to derive the guidance that these teachings aimed to provide.

(Translated by Nikhat Sattar)

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1. William Muir, The Life of Mahomet, vol. 2, 310.

CHAPTER 14

Objections on the Prophet's Personality

Observing the interest and the manner in which people belonging to all walks of life were impressed by the message being preached by the Prophet (sws), the leaders of the Quraysh began to see clear evidence of its success. Deeply concerned, on the one hand, they tried to create doubts about the authenticity of the Qur'an, and on the other, attempted to cast a shadow over the fact of Muhammad (sws) being God's prophet. They put across various arguments aimed at turning people against the Prophet (sws).

The Taunt of being Human

The Prophet (sws) was born in the tribe of Banu Hashim. His ancestors were well known and respected. He was brought up among the people of Makkah. He had adopted trade as his profession, set up partnerships with several traders of Makkah and created a name for himself as an honest and trustworthy tradesman. He married within one of the tribes of Makkah and had children. He thus had the same needs as those of any other human being, and went through similar upheavals in life. He faced the same problems ordinary men go through. Seen from this perspective, his life was no different from any other human being's. The Quraysh used this argument as propaganda against him, saying that he was a human being just like any of them. He went to the market to meet his needs, faced problems related to his wife and children and got sick, and was likely to die: how could he then claim to be a representative of God? He was the same as the rest of them, and therefore his assertion of being a prophet was absolutely false.

It is obvious that this argument from the Quraysh could not find any ground for intelligent minds who questioned the Quraysh on this point further. The latter then had to offer additional arguments: such as that Muhammad (sws) was not able to succeed as well as he had wished to as a trader and as a family member, and as he had wanted to become one of the elite of the Quraysh, he had claimed prophet hood, the authenticity of which could never be proved. If they were to be awed by this and accept this claim from someone who was just another ordinary human being, they would only harm themselves by submitting to him. According to historical records, some people saw this situation in the context of rivalry between the tribes of the Quraysh; one leader of the Banu Umayyah had said that they had fought Banu Hashim in every field of life, and now one of them was claiming prophethood, and thus, superiority over others- were they to become their servants?

At times the Quraysh would negate the possibility of any divine revelation being made to a human being. They would question the selection of Muhammad (sws) as the person to whom the divine message was being revealed: why was it not being revealed to any of the others? If Muhammad (sws) was telling the truth, then they expected to receive the same message that other prophets had received. If they received the same divine revelation, they would not hesitate in believing Muhammad (sws); otherwise not. They would also say that a human being could not be the medium to spread the message of God; this should be a job performed by angels, since they were made of light, and were closest to God. Had God desired to enlighten and guide people, He would have sent His angels. Unless He made these arrangements, they would continue to believe that Muhammad's claim was based on lies.

The people of Makkah would often ask their leaders about the message being preached by the Prophet (sws); the incidents related to previous prophets that were quoted in the Qur'anic passages and the predictions therein of the terrible end of those who disbelieved in the Prophet (sws). The leaders would reassure them that Muhammad (sws) was making up stories: they were concocted tales related to people of yesteryear that were being presented under the name of God. They also said that to some extent, the Ahle- Kitab were also involved in this conspiracy, as some of them conveyed information from their books to Muhammad (sws) which he then presented as divine revelation. The Quraysh also used the loyalty of their people to their ancestors as an instrument against the truth. They would pitch the knowledge being communicated by the Prophet (sws) against that of their forefathers, saying that there could be no comparison between the two. Real knowledge was what had been passed on from their forefathers, whereas this individual (the Prophet) was trying to get people away from their gods and had taken on the guise of a prophet. Therefore, they argued, the need of the day was to stay away from Muhammad (sws), not to listen to what he said and to remain strictly loyal to their gods and to the religion of their ancestors.

While several leaders propagated this idea, among the most prominent were Abu Lahab and Abu Jahal who shadowed the Prophet (sws) incessantly. Whenever the Prophet preached to an individual or a group and called them towards belief in one God, they would immediately negate his teachings by referring to their ancestors and their religion, telling people that the Prophet (sws) was talking against their forefathers and that he thought that they were against the truth. So, they must not accept his teaching. Abu Lahab's rant is quoted in history in the following words:

O Banu X! this person is calling upon you to throw off the yoke of the supporters who love Banu Malik and Lat and 'Uzzah, and instead accept the innovation and deviation from the right path that he preaches. Do not listen to him, and do not believe in what he says.[1]

These people also instructed their hooligans to make as much noise as possible when the Prophet (sws) was talking to others, and to create so much trouble that it would become impossible for him to communicate with others. They would try to satisfy their audience that their stance was correct by reassuring them that they had the backing of God when they worshipped so many idols and branded various items *halal* and *haram* in their names. Their argument was that if they were wrong, God would have stopped them by using His powers. They considered the concept of the Day of Judgment merely an illusion used to frighten people and said that it was impossible to be raised once again to life after being

dead and reduced to dust and ashes. According to them, Muhammad (sws) was introducing this idea to merely increase the number of his followers.

The objection of the Quraysh to the Prophet (sws) being a human being was totally baseless. They knew well enough that Abraham (sws) and Ishma'il (sws) were both the ancestors of the Arabs. Their family lines could be traced to the beginning of the Quraysh and the latter were proud to be linked to these respected personalities. They also knew that the two were prophets of God and it was the religion that they had taught, the remains of which were dear to the Quraysh and the basis of their sovereignty among the Arab tribes. It was not hidden from the Quraysh that God's prophets were human beings, and like other people, they married, ate and drank, lived with their families and got involved in the same activities of life as others did. The Quraysh also knew about the prophets of the Israelites, who were all human beings, none being angels. Being a human being was never a barrier to prophet hood.

Linking prophets to other creations was incomprehensible. Only a human being could guide and educate other human beings, because he possessed similar emotions and feelings, desires and needs as well as abilities. If this were not the case, it would have been impossible for the guide to explain any issue in a manner they could understand, or produce a practical example. Had there been angels living on this earth, and God had desired to guide them, He may well have sent an angel to be a prophet amongst them. The Qur'an clarified this point thus:

وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ أَن يُؤْمِنُواْ إِذْ جَاءهُمُ الْهُدَى إِلاَّ أَن قَالُواْ أَبَعَثَ اللّهُ بَشَرًا رَّسُولاً قُل لَّوْ كَانَ فِي الأَرْضِ مَلآئِكَةٌ يَمْشُونَ مُطْمَئِنِّينَ لَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِم مِّنَ السَّمَاء مَلَكًا رَّسُولاً (١٧: ٩٤-٩٥)

And what prevented the people from believing when guidance came to them except that they said: "Has God sent a human messenger?" Say: "If there were upon the earth angels walking securely, We would have sent down to them from the heaven an angel [as a] messenger." (17:94-95)

Sending angels individually to people was also inappropriate because prophethood suits only the person who is the best example of trustworthiness, peace loving and purity of heart and of the highest morality of character within society. Such a human being has the capacity to absorb the light of divine guidance within himself because of his inner nature, whereas people who are immersed in worldliness are unable to grasp the real essence of such guidance. This is why the Qur'an says: "God knows well who to bestow the responsibility of prophethood?" (6:124)

In answer to the demand from the Quraysh of sending angels to them, the Qur'an, on the one hand clarified that not everyone was worthy of being chosen by God of achieving the exalted status of prophethood, and on the other, also explained that angels could descend on other human beings, but this could be very dangerous for the person concerned. In such instances, angels came with a final purpose, and in case of those who refused to believe in prophets, their purpose was to destroy them. One such example has been stated in the Qur'an of the people of Lot (sws) thus:

وَقَالُواْ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِي نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الذِّكْرُ إِنَّكَ لَمَجْنُونٌ. لَّوْ مَا تَأْتِينَا بِالْمَلائِكَةِ إِن كُنتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ. مَا نُنَزِّلُ الْمَلائِكَةَ إِلاَّ بِالحَقِّ وَمَا كَانُواْ إِذًا مُّنظَرِينَ. إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ (١٥: ٦-٩)

And they say: “O you upon whom the message has been sent down, indeed you are mad. Why do you not bring us the angels, if you should be among the truthful?” We do not send down the angels except with truth; and the disbelievers would not then be reprieved. Indeed, it is We who sent down the Qur’an and indeed, We will be its guardian. (15:6-9)

In reality, all prophets who came before Muhammad (sws) had to face the same objection of being human from their detractors. This objection from the Quraysh was nothing new. People of all ages had the same difficulty in accepting prophets and they had declared the claim of their prophets as an attempt to gain superiority over them. This becomes clear also from the following statement of the Qur’an:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَى قَوْمِهِ فَقَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ. فَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِن قَوْمِهِ مَا هَذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُرِيدُ أَن يَتَفَضَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَوْ شَاء اللَّهُ لَأَنزَلَ مَلَائِكَةً مَّا سَمِعْنَا بِهَذَا فِي آبَائِنَا الْأَوَّلِينَ. (٢٣: ٢٣-٢٤)

And We had certainly sent Noah to his people, and he said: “O my people, worship Allah; you have no deity other than Him; then will you not fear Him?” But the eminent among those who disbelieved from his people said: “This is not but a man like yourselves who wishes to take precedence over you; and if Allah had willed [to send a messenger], He would have sent down angels. We have not heard of this among our forefathers.” (23:23-24)

ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَا مِن بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا آخَرِينَ. فَأَرْسَلْنَا فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ. وَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِن قَوْمِهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِلِقَاء الْآخِرَةِ وَأَتْرَفْنَاهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا مَا هَذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يَأْكُلُ مِمَّا تَأْكُلُونَ مِنْهُ وَيَشْرَبُ مِمَّا تَشْرَبُونَ. وَلَئِنْ أَطَعْتُم بَشَرًا مِّثْلَكُمْ إِنَّكُمْ إِذًا لَّخَاسِرُونَ. أَيَعِدُكُمْ أَنَّكُمْ إِذَا مِتُّمْ وَكُنتُمْ تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَنَّكُم مُّخْرَجُونَ. هَيْهَاتَ هَيْهَاتَ لِمَا تُوعَدُونَ. (٢٣: ٣١-٣٦)

Then We produced after them a generation of others. And We sent among them a messenger from themselves, [saying]: “Worship Allah; you have no deity other than Him; then will you not fear Him?” And the eminent among his people who disbelieved and denied the meeting of the Hereafter while We had given them luxury in the worldly life said: “This is not but a man like yourselves. He eats of that from which you eat and drinks of what you drink. And if you should obey a man like yourselves, indeed, you would then be losers. Does he promise you that when you have died and become dust and bones that you will be brought forth [once more]? How far, how far, is that which you are promised.” (23:31-36)

As far as information regarding previous prophets is concerned, the Quraysh knew well enough that the Prophet (sws) was unaware of their history initially. He was not an educated man, nor had he heard of what had been written of them in the holy books. Despite his ignorance, he spoke with authenticity after the Qur'an was revealed to him. If the People of the Book distorted any facts, he corrected them and each fact that was related also included a lesson to be learned by the Quraysh. Thus, the historical facts were not told as stories, but were contextualized to the situation of the Quraysh. Often, the Prophet (sws) was questioned on a specific historic incident, and the Qur'an answered it with full clarification. Even if we assume that the Prophet (sws) had someone who was feeding him the information, how was it possible to provide such complete facts immediately? Obviously this knowledge was coming to him through divine revelation because he was God's prophet, and God Himself was guiding him at every step. Thus, Moses's (sws) stay in Madyan and the events at the mountain of Ṭur; the birth of a son to Zakariyya (sws); the care being taken of Mary (sws); the details of Joseph's (sws) life; Dhu al-Qarnayn's victories and events related to several other prophets are explained in detail in the Qur'an. God transmitted this information to the Prophet (sws), although he was completely unaware of it before prophethood. After giving these facts to him, the Qur'an said:

تِلْكَ مِنْ أَنبَاء الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهَا إِلَيْكَ مَا كُنتَ تَعْلَمُهَا أَنتَ وَلاَ قَوْمُكَ مِن قَبْلِ هَـذَا فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ الْعَاقِبَةَ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ. (١١:٤٩)

That is from the news of the unseen which We reveal to you, [O Muhammad]. You knew it not, neither you nor your people, before this. (11:49)

The teachings of their forefathers that the Quraysh were so proud of were also very different and had been completely distorted from what had been transferred originally from Abraham (sws) to his subsequent generations. The greatest damage had been done by 'Amr ibn Luhayy al-Khazarji, when he installed statues within the Ka'bah. Later, the managers of the House of God created a comprehensive system based on idolatry and innovation. The true followers of Abraham (sws) called *hanif*, continued to protest against this new idolatrous religion, and this group managed to retain its identity until the prophethood of Muhammad (sws). The Quraysh had no real problems with the moral teachings of the Prophet (sws). But when he spoke against their idolatry, it was an attack against their vested interests which they were ready to protect at all costs.

Similarly, they could find no basis to object to the Prophet (sws) being human. Whatever they said were flimsy excuses.

The Taunt of Lack of Worldly Goods

Holding the Prophet's humble lifestyle in contempt, the Quraysh would also say that if God had to bestow prophethood on a human being, He could have given him worldly goods and riches so that his status in society could be elevated, and he could have stood with the other leaders with his head high.

Muhammad (sws) was not even well to do, whereas there were several other leaders who were not only financially well placed, but possessed a strong personality and were thus more prominent than Muhammad (sws). These individuals, according to the Quraysh, were more worthy of becoming God's representatives in the world. No one among Muhammad's companions was near comparable. They were impetuous youth and slaves who had gathered around him, but no wise leader had joined him. Hence, his teaching influenced only those who were of a low mental level and who were not able to distinguish between falsehood and the truth.

The Quraysh would make certain demands of the Prophet (sws), asking him to perform miracles. They would ask him to create a freshwater spring in the water scarce land if he was a true representative of God; obtain for himself an oasis and a garden with waterways running in its centre, a garden providing him with riches and thus proving that God thought him worthy enough; or ask God to make a palace of gold for him that would visibly demonstrate his wealth. They expected him to perform some extraordinary feats to prove his identity as a messenger of God. So, if it was true that everything came from God, why could he not make some pieces of the sky fall on them? Or God and a few angels come and become visible to them? Or could he not climb up to the heavens in front of them, have the revelation written and bring it to them, which they could read for themselves? If he could do any of this, they would accept him as a prophet of God. The Quraysh believed that since they were better than Muslims in worldly riches, this was proof of being better also in the eyes of God. Had they incurred God's wrath, He would not have left them to enjoy life in the manner they were living it.

They also held the Prophet's companions in great contempt. They refused even to sit close to them, and told the Prophet (sws) that they would listen to him only if they were not there. History tells us that they made fun of the poor Muslims, teased and abused them and taunted the Prophet (sws) on being close to them. The Prophet (sws) would often worry on how to handle such arrogant leaders and how to preach to them.

When he would talk about the Day of Judgment and the punishments that would be meted out to those who denied the message preached by him, the leaders were outraged. They were not ready to understand that the poor and humble companions of the Prophet (sws) might be rewarded with the blessings of Paradise, and the leaders of the Quraysh would be thrown into hell. They formed groups to threaten the Prophet (sws) and force him to give up his preaching.

The lack of worldly possessions of the Prophet (sws), or the fact of his companions being poor and humble were both ludicrous objections from the Quraysh. Material possessions have absolutely no relationship with moral or spiritual guidance. The two are different situations altogether. If a person is rich, this is not tantamount to his being morally strong. Often, it is seen that such people may become involved in evil deeds that people with less resources normally do not commit. In any case, guidance is given by God, and He decides who to bestow His guidance upon. Worldly goods and riches, are, in fact a trial and are mentioned in the Qur'an with contempt thus:

وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ عَلَى رَجُلٍ مِّنَ الْقَرْيَتَيْنِ عَظِيمٍ. أَهُمْ يَقْسِمُونَ رَحْمَةَ رَبِّكَ نَحْنُ قَسَمْنَا بَيْنَهُم مَّعِيشَتَهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَرَفَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِيَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُهُم بَعْضًا سُخْرِيًّا وَرَحْمَتُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ. وَلَوْلَا أَن يَكُونَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً لَجَعَلْنَا لِمَن يَكْفُرُ بِالرَّحْمَنِ لِبُيُوتِهِمْ سُقُفًا مِّن فَضَّةٍ وَمَعَارِجَ عَلَيْهَا يَظْهَرُونَ. وَلِبُيُوتِهِمْ أَبْوَابًا وَسُرُرًا عَلَيْهَا يَتَّكِؤُونَ. وَزُخْرُفًا وَإِن كُلُّ ذَلِكَ لَمَّا مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةُ عِندَ رَبِّكَ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ. (٤٣: ٣١-٣٥)

And they said: “Why was this Qur’an not sent down upon a great man from [one of] the two cities?” Do they distribute the mercy of your Lord? It is We who have apportioned among them their livelihood in the life of this world and have raised some of them above others in degrees [of rank] that they may make use of one another for service. But the mercy of your Lord is better than whatever they accumulate. Had it not been for the fact that people might have adopted one path, We would have made the house roofs of those who have rejected the Most Gracious Lord of silver and their stairways also which they climb roofs, and also their doors and their couches on which they recline. And We could have made these into gold as well. And these things are only provisions of worldly life and the life to come is reserved by your Lord for the virtuous. (43:31-35)

Just as all prophets have faced objections of being human, they have also been ridiculed for attracting people from the poor and humble strata of society. Referring to the times of Noah (sws), the Qur’an says:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَى قَوْمِهِ إِنِّي لَكُمْ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ. أَن لاَّ تَعْبُدُواْ إِلاَّ اللّهَ إِنِّيَ أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ أَلِيمٍ. فَقَالَ الْمَلأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ مِن قَوْمِهِ مَا نَرَاكَ إِلاَّ بَشَرًا مِّثْلَنَا وَمَا نَرَاكَ اتَّبَعَكَ إِلاَّ الَّذِينَ هُمْ أَرَاذِلُنَا بَادِيَ الرَّأْيِ وَمَا نَرَى لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا مِن فَضْلٍ بَلْ نَظُنُّكُمْ كَاذِبِينَ. (١١: ٢٥-٢٧)

And We had certainly sent Noah to his people, [saying]: Indeed, I am to you a clear warner. That you not worship except Allah. Indeed, I fear for you the punishment of a painful day.” So the eminent among those who disbelieved from his people said: “We do not see you but as a man like ourselves, and we do not see you followed except by those who are the lowest of us [and] at first suggestion. And we do not see in you over us any merit; rather, we think you are liars.” (11:25-27)

We see, therefore, that the attitude of the Quraysh towards the Prophet (sws) was very similar to that of the nations of all previous prophets. Whenever he was asked to perform a miracle, he would answer that God had all power; he was merely a human being like them, but that he had been entrusted with the responsibility of prophethood. If they wished to test him, they should do so from the criteria of prophethood. He had nothing to say to the demands they were making merely to frustrate him. The Qur’an says:

قُل لاَّ أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِندِي خَزَآئِنُ اللّهِ وَلا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ إِنْ أَتَّبِعُ إِلاَّ مَا يُوحَى إِلَيَّ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الأَعْمَى وَالْبَصِيرُ أَفَلاَ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ. (٦:٥٠)

Say [O Muhammad]: “I do not tell you that I have the depositories [containing the provision] of Allah or that I know the unseen, nor do I tell you that I am an angel. I only follow what is revealed to me.” (6:50)

The Accusation of being a Poet, Magician, Sorcerer and Madman

An effective tactic to divert attention from someone’s real status is to create propaganda about his mission in such a manner so as to project it in an entirely different mode. Because the Prophet (sws) had the Qur’an which he recited and explained, thus presenting his status as a prophet, the Quraysh used this to accuse him sometimes of being a poet, other times of being a sorcerer who was trying to divide society. At times, they would say that he had lost his senses because someone had cast a spell on him. By branding him as a poet, they expected him and his “poetry” to end with the passage of time. If it was madness that was creating such a furore, it was not necessary to take it seriously. This was merely delirious talk that had no basis in reality.

The objections on the personality of the Prophet (sws) were addressed by God. He explained very clearly that the prophet was not a stranger to any of the Quraysh leaders. He had been born, bred and brought up among them. They had observed him at each stage of his life, from childhood to youth, and each of them was witness to his purity of character, high morals, goodness, integrity, honesty, trustworthiness and truthfulness. For forty years, they had trusted him implicitly, but now that God had given him His guidance, they had begun to hound him, forgetting their testimony to his character. His preaching had nothing to do with any falsehood or ego, nor was the divine revelation a figment of his imagination. Whatever he was presenting was not fortune telling, and it was not a means to obtaining money. Why was it that people were unable to observe that God was removing falsehood through His words and setting in place the real Truth? Such a message as the Qur’an that provided enlightenment and opened up hearts and minds to the truth was never brought by false and illegitimate sources.

The fact is that the Quraysh had no basis to revile the Prophet’s character, nor did they have any arguments to convince anyone. They would merely swear and confuse simple minded people by their vehemence. They would also create misunderstandings and spread rumours among Muslims so that they may become divided and weak, and begin to resent the Prophet (sws).

In answer to the accusation that Muhammad (sws) presented the text as coming from God and thus claim superiority, God clarified that the Prophet (sws) conducted his responsibility under the most strict supervision. Just as no satanic force could take the divine revelation from the Divine Angel (Gabriel), who delivered it to the Prophet (sws) in its pure form, it was kept with the Prophet intact such that he could not make any alterations to it either. If ever anyone dared to do this, God promised: “We will catch him with Our Arm. Cut his jugular vein, and no one can then save him from Our Wrath.” (69:45-47)

The Qur’an, asked the Prophet (sws) to announce that if he was in the wrong and that was the reason for them not joining him, he would be punished and they would be protected. But if he was right, and was receiving guidance from his Lord, then they would be declared deniers of guidance. This would not be taken as a simple offence. Hence, they must think seriously before taking a decision.

The Qur'an also reassured the Prophet (sws) that he had not asked to receive divine revelation. He could not have done so. The Being Who sent it to him was the Only One who could continue or discontinue it. If He had thought it fit to bestow it upon him, He would also give him the wherewithal to fulfill his responsibilities, and keep him safe from the conspiracies of his enemies. Thus, he must continue to keep doing what he was doing with patience, and disregard his foes. God was enough to deal with his enemies. Very soon they would meet their fate.

All efforts made by the Quraysh to lower the esteem in which the Prophet (sws) and his companions were held by people were in vain. The Prophet's character suffered no blemish, and no misunderstanding about the authenticity of the Qur'an could be created. The followers of the Prophet (sws) increased in number day by day, and each and every tribe of the Quraysh had a mix of Muslims and Kafirs. In this situation, the leaders of the Quraysh had no option but to torture the Muslims even more, target the Prophet (sws), make it almost impossible for people to listen to the Qur'an and create such a reign of terror so as to stop the further spread of Islam.

(*Translated by Nikhat Sattar*)

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1. Ibn-Hisham, Al-Sirah al-nabawiyyah, vol. 1, 423.

CHAPTER 15

The Migration to Abyssinia

As Muslims continued to face difficulties put in their way by the Quraysh, the Qur'an impressed upon them to counter these with fortitude and firm belief, and predicted rewards in exchange for their sacrifices, far in excess of any expectations and dreams. The Qur'an also asked them not to despair even if they found that their own country had been made tough for them to live in. God's earth was extensive, and if conditions were intolerable for them in that city, God would guide them towards another place where they would live in peace, and worship Him without fear, and where He would provide for them and for their safety. Did they not see how so many other living beings did not carry their provisions with them, but God gave them sustenance wherever they went, and they returned to their nests at night? Thus they should also rely upon God Who would make their trials easier to bear:

My servants who have believed, indeed My earth is spacious, so worship only Me. Every soul will taste death. Then to Us will you be returned. And those who have believed and done righteous deeds – We will surely assign to them of Paradise [elevated] chambers beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally. Excellent is the reward of the [righteous] workers, who have been patient and upon their Lord rely. And how many a creature carries not its [own] provision. God provides for it and for you. And He is the Hearing, the Knowing. (29:56-60)

When the oppression by the Quraysh became so severe that the faithful could no longer bear it, Makkah's space began to shrink for the latter in reality. Anyone who mentioned Islam could no longer protect himself against the terrible onslaught from society. During this period, the Prophet (sws) made a request to God to strengthen Islam either through 'Amr ibn Hisham or 'Umar ibn al-Khattab. 'Amr ibn Hisham was the real name of Abu Jahal, who was always in the forefront when opposing the Prophet (sws); 'Umar ibn al-Khattab was well known for his strength and bravery, and enjoyed taunting weak Muslims. When they would complain to the Prophet (sws), he consoled them by saying: "Be patient, God will find a way out for us. Before you, nations have been oppressed by their opponents, to the extent that they have had their heads cut off, but they did not give up their faith."

When the situation became untenable, the Prophet (sws) allowed those who had been particularly targeted by the Quraysh, to migrate to Abyssinia, because the Christian ruler, Ashamah was well known for his kind heartedness and sense of fair play and justice, and peace reigned in his country. The country was also close to Arabia, just west of the Red Sea. It was strange that almost all the Muslim youth of the Quraysh tribes were eager to migrate. The first group that did so included eleven men and five women. They were:

Banu Ummayyah	‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan (rta), with wife Ruqayyah bint Muhammad (sws)
Banu ‘Abd Shams	Abu Hudhyafah ibn ‘Utbah (rta), with wife Sahla, daughter of Suhayl ibn ‘Amr
Banu Makhzum	Abu Salamah ibn ‘Abd al-Asad (rta), with wife Umm Salamah (rta)
Banu Asad	Zubayr ibn al-‘Awwam (rta)
Banu ‘Abd al-Dar	Mus‘ab ibn ‘Umayr (rta)
Banu Zahrah	‘Abd al-Rahman ibn ‘Awf (rta)
Banu Jumh	‘Uthman ibn Maz‘un (rta)
Banu ‘Adi	‘Āmir ibn Rabi‘ah (rta), with wife Laylah bint Abi Hathmah (rta)
‘Banu ‘Āmir	Abu Sabrah ibn Abi Raham (rta), with wife Umm Kulthum bint Suhayl (rta), Hatib ibn ‘Amr (rta)
Banu Harith	Suhayl ibn Bayda’ (rta)

We learn, therefore, that while these young people suffered the pain of separation from their relatives for the sake of their faith, several tribes of the Quraysh, too, were affected. According to the biographers of the Prophet (sws), this migration took place during the month of Rajab, the fifth year of prophet hood.

When the first group reached Abyssinia safely, and word got around that they had been received well, many people started to move out of Makkah. Some known names are:

Banu Hashim	Ja‘far ibn Abi Talib (rta) with wife Asma’ bint ‘Umays (rta)
Banu Umayyah	Khalid ibn Sa‘id ibn al-‘Ās (rta),
	‘Urwah ibn Sa‘id ibn al-‘Ās (rta) with wife Fatimah bint Safwan bin Umayyah (rta)
Banu Asad	‘Ubaydullah ibn Jahash (rta) with wife Umm Habibah bint Abi Sufyan
Banu ‘Āmir	Sakran ibn ‘Amr (rta) with wife Sawdah bint Zam‘ah (rta)
	‘Abdullah ibn Suhayl ibn ‘Amr (rta)
Banu Harith	Abu ‘Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah (rta)

Other than these, ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud (rta), ‘Utbah ibn Mas‘ud (rta) and Abu Musa Ash‘ari (rta)’s names are also mentioned. The total exceeded 80 people who migrated at that time. Only those people migrated who had suffered greatly at the hands of the Quraysh. The others remained behind with the Prophet (sws) to continue to gain spiritual benefit from their closeness with him.

Pursuit by the Quraysh

When the Quraysh saw that Muslims had found refuge in Abyssinia and were leading a peaceful life there, they decided to follow them and prepared two men, ‘Amr ibn al-‘Ās and ‘Abdullah ibn Abi Rabi‘ah to present their case in front of Ashamah. They went there, fully instructed, but also with presents for Ashamah and his religious leaders. They first met with the latter, to elicit their support, and then appeared before Najashi, the King. They said: “O King, a few silly young men have come to your country. They have left the faith of their ancestors, and have not accepted your faith. They present a new religion which neither we, nor you are familiar with. Their elders have sent us to you, to request you to send them back to them, because only they can keep an eye on them.” Najashi took counsel from his courtiers, all of whom agreed with the men from the Quraysh, but Najashi hesitated. His argument was that when a group of people had come to him for protection, and chosen him and his country above all others, how could he hand them over without listening to their point of view?

The king sent his steward asking the Muslims to come to his court. The Muslims decided that come what may, they would speak the truth, as they had been taught by God’s Prophet (sws). When Najashi put forward the situation as described by the Quraysh, Ja‘far ibn Abi Talib (rta), speaking on behalf of the Muslims, said: “O’ King, before we accepted this new faith, we were idol worshippers, consumed dead meat, cut off connections with our blood relations and engaged in obscene activities. We were in such a poor condition that God sent His messenger towards us. We were already well aware of his dignified lineage, his truthfulness, his piety and honesty. He gave us a call to worship one God and to stop praying to manmade idols. He taught us to speak the truth, deal with others with honesty, have mercy on our fellow human beings, be kind to our neighbours, perform our prayers, pay alms and stay away from polytheism. He instructed us to abstain from all forms of lying, cheating, usurping the rights of orphans and obscene acts, and all other actions that could obstruct us from living a pious life. We witnessed that what he said was the truth, confirmed our faith in his message and are following his instructions. Our country men have brought great tribulations upon us; they have tortured us, penalized us and have tried their utmost to turn us away from our faith. When it became impossible to live in our own country, we came to yours, selecting your country as a safe haven. We hope that we shall not find any injustice here.” On hearing this, Najashi rejected the plea of the Quraysh.

When ‘Amr ibn al-‘Ās and ‘Abdullah ibn Rabi‘ah returned unsuccessful from the court, they decided to incite Najashi’s religious sentiments. They requested permission to come back the next day to his court and submitted to him that the new prophet presented wrong ideas about Jesus, son of Mary. Najashi again called the Muslims to clarify the situation. Ja‘far (rta) began to recite Surah Maryam, which contains the entire story of Jesus (sws) as well as the Qur’anic instructions related to him. Tears rolled

down Najashi's cheeks as he heard the recitation. When it had ended, Ja'far (rta) said: "According to this, Jesus (sws) was God's servant, His apostle, His spirit and His word, which were entrusted to Mary." Najashi said: "By God, what you have just recited, and the guidance that Jesus brought is light emanating from the same source."

The Quraysh delegation had to return without meeting their objectives. The Muslims in Abyssinia had inspired the light of Islam within Najashi, who accepted Islam soon after. Najashi, it seems, belonged to the group of Christians who were against the innovations introduced by Paul and who had adopted the actual Jesuit faith. These were the same people about whom the Qur'an states that when they received the message from the Prophet (sws), they would start to cry, because they instantly recognized the truth of Jesus's (rta) prediction in it. They were the ones who accepted Islam by and large.

The Acceptance of Islam by the Abyssinian Delegation

Those who were believers in the original form of Christianity did not accept Jesus (sws) to be the son of God, or one of the trinity elements. They awaited the fulfillment of Jesus' (sws) prediction about the last prophet, so that they would accept him when he gained prophethood. The arrival of the Muslims in Abyssinia confirmed Jesus' (sws) predictions. The Christians questioned the Muslims further about the Prophet (sws)'s prophet hood and his teachings, heard about what they had suffered at the hands of the Quraysh and observed the character of the Muslims themselves. A group of 20 individuals visited Makkah to make their own assessment and meet the Prophet (sws) in person. After questioning him in a meeting, they satisfied themselves that he met the criteria that had been conveyed to them in their books and by scholars through the ages. After answering their queries, the Prophet (sws) recited Qur'anic verses according to the situation. This convinced them even further. The truth was then clear to them. The fortunate group did not wish to waste a single moment. They immediately accepted Islam and returned to Abyssinia[1], since their purpose was not to stay in Makkah. It is obvious that they must have gained further knowledge of Islam from the Muslims who were already living in Abyssinia. This was such a fruitful result from the migration that the Quraysh could never have dreamt of it. The Prophet (sws) wrote to Najashi after this, inviting him to come within the fold of Islam, and the latter gladly accepted the invitation. The Prophet (sws) always prayed for him.

The kuffar of Makkah were livid with anger when the Christians of Abyssinia accepted Islam. Abu Jahal and his friends called them fools, to have come to review the situation, and gone back having converted to the same faith.

This event caused much agitation among the Quraysh. If people went there and became impressed by Muhammad (sws), his message would spread to other tribes, and if this reached beyond Makkah, it was likely to create even greater problems for them. They began to keep an eye on anyone coming from outside and if there was any attempt to meet the Prophet (sws), they did not hesitate to beat him up.

‘Amr ibn ʻĪsa al-Salamah’s Acceptance of Islam

‘Amr ibn ʻĪsa was one of the *hunafa*’. He believed that those who worshipped idols are wrong and that this practice had no logical basis. When he heard that a person was preaching a new faith in Makkah, he was curious to know more, and arrived in Makkah. On arrival, he found that no one was allowed to meet the person concerned because his countrymen were his enemies. He recounts that he found a way to meet the Prophet (sws) in secret, and asked him: “Who are you?” He answered: “I am God’s messenger.” I asked: “Who is a messenger?” He answered: “God has sent me with a message.” I asked: “What message is this?” He said: “The message of worship of one God, keeping good relations with relatives and destroying idols.” I asked: “Who is with you in this?” He answered: “Both who are free and slaves. I wanted to become his follower, but he told me to wait because I was not strong enough.” He said: “Do you not see how people behave? You should go back now. When you hear that I have gained the upper hand, come back to me.” ‘Amr says that he returned to his tribe, but kept himself informed of what was happening in Makkah. Finally, some people came from Madinah and told him that the Prophet (sws) had migrated to Madinah and that people were flocking to him and converting to Islam in large numbers. His nation had tried to kill him, but was unsuccessful. ‘Amr went to Madinah and met the Prophet (sws) who recognized him immediately. The former obtained knowledge of prayer and ablution from the Prophet (sws) on this occasion.[2]

This shows that it had been made extremely difficult for anyone to meet the Prophet (sws) in Makkah. ‘Amr ibn ʻĪsa may have wished to stay with him in Makkah, but he was advised to return to his tribe and wait for Islam to rise to power.

The Acceptance of Islam by Abu Dharr Ghifari (rta)

Abu Dharr (rta) of the tribe of Ghifar came to know that someone in Makkah claimed prophet hood. He sent his brother Unays to Makkah to gather information. Unays returned after conducting research, having found out that the man taught morality and good dealings with others, and presented a text that was neither poetry nor a story. Abu Dharr (rta), dissatisfied with these details, travelled to Makkah to see for himself. He got down in the Ka‘bah, and looked for the Prophet (sws), but could not locate him. He did not think it appropriate to ask anyone. ‘Ali (rta) took him to his house, as a mark of hospitality to a traveler. He returned to the mosque early in the morning, and repeated the routine the second and third day. Finally ‘Ali (rta) asked him what he was looking for and promised that he would not share this information with anyone else. When Abu Dharr (rta) finally divulged the reason for his arrival in Makkah, ‘Ali (rta) confirmed that the Prophet (sws) was indeed the apostle of God. He took him to meet the Prophet (sws) the next morning, when Abu Dharr (rta) accepted Islam, and was instructed by him to return to his tribe and instruct them accordingly, but remain there until he heard otherwise. Abu Dharr (rta) took an oath upon God that he would make a public declaration of his new faith before departing. He went to the mosque and proclaimed loudly: “I am a witness that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is the Prophet of God.” As soon as he had spoken, people attacked him and began to beat him up. ‘Abbas ibn al-Muttalib warned the crowd that he was a member of the Ghifari tribe that lived on

their trade route towards Syria. On hearing this, the attackers moved away and Abu Dharr (rta) was allowed to leave safely. [3]

This incident also shows that the Quraysh had created such an environment of fear and intimidation for outsiders that no one could pronounce the Prophet's name or meet him. If, by chance, anyone did meet him, he would be thrashed without any hesitation. During this period, the Prophet (sws) advised people to stay away, and to make contact only after they had heard news of the Muslims gaining power over the *kuffar*.

God's Acceptance of the Prophet's Prayer and Conversion of 'Umar to Islam

The migration of Muslims from Makkah in large numbers merely so that they could practice their faith in peace, leaving the comfort of their homes in a manner as if they were thorns in their backs, was such an extraordinary event that it shook the core of the Quraysh who were forced to re-examine the emotional approach they had been taking so far. Among these people was 'Umar ibn al-Khattab who came within the fold of Islam in the 6th year of prophet hood, after the migration to Abyssinia.

There are two versions of his conversion narrated in history.

The First Version that has gained the most currency is that 'Umar (rta) left his home intending to kill the Prophet (sws). He met Na'im ibn 'Abdullah (rta) on the way, who asked him where he was going. 'Umar (rta) told him that he wished to decide about Muhammad (sws). Na'im ibn 'Abdullah (rta) asked him to take care of his household first, as his own sister and brother in law had accepted Islam already. 'Umar (rta) enraged, went to his sister's house, where she and her husband were studying the Qur'an from Khubab ibn al-Art (rta). When they heard him enter, they hid the papers. Since 'Umar (rta) had heard them recite the verses, he insisted that they recite them to him too. When they refused, he beat them mercilessly. Their answer was to say that he could do whatever he wanted; he could never remove the love of Islam from their hearts. As 'Umar (rta) calmed down, his sister placed the papers of Surah Taha, (according to some narratives, it was Surah Hadid) in front of him. As soon as he had read these, his heart went through a complete change. He asked Khubab (rta) where the Prophet (sws) was, and was told that he was in a house close to the Mount of Safa. Putting his sword in its sheath, 'Umar (rta) went across to the place. Someone inside the house saw him coming and warned the Prophet (sws), who asked for the door to be opened for him. On entering, he immediately accepted Islam. This version was passed on from the people of Madinah to Ibn Ishaq.[4]

Despite the fact that this version is the more commonly accepted one, several questions arise about its authenticity.

1. It was a matter of far reaching consequences in the tribal life in Arabia if a person belonging to another tribe was killed. Had this been easy, the Quraysh tribes would not have impressed upon the Banu Hashim to restrain the Prophet (sws) from preaching. They were afraid that if they were to take

any action against him directly, a long battle would begin within Makkah, and it would then be difficult for anyone to disentangle from it.

2. ‘Umar (rta) was a wise and far sighted man. He was aware of what might happen if he were to attempt the murder of the Prophet (sws), because his own tribe, Banu ‘Adi was weak as compared to the Banu Hashim.

3. Sa‘id ibn Zayd (rta) and Fatimah bint al-Khattab (rta) belong to the earliest group of companions, and were among the first to accept Islam after prophethood. Their faith was not hidden, and their family members must have known about it. Every Muslim became known within a period of five years. This is the reason why the entire Quraysh were bent upon teaching a lesson to the Muslims, and the latter were ready to migrate to Abyssinia. The story seems to indicate that they had just recently accepted Islam, in the 6th year of prophet hood.

4. ‘Umar’s (rta) insistence that his sister read out to him what they were reciting indicates that he was unfamiliar with the Qur’an. Yet, it was the responsibility of the Prophet (sws) to recite the Qur’an to his people. He had read it out to the Quraysh several times, and when performing the salah next to the Ka‘bah, would read its verses loudly so that people would hear them. The version as stated, therefore, contradicts this fact.

5. It is also difficult to accept that Fatimah (rta) would read from papers and hide them. In those days when Muslims were in a particularly repressed state, it was impossible for them to arrange for the Qur’anic verses to be available in a written form, and then to read from them. Very few people from within the Quraysh knew how to read and write, and there were hardly any women amongst these. Similarly, Khubab (rta) was a slave. His literacy is questionable.

6. Surah Hadid is a Madaninan surah. It had not been revealed in the 6th year of prophet hood.

7. Dar Arqam was a house that had become a centre for the Muslims and was known to all Makkans. The narrative mentions it as if it was an unknown place and ‘Umar (rta) was hearing about it for the first time.

8. The story gives an impression that the Prophet (sws) was hiding inside the house. To the contrary, he moved freely, not only to the Ka‘bah, but also to the meetings of the Quraysh. According to several narratives, the Prophet (sws) recited the Qur’an loudly in his prayers, and members of the Quraysh listened to him from behind curtains. This also happened when resistance against the Prophet (sws) was at its peak. It was never difficult for anyone to meet the Prophet (sws). God’s apostles always did their work openly. They were assigned to their responsibilities by God and He took care of their safety. They were not required to protect themselves.

The Second Version is narrated from Umm ‘Abdullah bint Abi Hathmah (rta). ‘Āmir ibn Rabi‘ah was a supporter of ‘Umar’s family. His family was preparing for migration to Abyssinia when ‘Umar (rta) came and saw what was happening. Until then, his attitude had been very harsh towards them and he had

caused them great pain. ‘Umar (rta) asked: “Umm ‘Abdullah, are you leaving?” She answered: “Yes, your people have hurt us and tortured us. We will now spread out on Allah’s earth, until He opens a way out for us.” ‘Umar (rta) answered, “May Allah be with you,” and in so saying, his voice faltered, and he left. It was clear that the departure of that family hurt him deeply. Umm ‘Abdullah told her husband that if he had seen ‘Umar (rta), he would have noticed the signs of sorrow and pain on his face. She felt that it was very likely he would accept Islam soon.[5]

This narrative appears true and natural. Here was a family with which one had had years of close relations, and with whose members one was emotionally attached. On what one judged as a temporary matter, one was excessively cruel and unfair, and the family decided to leave home and country, rather than give up on its new beliefs. The most hard-hearted man would be forced to rethink his attitude, and wonder if he was not the one who was wrong, and the others who were on the right path? Events such as these change the course of our lives. It seems this is what happened to ‘Umar (rta), and after some thought, he accepted Islam.

According to a narrative from ‘Ata and Mujahid, ‘Umar (rta) went to the Ka‘bah one night and found the Prophet (sws) reciting the Qur’an in his prayers. He approached the Ka‘bah from the Hatim, hid behind its cover, and listened to him. When the salah ended, the Prophet (sws) proceeded towards his home. As he came close, ‘Umar (rta) made himself known. When the Prophet (sws) asked him his reason for being there, he answered that he had come to accept Islam. The Prophet (sws) prayed for steadfastness in his faith, and this great hero of Makkah became a servant of Islam.[6] The next day he announced in the mosque that he had become a Muslim and that he would perform his salah publicly. He dared anyone to stop him from doing so.

Thus the supplication of the Prophet (sws) made in ‘Umar’s favour was accepted by God. The Muslims were greatly reassured, and the Quraysh felt defeated.

‘Umar’s (rta) acceptance of Islam soon after the migration to Abyssinia is proof of the fact this had shaken the Quraysh, as well as most of the youth. Contrary to their expectations, conversion to Islam continued at a rapid pace and the numbers of Muslims increased exponentially.

Revelation of Power to Muslims

The migration to Abyssinia had affected the Quraysh in another way. The manner in which Muslims were accepted by the Abyssinians, and the leaning of their King towards Islam created hatred and resentment for the Christians in the hearts of the Quraysh. Muslims, on the other hand, were deeply grateful to the Christians and spoke well of them.

Outside the Arab world, but adjacent to them were the great empires of the Persians and Romans. The Persians were polytheists, but the Romans, despite the introduction of Paul’s new concepts of the holy trinity, were believers in the Oneness of God. The Quraysh were not interested in the controversies between various sects of the Christians. They considered them to belong to the same religious group.

The Persians and Romans often had skirmishes along the borders of Syria, which at times reached the level of a full scale war. In 616 A.D, Persia invaded a part of what was Rome and gained a strong foothold there. The Persian ruler, Khusru Pervaiz started dreaming of over powering the whole of Rome. When this news reached Makkah, the Quraysh taunted the Muslims with the fate of their co-religionists. They made fun of the Prophet (sws) who had spoken of the power of the Muslims, saying that had he been right, why would God have given victory to the polytheist Khusru over the monotheist Caesar? The situation was that the Romans could not find a place to live, and the Persian army was invading deep into their land. The Muslims, according to the Quraysh, were bound to suffer a similar fate. Since Muslim sympathies were with the Romans, they were embarrassed and had little to say. It was then that Surah Rum was revealed:

This is Surah Alif Lam Mim. The Byzantines have been defeated. In the nearest land. But they, after their defeat, will overcome. Within three to nine years. To Allah belongs the command before and after. And that day the believers will rejoice in the victory of God. He gives victory to whom He wills, and He is the Exalted in Might, the Merciful. [It is] the promise of Allah. Allah does not fail in His promise, but most of the people do not know. (30:1-6)

These verses reassure the Muslims that the victories gained by the Persians were temporary. The situation would change soon and in a few years, the Romans would gain dominance over their enemies. That would be the time when Muslims would rejoice and the polytheists of Makkah would be thwarted.

The Arabic term used for a few years is bid'a sinin which means nine or less years. In reality, that is what happened. In the second year after migration to Madinah, the Romans overpowered the Persians completely. At the same time, in the battle of Badr, a mere 300 Muslims defeated the 1000 iron clad army of the kuffar. The key leaders of the Quraysh who led the enmity campaign against the Prophet (sws) were slain. Thus, the prediction made at the time of the migration to Abyssinia came true and the faithful were given several reasons to celebrate their victory.

Return of Migrants from Abyssinia

After staying in Abyssinia for some time, 33 Muslims, including some wives, returned to Makkah. According to Ibn Ishaq, this return was caused by misinformation they had received. On coming back, they were worried on whose responsibility they would enter the city. The doors of their own home were closed to them. Unless they could gain the protection of some strong individuals, they would be vulnerable if they attempted to live on their own. Some Muslims, therefore, took protection of tribes other than their own. 'Uthman ibn Maz'un (rta) took refuge from Walid ibn Mughirah. When he saw that he was enjoying full safety because of Walid's protection, while the Prophet (sws) and other Muslims remained in difficulty, he wanted to return his protection. Walid said that since he had given him protection in the mosque, it could be returned in the same place. Usman went to the mosque, and while appreciating Walid's protection and his kindness, announced that he was returning it, and that from now on, he would be relying on God's protection alone.

Abu Salamah took protection from Abu Talib, at which Abu Lahab was very angry and resisted it. Abu Talib answered that Abu Salamah was his nephew and therefore under his protection.

Those who had migrated forever to Abyssinia, migrated again to Madinah, and gained blessings from God for a double migration in the way of God. It is probably only among Muslims that some companions of the Prophet (sws) have been blessed twice through two successive migrations.

(*Translated by Nikhat Sattar*)

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1. Ibn Hisham, Al-Sirah al-nabawiyyah, 391-392.

2. Ibn Kathir, Al-Sirah al-nabawiyyah, 281

3. Muslim, Al-Jami‘ al-sahih, 388.

4. Ibn Hisham, Al-Sirah al-nabawiyyah, 343-346.

5. Ibid., 343-346.

6. Ibid., 348.

CHAPTER 16

Renaissance

A MONTHLY ISLAMIC JOURNALPAKISTAN

The Unlettered Prophet (16)

Biography
Khalid Masud
(Tr. by:Nikhat Sattar)

Criticism on the People of the Book

The manner in which the Jews of Madinah used the movement of Nadr ibn Harith to damage the message of the Prophet (sws) has been discussed in detail earlier. The answers to their questions and objections were revealed in the Qur'an, such that, not only were the facts brought to light; they were also a source of learning for the faithful, and provided guidance and corrective action for the Quraysh, if they so wished.

It became necessary in this process to include the People of the Book during the Makkan phase, only to an extent, so that the more learned people amongst them would be inclined towards Islam and accept its guidance. Both Christians and Jews were included, and were addressed indirectly and as a secondary group, while the direct addressees remained the Quraysh, because the Prophet (sws) had received his prophethood within them.

The Attitude of the good People of the Book

Not all the People of the Book adopted the same attitude towards the Qur'an. Although the majority was against it, the better ones were not arrogant, stubborn or obdurate. The Qur'an, therefore, praised them at various places, and pointed out that everything mentioned by the Qur'an resonated with them, and they greeted the revelations eagerly. They sensed the same fragrance in it that they got by reading their own scriptures. When they heard the Qur'anic verses, they were so affected that they were overcome with the dual states of happiness and fear. Because their books had prophesied the advent of a great prophet, and a divine revelation through him, they had been waiting for him eagerly. Then, in the Prophet (sws), and the Book he had brought, they found fulfillment of the prophesies that they already had belief in. The Qur'an appreciated such people several times. For example:

Rather, the Qur'an is distinct verses [preserved] within the breasts of those who have been given knowledge. And none reject Our verses except the wrongdoers. (29:49)

And [the believers among] those to whom We have given the [previous] Scripture, rejoice at what has been revealed to you, [O Mohammed], but the [opposing] factions are those who deny part of it. (13:36)

Those to whom We have given the Scripture, recognize it as they recognize their [own] sons. Those who will lose themselves [in the Hereafter] do not believe. (6:20)

Verses 52-55 of Surah Qasas also dealt with the same matter. In them, because of the righteous path adopted by such People of the Book, they were promised to be doubly rewarded, first for remaining true to their original faith, and second, by recognizing the last Prophet (sws) when his prophethood was evident.

This attitude of the virtuous People of the Book held a lesson for the Quraysh. And that was the fact that truth is always judged on the basis of its own evidence. Therefore, firstly, the Qur'an's divinity should have been assessed by the arguments it had given. Even if external evidence in its favour was required, the evidence provided by the actions of people of sobriety and integrity, who were well versed in matters of divine revelation, should have been accepted, despite their small numbers. The attention of the Quraysh is directed towards this point in Surah Shu'ara':

And, indeed, it is [mentioned] in the Scriptures of former peoples. And has it not been a sign to them that it is recognized by the scholars of the Children of Israel? (26:196-197)

Surah Bani Isra'il says:

Say: "Believe in it or do not believe. Indeed, those who were given knowledge before it – when it is recited to them, they fall upon their faces in prostration. And they say. 'Exalted is our Lord! Indeed, the promise of our Lord has been fulfilled!' And they fall upon their faces weeping, and the Qur'an increases them in humble submission." (17:107-109)

The question remains, who were these virtuous People of the Book? This can be answered with veracity only for some Christians who resided in Abyssinia and Makkah. The Qur'an has praised Christians at various places, and so frequently that it seems that this group had been influenced early by Islamic teachings. The Christians who lived in Makkah, but originated from other places, accepted Islam in the beginning. But it would not be correct to conclude that the Jews were not influenced by the Prophet's message during the Makkan phase. From the number of arguments they had raised, and the extensive manner in which the Qur'an refuted these we can deduce that the doubts in the minds of their scholars had been clarified, and when the time came, they too joined the group of Muslims, even though they must have been a few in number. If they were not visible enough during the Makkan phase, it is probably because their centres were outside of Makkah, whereas Islam was confined within the Makkan city in that period.

Attitude of the Muslims towards the People of the Book

Muslims were asked to refrain from getting involved in arguments with the People of the Book during the early days of the preaching of the Prophet (sws). The reason was that this group was a recipient of faith and religious laws (shari'ah), and was

the custodian of the traditions of prophets. It was expected that its members would be able to clear the doubts they had about the message of Islam, and that they would become its protagonists and supporters to take it forward. Muslims were, therefore, instructed not to create any tensions during discussions with them. On the contrary, they were to help them to recognize that both groups had common religious teachings and moral values. For example, the God of both Muslims and the People of the Book was the One Almighty; the Qur'an and previous holy books contained the same teaching of monotheism. Just as the People of the Book believed in their holy texts, Muslims not only believed in the Qur'an, but also in the divinity of the Books that had come before it, since the source of all divine revelations was the same. The predictions contained in the books of these people were being realized through the Qur'an and the Prophet (sws). Hence, Muslims were to inform the People of the Book that the right path for them would be to accept the elements of this shared value system, and not negate their own beliefs with their actions. Surah 'Ankabut says:

And do not argue with the People of the Scripture except in a way that is best, except for those who commit injustice among them, and say: "we believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you. And our God and your God is one; and we are Muslims [in submission] to Him." (29:46)

The Qur'an gave due recognition to the fact that the People of the Book enjoyed respect within the Arab society. It went as far as to ask the Quraysh, who were facing difficulties in understanding religious guidance, to seek advice from the People of the Book who were well versed in religious matters. Surah Nahal says:

And We sent not before you except men to whom We revealed [Our message]. So ask the people of the message if you do not know. (16:43)

This guidance was given at the time when the Quraysh refused to accept that a human being could also be a prophet of God. The history of the People of the Book was replete with examples of human beings being assigned the status of messengers from God. The same message is given in Surah Yunus:

So if you are in doubt, [O Muhammad], about that which We have revealed to you, then ask those who have been reading the Scripture before you. The truth has certainly come to you from your Lord, so never be among the doubters. And never be of those who deny the signs of Allah and [thus] be among the losers. (10:94-95)

These verses ask the Quraysh to refer to the People of the Book in order to clear their doubts about the divine revelations. The addressee is apparently the Prophet (sws), but the reprimand is directed towards the Quraysh who were creating confusions and doubts against the Qur'an in the minds of people.

Criticism on the Opposition of the People of the Book

Later, when the collective attitude of the People of the Book proved to be adverse to the Qur'an, and they began to portray themselves as the only custodians of the truth, declaring a new prophet to be unnecessary, the Qur'an, too, unveiled their real motives. It clarified that both the Christians and Jews had not lived up to the trust that had been given to them, and due to which their religious status was recognized. In the last years of the Makkan phase, the Qur'an struck hard at the beliefs and treasured customs of both groups and revealed the mistakes they were committing. It informed the Muslims of the situation arising from the alliance between the wicked among the People of the Book and the Quraysh, and reassured them that earlier prophets and their believers had also faced similar situations with evil forces of their times. The latter had tried to

create barriers to the spread of the preaching plans of prophets through their deception and concealment of truth. All this was a part of the trial for the truth, and there was no need to be afraid. All resistance would eventually break down, and so, the believers were to concentrate on their mission.

As the opposition of the People of the Book increased unexpectedly, it became necessary to clarify their factual religious status. Hence, two very important surahs related to the Christians and Jews were revealed during the Makkan phase. This is evidence to the fact that the influence of the two groups in Thus, it was essential to counter them.

It is possible that during the early days of the Prophet (sws)'s preaching, some People of the Book may not have understood his message clearly, or that the arguments of his prophethood may not have been clear enough to them, or, even that they had valid questions and doubts in their minds that prevented them from accepting the new faith. But, as time passed, it became obvious that they knew that the Prophet (sws) was a true prophet, and that his prophethood was the same that had been predicted by earlier prophets of Bani Isra'il, who had also instructed their nations to believe in it and to support it. It was what Jesus (sws) had brought tidings of, and what the earlier People of the Book had waited for. However, with the passage of time, they adopted an attitude that was a composite of fraud and deception, conspiracies and obstruction to faith. Thus, during the early Makkan phase, the Qur'an exposed their ingratitude, evasion of their religious responsibilities, breaking of the covenant with God and conspiracies against the religion of God: all their activities were revealed. It is clear that the Christians and Jews did not remain impartial in the matter of Islamic preaching; they opposed it fully, and the Qur'an responded accordingly.

Criticism of the Jews

Verses 103 to 171 of Surah A'raf give, in detail, the history of the blessings and special favours of God upon the Jews. We are told that this nation had suffered greatly at the hands of the Pharaoh, before the prophethood of Moses (sws). The Pharaoh became furious when Moses (sws) invited him to accept faith, and as a result, the Israelites were forced to face much torture and many trials. God Almighty punished the Pharaoh for his excesses and insurgence by drowning him, but saved the Israelites by providing them a safe passage out of Egypt. The Israelites should have been grateful to God for this great favour, but they showed a tendency to Idolatory as soon as they were released from the slavery of the Pharaoh, and demanded of Moses (sws) that he assign a deity which they could recognize. When Moses (sws) reprimanded them, they melted their jewellery, sculpted a calf from the molten metal and began to worship it during his absence, when he had gone to the Mount of Ṭur to receive instructions from God. On his return, he was angry with the elders of his people for having allowed this evil to develop to this extent. He then selected 70 elders and took them to Mount Ṭur for collective repentance. At this point, when they turned to God and prayed for deliverance from evil, both in this world and the Hereafter, God made it clear to them that He would have mercy only on those people who refrained from disobeying Him, paid zakah, believed in His holy verses and followed the unlettered Prophet whose signs would be given to them. They were to respect him, support him and follow the light of guidance that God would send down to the earth through him. Only such people would be deserving of salvation.

The purpose of giving such a detailed background was to remind the People of the Book, in particular the Jews, of their responsibility towards the Prophet (sws), who was from among the unlettered Arab tribes, and who had then acquired prophethood, so that they would believe in him, and support him fully in order to make themselves eligible for salvation.

The same narrative goes on to mention some of the wrongdoings of the Israelites, as a punishment for which God had scattered them and imposed cruel rulers upon them, who put them through hard trials. If these people learnt from the errors of their past, this was the last chance for them to reform themselves, failing which their destiny would conclude with humiliation in this world, and ruin in the next.

The Jews had always been proud of the fact that God had made a covenant with them. During the phase of divine revelations, Moses (sws) would gather his people after each instruction, and take their vows that they would obey and not deviate from the orders given. The Israelites would promise to listen and abide by the instructions by declaring God as the witness. During the last days of the prophethood of Muhammad (sws) in Makkah, the Jews were reminded that, after a long history of promises to God, the time had come for them to fulfill the promise and not tear it apart for their self serving interests. Otherwise, their example would be that of an old woman who wove a strong cloth with great effort over years, but when the time came to use it, she tore it to pieces.

The Jews presented their ideas to the Quraysh in attractive ways and in order to keep their trust, reassured them that their advice was based entirely on good will towards them. This was a ploy of deception and lies, aimed at ensuring that the Quraysh abide by their stance, keep firm on their opposition to the Prophet (sws), weaken the morale of the Muslims and stop believers from taking steps towards the religion of God. The Qur'an exposed this conspiracy of the Jews, and revealed the implications of their efforts. Their entire activities were based on the fear that the population and power of Muslims may exceed theirs. Hence they did not spare any effort that could thwart the steps of the Muslims, and missed no opportunity to create doubts and apprehensions within the minds of those who listened to the new Message with attention.

The attitude of the Jews was not based on any sincerity. They were creating difficulties for the Prophet (sws) merely to protect their worldly benefits. The Qur'an compared this character to the greed and baseness of dogs. A dog searches for his favourite food and wherever he finds its smell, he turns towards it. Following this example, the Jews had also let their desires and vested interests rule them, above divine guidance, and forgot their vows and covenant, as well as the responsibilities of their status. God Almighty had showered them with blessings, and had also warned them, but these things did not prove to be of use to them. God had wished to award them supremacy of this world and the next, but greed for this world became their undoing, and this nation could not prepare itself for any lofty purpose. Various aspects of this particular characteristic of the Jews were exposed by the Qur'an during the Makkan phase. Its pitiless criticism points to the fact that the Jews were not playing an ordinary role during this phase, and that they were constantly creating problems for the Prophet's struggle, and thus it became necessary to correct the situation.

Criticism on the Christians

As with the Jews, the beliefs of the Christians, too, came under discussion during the Makkan phase. However, the address to them does not contain the same bitterness as is found for the Jews. This is probably because the Jews were known to operate through conspiracies and deception, whereas the Christians were misguided and victims of misunderstanding. Their wrong beliefs included divinity of Jesus (sws) or his being God Himself, the idea of his being the son of God and his bringing salvation to his believers in the Hereafter. A comprehensive Surah Maryam was revealed to refute these beliefs. It begins with the miraculous birth of Yahya (sws) – John the Baptist, to Zakariyya (sws) – Zachariah. He, himself was very old, and his wife was infertile. As an acceptance of their humble supplications, God Almighty blessed them with a son. Maryam (sws) – Mary, was a pious and virtuous lady at the Bayt al-Maqdas, where Zachariah was custodian and leader. She gave birth to a son, born

without a father, on God's special instructions, and the child, while still in his mother's lap, witnessed to his being a slave of God and His prophet, sent towards the Israelites. This child was ʻĪsa (sws) – Jesus, who was given the status of the son of God, and assigned divinity by his followers. The above two births have been mentioned together to demonstrate the fact that, if miraculous births could be the reason for being deities, then Zachariah (sws), too, was born miraculously. But he had neither claimed divinity on this basis, nor had anyone one else believed him to be thus. Why did then, the followers of Jesus (sws) leave their reasoning aside in his case?

Mary (sws) was a servant of God, worshipping in the temple. When Jesus (sws) was born to her, the fact of his being a human being was automatically proved. Despite this, he proclaimed openly his servant hood of God throughout his life, from the cradle to the last phases of his preaching. God blessed him with prophethood and the Holy Book, entrusted him with religious guidance and instructed him to pray and to pay zakah. He said about himself that, just as with other human beings, he, too, had to go through the stages of birth, death and resurrection. Hence, his position was no different from that of others. Addressing his followers, he proclaimed that he was a slave of God, who was his Creator, as well as theirs. He clarified that his relationship with God was the same as that of his addressees with God. Thus, if this relationship meant being a son of God, then all human beings were children of God and it was not a special characteristic of Jesus (sws) alone.

Surah Maryam also threw light upon the traditions of prophets, and explained that virtuous and pious people were averse to polytheism, proclaimed the oneness of God and expressed their servitude to Him. Jesus (sws) was a true follower of these traditions, and the same should be held dear to the hearts of his followers. These prophets were also characterized by their devotion to the revelations they received. They were influenced by each and every divine verse, and acted upon it. The true disciples among the People of the Book should have reverted, with sincerity, to the divine guidance which was being revealed then. But their situation was such that they were under the influence of satanic elements and expressed their aversion to divine guidance.

An important topic in Surah Maryam was one of the eventual return of all human beings to God. There was no other destination for them. Every individual will be presented for accountability. Neither his helpers and supporters, nor his allies or friends will be with him. The attribute of mercy of God shall come into action that day, and it will require Him to do justice among his servants, redress the sufferings of those who had followed the path of truth and banish the oppressors to hell. On that day, the people who followed the path of virtue and whose actions were witness to their piety shall be deserving of entering paradise. They shall be received with great honour, and presented before God Almighty with respect and dignity. The criminals shall be warded off to hell like thirsty camels. Their presumed pleaders will not have any right to plead on their behalf. This narrative refuted the belief of the Christians that Jesus (sws) would come to their rescue in the Hereafter, and God would absolve them of all their sins on the basis of their belief in him.

This explains that the Qur'an not only clarified right from wrong through its commentary on the Quraysh, but also exposed the wrongdoing of the People of the Book who supported them. This informed the Quraysh of the position and value held by the people they were relying upon in the eyes of God, and the importance of any advice they gave to them.

CHAPTER 17

As the Quraysh realized increasingly that matters related to the new religion were getting out of their control, they proposed even more tough actions, one after the other, against the believers and their supporters, so that the Message may be prevented from becoming a success. The Banu Hashim had given refuge to the Prophet (sws), and the Quraysh were unsuccessful in convincing Abu Talib to withdraw this support. Therefore, some emotional people decided to punish the Banu Hashim itself for this support, in the shape of a social boycott.

The Most Common Narrative of the Boycott

The most common narrative related to the boycott, that biographers have relied upon, is that when the Quraysh were offended by the expressions of esteem and good wishes for Muslims from Najashi, they agreed among themselves to kill the Prophet (sws). They wrote an agreement against the Banu Hashim, saying that, unless that tribe delivered the Prophet (sws) to them, no family of the Quraysh would develop any bonds of marriage with them, conduct any business dealings or have any interaction with them. This written document was hung inside the Ka'bah. According to the narrative, acting upon this agreement, they put the Banu Hashim and their ally, the Banu Muttalib, under siege in Sha'b Abi Talib. They were neither allowed to be given any food, nor to purchase anything from external traders. They survived by eating the leaves of berry trees. Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas became so hungry once that, when he found a piece of dried leather, he roasted it over the fire, chewed it and swallowed it with water. A few kind individuals would drive a beast laden with grain towards them. When children cried with hunger, the Quraysh rejoiced in their sounds. The Banu Hashim tolerated this situation for three years. Finally, the Prophet (sws) informed Abu Talib that the document of the agreement had been eaten up by woodworm. Abu Talib went to the kafirs, and asked them to present the agreement. According to his nephew, nothing was written on the document. If he was wrong, Abu Talib would deliver him to them. When the document was brought forth, it was found to be empty of any writing. At this point, some large hearted leaders such as Mut'im ibn 'Adi, Abu al-Bukhtari ibn Hashim, Zam'ah ibn al-Aswad, 'Adi ibn Qays and Zuhayr ibn Abi Umayyah insisted that they would not allow such cruelty any further, and they brought the beleaguered people from the valley. They had raised their voices even before this cruel agreement was made.

According to this narrative of the agreement, every tribe of the Quraysh was bound to implement the following:

· No one would enter into marriage with the Banu Hashim

· No trade would be conducted with them and,

· No one would have any social interaction with them

until they gave Muhammad (sws) into their custody, so that they could get rid of him.

Other narratives of this event differ in their detail. According to some, the Quraysh put the Banu Hashim in Sha'b Abi Talib, but according to others, they came together of their own accord. Narratives also give the duration of the siege as 2-3 years, or less, or more. There is also a difference regarding the part of the document that was destroyed by woodworm: was it the first part with the words bi ismika allahumma, or did these words remain and the rest was destroyed?

In our view, several questions arise, regarding such a narrative, to which satisfactory answers cannot be found. For example:

1. The agreement includes clauses forbidding marriages and trade relations, but none on putting them under siege. Thus, there was no requirement under this agreement to bring them under siege, and no Quraysh tribe was under any compulsion to do so. Without such a clause in the agreement, how did the Quraysh implement it with consensus?

2. This agreement was against the Banu Hashim and its ally, the Banu Muttalib. Other tribes were not to be affected by it. Yet, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas is said to be chewing a piece of leather in his hunger. He belonged to the tribe of the Banu Zahrah. The question arises, why was he included in those besieged? If he was forced, why did his tribe not come to his rescue?

3. The trade ban with the Banu Hashim was put only on the Quraysh; it did not apply to other tribes or traders who came from outside Makkah. In such a situation, the Banu Hashim would not have found it difficult to obtain necessary goods from other traders, and cause their children to go hungry. But the narrative shows that they suffered from hunger throughout the three year siege.

4. It was not an easy task to kill anyone in Arab society. If the Quraysh wanted to kill the Prophet (sws), the best place to take such a decision have would been the Dar al-Nadwah, where all Quraysh leaders would gather to make important decisions. But such a meeting was not held. Decisions taken out of the ambit of such meetings were not considered to be joint decisions, even if they were important ones, and were not implemented. It was after this event that all the tribes of the Quraysh gathered in the Dar al-Nadwah, and after much debate and discussion, decided on ways and means to kill the Prophet (sws). Because this decision was taken very seriously, God instructed the Prophet (sws) to migrate and thus he was saved from his enemies.

5. If the three year siege had occurred, it would have carried so much significance that the entire Arab world should have resonated with its implications, because the Banu Hashim held the responsibility of taking care of the hajj pilgrims, giving them water, managing the House of God and serving the travelers. If they vanished for three years, this should have created a crisis in the country. But history does not

mention any alternative arrangement that was put into place after banishing the Banu Hashim to a besieged status.

In the light of these facts, it is not possible to believe such weak narratives. The event is different from what has been portrayed in them.

The Possible Situation

Abu Hurayrah (rta) relates that, when they were in Mina# during the last day of the hajj, the Prophet (sws) said that they would descend into the valley of the Banu Kananah the next day. This was the place where people promised to remain disbelievers, the Quraysh and the Banu Kananah swore that they would neither marry into Banu Hashim and the Banu Muttalib, nor have any commercial dealings with them, until they gave up the Prophet (sws) to them.[1]

This is far more close to reality than the previous narrative. According to this, the situation may have been somewhat as follows: a group of the disbelievers of the Quraysh promised each other that they would boycott both the Banu Hashim and the Banu Muttalib, who had remained steadfast in their support to Banu Hashim. The boycott included not getting involved in mutual marriages and ending all trade relations with them. It had no clause that covered a ban on getting food to them, or besieging them. This promise was made in a valley of Mina, not in Makkah, and whatever status it had for those who participated, it was not an agreement made by the Quraysh, hence it was not written down. With this background, it is not difficult to come to the following conclusions:

1. This was not a collective agreement of the Quraysh made after careful deliberation. A few people of the Quraysh and the Banu Kananah thought of harassing the Banu Hashim and got together in the valley of Mina# to boycott them. It is quite possible that some emotional people were involved in this, and the elders were kept out. There was no mention of any siege.

2. This agreement was not acceptable to some important Quraysh leaders. They fought with the proponents of the boycott constantly and their efforts brought the conflict to an end. This shows that it was not a consensual agreement among the Quraysh, and was therefore often breached by some people, as some narratives show.

3. Since there was no siege, the relatives of the Banu Hashim could convey necessary items to them. Thus, some narratives give the example of Hakim ibnn Hizam taking grain to them.

4. Abu Hurayrah's story does not explain the duration for which the Banu Hashim remained worried. But the worry existed, not because of any siege or lack of food, but because they faced this situation caused by people with whom they had had good relations previously.

As explained above, most people within the jurisdiction of the Quraysh and Banu Kananah had accepted Islam. Since this agreement was only against Banu Hashim and the Banu Muttalib, the rest of the

Muslims, such as Abu Bakr (rta), Omar (rta) and those whose names have been cited above were not affected. Hence this boycott did not hamper the spread of Islam.

It can be deduced that there was no ban on free movement of either the Prophet (sws) or other Muslims, to come to the Ka'bah or go to the city. Hence his preaching continued as before. In such a situation, Banu Hashim would have been able to fulfill their responsibilities related to hajj and 'umrah.

5. Except from those who were part of the agreement, Banu Hashim could trade with others who were not bound by the agreement.

6. The location of the siege is given as Sha'b Abi Talib, but such a place does not exist within the surrounds of Makkah. It could have been Sha'b Bani Hashim, which is the area within Makkah where Banu Hashim resided in large numbers, and which was present in the recent past in the south west of the Prophet's place of birth. With the extension of the Ka'bah, all signs of this quarter and the hill over which it was located have vanished. The idea that this was a valley away from Makkah and where the Banu Hashim were imprisoned is completely wrong, since these narratives also say that when the children of Muslims cried from hunger, the Quraysh would hear their cries and laugh. This could only have been possible if the valley was close to other quarters of Makkah. It was also barren and had no berry trees on the leaves of which the Banu Hashim could have survived for so long.

Had the Banu Hashim gathered in this place, it is possible that Abu Talib may have asked those of his tribe, who lived out of the area to come together for fear of oppression by the Quraysh. Then, when the better elements within the Quraysh put a stop to their activities, the Banu Hashim returned to their homes. This has also been stated in one of the narratives. [2]

Invitation for Reconciliation

When the Quraysh realized that their oppression was worsening the situation and the new religion was gaining dominance in society, they made a political move. They pleaded to the Prophet (sws) that they were brothers to each other; it did not please them to create difficulties for them. They had great expectations from him, that he would lead the Banu Hashim so that the status of the Quraysh would be raised. They believed that, if he changed some parts of his teachings that were objectionable to them, they would accept these. Additionally, there were some behaviours and actions that they were now so used to, that it was not possible for people to adjust to the new injunctions he was asking them to obey; they would request him to revise these as well. This would lead them to implement his instructions. Their people would accept his religion and his mission would be successful.

Such ideas cause one to pause and rethink. One is impelled to consider the pros and cons, and think that if one could give some flexibility to people, perhaps they could come around to belief in the original teachings after having understood it in totality. The Prophet (sws) loved his people, and was eager for them to accept the faith, concerned that they may become fodder for hell in their foolishness. Thus, he began to think about their proposal. Since prophets act as the representatives of God on earth, they are

under His guidance. On occasions such as these, when a prophet is indecisive about an action, God stops him from taking a wrong decision and guides him to the straight path. God explained the Prophet Muhammad's situation thus:

And indeed, they were about to tempt you away from that which We revealed to you in order to [make] you invent about Us something else; and then they would have taken you as a friend. And if We had not strengthened you, you would have almost inclined to them a little. Then [if you had], We would have made you taste double [punishment in] life and double [after] death. Then you would not find for yourself against Us a helper. (17:74-75)

At another place, the Qur'an says:

And when Our verses are recited to them as clear evidence, those who do not expect the meeting with Us say: "Bring us a Qur'an other than this or change it." Say, [O Muhammad]: "It is not for me to change it on my own accord. I only follow what is revealed to me. Indeed I fear, if I should disobey my Lord, the punishment of a tremendous Day." Say: "If Allah had willed, I would not have recited it to you, nor would He have made it known to you, for I had remained among you a lifetime before it. Then will you not reason?" (10:15-16)

In other words, the Qur'an was not the Prophet's creation that he could make changes in it according to his will. This was God's guidance which he was bound to follow and could not cancel any part of it. If he did so, he would come under God's grasp.

At another place:

[He is] Knower of the unseen, and He does not disclose His [knowledge of the] unseen. Except whom He has approved of messengers, and indeed, He sends before each messenger and behind him observers. That He may know that they have conveyed the message of their Lord; and He has encompassed whatever is with them and has enumerated all things in number. (72:26-28)

This shows that when God gives knowledge of the unknown to His messenger through divine revelation, He does not leave him to himself to say whatever he will to the people. The messenger is kept under strict observation and is surrounded by angels who ensure that the message is communicated to the people in its entirety and purity. Hence, there is no possibility that the message could be changed by the messenger of his own accord, or through the influence of others. Explaining this further, the Qur'an says:

[It is] a revelation from the Lord of the worlds. And if Muhammad had made up about Us some [false] sayings, We would have seized him by the right hand; Then We would have cut from him the aorta. And there is no one of you who could protect him from [Us]. And indeed, the Qur'an is a reminder for the righteous. (69:43-48)

Here, the Quraysh were told that when one was was selected as God's messenger, there was no danger that he would mix his own falsehoods with God's revelations. If ever a messenger dare do this, he would be destroyed immediately by God.

In this way, God instructed the Prophet (sws) that it was his responsibility to communicate God's revealed message without any addition or subtraction to people. These people wanted to show flexibility in their attitude if he would do the same. But he was not authorized to do so. He was answerable only to God, not to them. However hard his detractors may try, they must not succeed in swaying him from God's verses. The Prophet (sws) should proclaim all the verses that they disliked, loudly and clearly. God's revelations can neither be reversed nor hidden. This demonstrates the difference between a politician and a prophet. The latter cannot change his stance, but a politician changes his decisions according to changing circumstances and benefits from the type of opportunities which the Quraysh had offered to the Prophet (sws).

As a part of the above offer of reconciliation, a group from the Quraysh met with Abu Talib and requested him to convince his nephew to revise his message. In return, they would give him whatever wealth, fame, status and political standing that he may wish for. When Abu Talib called the Prophet (sws) and presented this idea to him, he said what became one of his most famous sayings: "Uncle, if these people were to place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left in lieu of my preaching, I would not accept these offerings." At this, Abu Talib asked him to continue with his work.

When the opponents despaired of any breakthrough in compromise, they started to terrorize people again and to torture the Prophet (sws) and his colleagues.

Abu Bakr's Decision to Migrate

Abu Bakr Siddiq (rta) was respected highly among the Quraysh and it was his responsibility to decide on matters related to blood money and ransom. Despite this, the Quraysh were deeply offended by his "crime" of accepting Islam. He was a man of great honour and did not hesitate to help any poor Muslim and back him up. He never faltered even under the most trying of circumstances. But now the Quraysh were becoming so barbaric that even such a steadfast person as he, thought of migrating from Makkah and joining other Muslims in Abyssinia. He had travelled several miles already from Makkah when he met a friend, Ibn al-Daghnah, who was the leader of the tribe Qarrah. In response to his query about where he was heading, Abu Bakr (rta) replied that his nation had forced him to move out. Now he wanted to go elsewhere, where he could worship God freely. Ibn al-Daghnah offered to take him into his protection and return to Makkah. On his return, Ibn al-Daghnah met all leaders of the Quraysh and told them categorically that a man like Abu Bakr (rta) could neither leave Makkah nor be forced to leave. Would they banish a person who helped the poor, treated his relatives well, carried the burdens of others, took care of guests and supported those in trouble? The Quraysh accepted Ibn al-Daghnah's protection and allowed Abu Bakr (rta) to worship God in his house, say the prayer, read the Qur'an, but not make this public, as this would lead their women and children astray. Abu Bakr (rta) had left an open space within his house, where he made a place for offering the prayer. He would offer the prayer and read the Qur'an. He would break into tears when doing so. Passersby would wonder and be concerned. The idolaters became worried and asked Ibn al-Daghnah to control Abu Bakr (rta), at which he asked the latter to pray inside his house. If he failed to do so, he should return his protection, because he did not

wish the Arabs to put the blame of breaking a promise of protection himself. Abu Bakr (rta) was not ready to accept protection under these conditions and returned it to Ibn al-Daghnah, saying that he was happy with the protection of God. He also decided to fight against the oppression of the Quraysh himself and not to migrate from Makkah.[3]

Thus, God retained a trustworthy well wisher to look after the interests of the Muslims within Makkah. Another benefit of his stay in Makkah was that, he was a very trusted friend of the Prophet (sws) who would consult him in all important matters. This consultation continued until both migrated together.

(*Translated by Nikhat Sattar*)

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1. Muslim, Al-Jami‘ al-sahih, vol.1, 549.

2. Ibn Kathir, Sirah al-Nabi, vol. 1, 344.

3. Al-Bukhari, Al-Jami‘ al-sahih, vol, 3, 126.

CHAPTER 18

Warning of God's Punishment to the Quraysh

Trials for the people of Makkah

When a prophet's nation oppresses him and his followers as a show of its arrogance, God inflicts lesser and greater punishments on them to cut them down to size, so that this might weaken their hearts, they might turn to God and listen to His message in the light of which they try to reform themselves. This is a law of God that has been implemented on all nations to whom prophets have been sent. The Qur'an explains this as follows:

And We sent to no city a prophet [who was denied], except that We seized its people with poverty and hardship that they might humble themselves [to God]. Then We exchanged in place of the bad [condition], good, until they increased [and prospered] and said, "Our fathers [also] were touched with hardship and ease." So, We seized them suddenly while they did not perceive. (7:94-95)

At another place, it says clearly that the Quraysh shall continue to face trials and difficulties until the final conclusive phase is reached.

And those who disbelieve do not cease to be struck, for what they have done, by calamity – or it will descend near their home – until there comes the promise of God. Indeed, God does not fail in [His] promise. (13:31)

This statement in the Qur'an shows that, many trials came upon the Quraysh, but they have not been recorded in history. Imam al-Bayhaqi has mentioned only one of these; during this period of obduracy and arrogance of the Quraysh, they were struck by a severe famine, to the extent that people would see a sort of smoke between the skies and the earth, due to extreme hunger. It is possible that the Quraysh suffered trade losses also during this period that were not recorded in history.

God's Law about Divine Punishment

It is an immense favour from God for any nation to have a prophet born within its people. The prophet is well aware of the nature, traditions and customs of his people, and when he communicates the message of God in their own language, it is the greatest wealth he could distribute amongst them. It enables them to not only improve their lives in this world, but also to become eligible for rewards in the Hereafter. It is a matter of great misfortune for a nation that it refuses to listen to and obey their

prophet. In such a situation, these people convert a huge divine favour, into a great suffering for themselves. They, then, become the addressees of God's message as a result of the advent of the prophet, because their carelessness and disregard means that they are disdainful of the Ruler of the universe and their own Creator, and His guidance. This act is rebellion against God, and that nation cannot save itself from its repercussions. If the people respond positively to the message, God opens the doors of His mercy even wider, the earth spews its treasures and the heavens play their part to make them more prosperous. This is why prophets are called the proclaimers of glad tidings and warners. The prophet gives good news of God's blessings to those who accept the truth and warns those who do not, of their ignominious end.

It is evident from the Qur'an that a period of time is allotted to a nation during which it is given freedom to choose and accept the message of its prophet, after he has been declared one. This period is known only to God; even the prophet is unaware. When people ignore the message, it is the responsibility of the prophet to warn them of the negative consequences of their stubbornness. He tells them that they shall be punished in this world, and shall also be considered criminals in the next. The Prophet (sws) would explain very kindly to his people that, by negating God's message, they were making themselves worthy of the same punishment that was accorded to the extinct nations of ʻĀd and Thamud. People would ask him; when would this punishment come? They wanted to see it. The Prophet (sws) would, very truthfully, tell them that he could only commit to the coming of the punishment; he could not say anything about its timing, because that was known only to God.

Signs of Impending Punishment to the Quraysh

As the Quraysh constantly insisted on the punishment to be shown to them, the Prophet (sws) was informed through revelation that, while the punishment would be a reality, the knowledge of its timing could not be given. It was possible that he could witness it partially during his lifetime, and it was also possible that he would not see what may happen to his detractors while he lived. Therefore, he was not to say anything to those who queried him on this matter. It is said in Surah Yunus:

And whether We show you some of what We promise them, [O Muhammad], or We take you in death, to Us is their return; then, [either way], God is a witness concerning what they are doing. And for every nation is a messenger. So when their messenger comes, it will be judged between them in justice, and they will not be wronged. And they say, "When is [the fulfillment of] this promise, if you should be truthful?" Say, "I possess not for myself any harm or benefit except what God should will. For every nation is a [specified] term. When their time has come, then they will not remain behind an hour, nor will they precede [it]." Say, "Have you considered: if His punishment should come to you by night or by day – for which [aspect] of it would the criminals be impatient?"

The Quraysh were warned that they should not consider themselves different from the earlier nations. Whenever a prophet was sent to a nation, a conclusive phase always came. If God decided to punish it in this world, He did not look at its predecessors nor its status and strength of numbers. It met the same fate that came to the nations of ʻĀd, Thamud and others that became worthy of punishment.

But if they turn away, then say, “I have warned you of a thunderbolt like the thunderbolt [that struck] the ʻĀd and the Thamud. [that occurred] when the messengers had come to them before them and after them, [saying], “Worship not except God.” They said, “If our Lord had willed, He would have sent down the angels, so indeed we, in that with which you have been sent, are disbelievers.” (41:13-14)

The Prophet (sws) would worry, seeing the stubborn behavior of his people, and wonder if it was due to some fault of his that they were not accepting his message. The Qur’an reassured him that this was not so. He was making even greater efforts in spreading the message than was expected of him. His responsibility was to communicate God’s guidance to people; it was not a part of his duties to ensure that people accepted it wholeheartedly, or that they changed their attitudes accordingly. If they did not accept it, they were the ones who would be punished. The Quraysh could not understand how, with all their grandeur, riches and high society status, they could be annihilated through divine punishment, and how the Muslims, who had no support, could claim victory. At this, the Qur’an invited them to observe how Islam was spreading around Makkah and how the city was being surrounded by supporters of Islam.

And whether We show you part of what We promise them or take you in death, upon you is only the [duty of] notification, and upon Us is the account. Have they not seen that We set upon the land, reducing it from its borders? And God decides; there is no adjuster of His decision. And He is swift in account. (13:40-41)

These verses indicate very clearly that the Quraysh would be defeated by the Prophet (sws) and his followers, and Makkah would be won by the latter. Those who reflected could already see the signs. The influence of Islam within the surroundings of Makkah, its acceptability in Abyssinia and the increasing number of people who were accepting Islam, and, after going through extensive suffering for its cause, had become even more fervent, were indications that with each passing day, the circle around the Quraysh would be tightened. However, the issue of whether the Prophet (sws) would himself be able to witness this situation or not was left ambiguous.

Are your disbelievers better than those [former ones], or have you immunity in the scripture? Or do they say, “We are an assembly supporting [each other]”? [Their] assembly will be defeated, and they will turn their backs [in retreat]. But the Hour is their appointment [for due punishment], and the Hour is more disastrous and more bitter. (54:43-46)

It is worth noting that these verses of Surah al-Qamar, too, indicate that the group of the disbelievers would be defeated in the battle with Muslims and they would turn and run away from them, despite the fact that when this surah was revealed, the Muslims were under great pressure, and the Quraysh were not even willing to let them live. Under such circumstances, the Quraysh found it incomprehensible to accept this prediction as a statement of fact. But the huge relief and satisfaction which the Muslims must have experienced as a result can only be imagined.

The impending punishment that the Quraysh were being warned against was not meant to destroy them completely, as clarified by God, but to help them turn towards God and provide a demonstration of what could be their fate if they did not accept the message of Islam. It was an invitation to people to

see those who had been punished earlier, take heed and reform themselves in time so that they could protect themselves.

And we will surely let them taste the nearer punishment short of the greater punishment that perhaps they will repent. And who is more unjust than one who is reminded of the verses of his Lord; then he turns away from them? Indeed We, from the criminals, will take retribution. (32:21-22)

As conditions in Makkah continued to worsen, the threats of punishment too became more severe and the Quraysh were warned that when the punishment came, it would not be possible for them to escape it. They were asked if God were to make the earth below their feet cave in and cause them to sink to the depths, who would save them? If a strong wind pelting them with stones was imposed on them, who would direct it away from them? If God were to take the ground water deeper into the earth, who would obtain fresh water to drink for them? Thus, to be protected from punishment, they should hang on to the Prophet (sws), leading their lives in his guidance. That was the only way for them to be saved.

Demand for a Sign of God's Punishment

When a prophet of God warned his nation of His punishment, and asked them to accept faith to be saved from it, the unfortunate leaders of the nation would take it as an affront and challenge to their ego. They started claiming loudly their disbelief, and demanded proof of the punishment. They said that, if the Prophet (sws) was unable to bring some proof, he should, at least, show them a sign which could prove the truth of his threat. The Prophet (sws) could never show any sign; this was not within his assigned capabilities. Signs were demonstrated only through the will of God. Thus, the warning of punishment by the Prophet (sws), but his inability to provide any physical proof, often resulted in his becoming a target of sarcasm and jeering. The Qur'an has explained at various places that demanding signs from the prophets was not justified. God had assigned a certain period for the preaching of the Qur'an. He was watching all deeds of the disbelievers and those who were heaping taunts on the Prophet (sws), and keeping an eye on them. When the time came for punishment, no tricks of theirs would be able to save them.

And those who disbelieved say, "Why has a sign not been sent down to him from his Lord?" You are only a warner, and for every people is a guide. God knows what every female carries and what the wombs lose [prematurely] or exceed. And everything with Him is by due measure. (13:7-9)

This means that the pregnancy of a pregnant woman is known, but the exact time of delivery in not known to anyone. Similarly, it is known and given that the punishment shall come, but no one can determine the time when it will happen. This is only in the knowledge of God.

When the disbelievers asked to be shown a sign of punishment, on the one hand they claimed that they would accept the Prophet (sws)'s message if he complied. The Prophet (sws) often believed and desired that if God gave such a sign, perhaps a way of guidance for his nation would be opened up. On the other hand, when he could not meet this demand, they made him a target of their sarcasm. Such a situation

was also a difficult one for the Prophet (sws), but God's law intervened here. If the Prophet (sws) showed eagerness, God stopped him by saying that He would not change His laws for people. At one of these situations, God addressed the Prophet (sws) thus:

And if their evasion is difficult for you, then if you are able to seek a tunnel into the earth or a stairway into the sky to bring them a sign, [then do so]. But if God had willed, He would have united them upon guidance. So never be of the ignorant. Only those who hear will respond. But the dead – God will resurrect them; then to Him they will be returned. (6:35-36)

The Qur'an explained that the entire universe, the skies, the earth, animals, birds etc are all innumerable signs of God's creation, power, wisdom, mercy and providence. God wanted people to ponder over these signs and make an effort to understand the realities of life. These signs were enough to demonstrate the oneness of God, all of his attributes, his justice and the system of reward and punishment on the day of reckoning. If people grasped this fact, there was no need for any special sign, because if such a sign were to be sent, it was also imminent that the Quraysh would be destroyed. People who did not think about daily signs also would not take heed on seeing any signs of punishment.

And there is no city but that We will destroy it before the Day of Resurrection or punish it with a severe punishment. That has ever been in the Register inscribed. And nothing has prevented Us from sending signs except that the former peoples denied them. And We gave the Thamud the she-camel as a visible sign, but they wronged her. And We send not the signs except as a warning. And [remember, O Muhammad], when We told you, "Indeed, your Lord has encompassed the people." And We did not make the sight which We showed you except as a trial for the people, as was the accursed tree [mentioned] in the Qur'an. And We threaten them, but it increases them not except in great transgression. (17:58-60)

The she camel of the Thamud is referred to above. Salih (sws) was the prophet for this nation. When, after preaching for a long time, the people did not accept faith, Salih warned them of punishment from God. They asked for a sign, and God made Salih appoint a she camel who was not to be hurt. If they disobeyed, God's punishment would strike them. One unfortunate person wounded the she camel, thus removing the last barrier in punishing the nation. The entire nation was wiped out.

The Prophet (sws) has been told in the above verses that, when the Quraysh were informed of facts that were arguments for their defeat and the control of Muslims over them, they refused to believe. They wanted to remain under their own vain hopes. Here, three such facts, which the Quraysh did not accept, are referred to. The first was that, the message of Islam was showing results among tribes living around Makkah and they were accepting it. Slowly, Makkah would be surrounded by Muslims. At that stage, there would be no way out for the Quraysh except to accept defeat. (Several years later, when Makkah was won, the Quraysh and all those living within Makkah surrendered their arms, and this defeat led to Islam being accepted by all within the Arabian Peninsula). The second fact was that, the prediction that was given to the Prophet (sws) was not accepted by the Quraysh who ridiculed it. Here, the dream or prediction was that of the Ascension, in which God had assigned the spiritual custody of both the Ka'bah and Bayt al-Maqdas to the Prophet (sws). This was not only a message for the Quraysh and Idolaters of

Arabia but also for the Jews and Christians that, the decision to give the custody of both these holy places to the Prophet (sws) and his followers had been taken. (This decision came into effect after the victory of Makkah and during the caliphate of ‘Umar (rta). The third fact was that, the Qur’an warned those who would abide in hell, of eating of the tree of spurge (a species of thorny euphorbia). Instead of fearing this news, and coming to the guidance of Islam, the Quraysh started to make fun of this tree. Thus, they showed clearly that they were not ready to let go of their presumptions. Even if they were shown any signs of punishment, they would refute it by declaring it to be magic. The only way was for them to listen to the Qur’an carefully, and to entrust their lives to its safety.

And is it not sufficient for them that We revealed to you the Book which is recited to them? Indeed in that is a mercy and reminder for a people who believe. (29:51)

The Sign of Splitting of the Moon

The sign of punishment for the Quraysh was neither determined, nor was it displayed. However, God gave a majestic sign of His great power and the tidings given by the Prophet (sws). Narratives tell us that at the continued insistence by the Quraysh to be shown a miracle, similar to what had come to previous prophets, the Prophet (sws) asked them to look at the moon. They saw that the moon broke into two, one piece moving towards the front of Mount Nur, and the other behind it. At this, the Prophet (sws) asked them to remain witness, but they again rejected it as magic. The Qur’an referred to this incident in the following words:

The Hour has come near, and the moon has split [in two]. And if they see a miracle, they turn away and say, “Passing magic.” And they denied and followed their inclinations. But for every matter is a [time of] settlement. And there has already come to them of information that in which there is deterrence – extensive wisdom – but warning does not avail [them]. So leave them, [O Muhammad]. The Day the Caller calls to something forbidding (54:1-6)

Redress for the Prophet’s Worries

A prophet of God operates in a society that has become his enemy. It is not possible that problems are created and he not be deeply affected. The society considers his preaching to be dangerous, and its leaders leave no unturned stone to stop him. Even when threatened with the advent of punishment, the people pay no attention, but the prophet hears it coming, his worry increases. In such situations, the only Being he can rely upon is God, on whose assignment he is working. He needs God’s guidance at every step, and He, too, provides it constantly.

Divine Revelation

The Prophet (sws) used to wait eagerly for divine revelation and desired for it to come to him as soon as possible. Sometimes, while waiting for the Divine Angel, he would raise his eyes to the skies. He would think that, if he were to learn the previous revelation faster, he would become eligible for the next one sooner. Hence, when the Angel came to deliver his message, the Prophet (sws) would try to learn it

quickly in order to assign it to his memory. The Qur'an stopped him from this, telling him that it was not appropriate to show impatience in matters related to revelations. There is a period of time that God has allotted for completion of the revelation and that was best. Until that time, he should pray for enhancement in his knowledge.

So high [above all] is God, the Sovereign, the Truth. And, [O Muhammad], do not hasten with [recitation of] the Qur'an before its revelation is completed to you, and say, "My Lord, increase me in knowledge." (20:114)

To reassure the Prophet (sws), God instructed the Angel to inform him that angels do not come down, except by the will of God. The Prophet (sws) may be eager for revelation, but this was not within their power. As soon as they are instructed by God, they appear before him without delay. Hence, he should continue to pray to his God and remain steadfast. His worries could be redressed by God only.

[Gabriel said], "And we [angels] descend not except by the order of your Lord. To Him belongs that before us and that behind us and what is in between. And never is your Lord forgetful – (19:64)

When the revelations came, they guided the Prophet (sws) on how to address the problems he was facing and respond to objections raised by the opponents. This gave a new strength to him, with which he was able to fight his circumstances with fortitude and determination.

Advice to Practice Extra Prayers and Patience

Amongst the chaos created by the resentment of the Quraysh, God also sent him instructions for his personal development. In particular, he was told to perform the prayers more frequently, for this was the key to his success. The more he turned to his God, the more his reliance and trust on Him would increase. When he entrusted himself and his affairs to His control, He would protect him. Similarly, it was necessary to show persistence in his own belief in the truth of his claims and arguments. If someone does not let go of patience in the most trying of circumstances, every additional challenge creates new resolve and closer links with his point of view. Narratives of previous prophets in which they handled their trials with great fortitude were related to the Prophet (sws) to guide him. Some instructions given to him were:

O you who wraps himself [in clothing], Arise [to pray] the night, except for a little – half of it – or subtract from it a little Or add to it, and recite the Qur'an with measured recitation. Indeed, We will cast upon you a heavy word. Indeed, the hours of the night are more effective for concurrence [of heart and tongue] and more suitable for words. Indeed, for you by day is prolonged occupation. And remember the name of your Lord and devote yourself to Him with [complete] devotion. [He is] the Lord of the East and the West; there is no deity except Him, so take Him as Disposer of [your] affairs. And be patient over what they say and avoid them with gracious avoidance. And leave Me with [the matter of] the deniers, those of ease [in life], and allow them respite a little. (73:1-11)

Cloistered in clothing means someone who is worried by his circumstances and is in deep thought. This was how the Prophet (sws) has been pictured. He was saddened by the obduracy of his people and wondered how he could communicate the message of God to them, that they would understand and accept guidance. He would pull his clothing around himself, and thus removing himself from the world, would go into deep thought. At this, God instructed him to pray during various stages of the night and to recite the Qur'an slowly, so that he would understand the real depths of its meaning and develop complete trust in God. At another place, it was said:

So be patient over what they say and exalt [God] with praise of your Lord before the rising of the sun and before its setting; and during periods of the night [exalt Him] and at the ends of the day, that you may be satisfied. And do not extend your eyes toward that by which We have given enjoyment to [some] categories of them, [its being but] the splendor of worldly life by which We test them. And the provision of your Lord is better and more enduring. And enjoin prayer upon your family [and people] and be steadfast therein. We ask you not for provision; We provide for you, and the [best] outcome is for [those of] righteousness. (20:130-132)

So remain on a right course as you have been commanded, [you] and those who have turned back with you [to God], and do not transgress. Indeed, He is Seeing of what you do. And do not incline toward those who do wrong, lest you be touched by the Fire, and you would not have other than God any protectors; then you would not be helped. And establish prayer at the two ends of the day and at the approach of the night. Indeed, good deeds do away with misdeeds. That is a reminder for those who remember. And be patient, for indeed, God does not allow to be lost the reward of those who do good. (11:112-115)

Consideration for Followers

The Prophet's friends and followers who had accepted Islam were a great consolation to him. Whenever the Prophet (sws) was concerned about the conspiracies being hatched by the Quraysh, God would advise him to take solace from the presence of his colleagues, take interest in their affairs and ignore the disbelievers. These faithful friends were the group that would be enough for him.

In the verse from Surah Hud above, the Prophet (sws) was instructed not to be swayed towards the tormentors. This did not mean that he was not to speak with them at all. Meeting the disbelievers and communicating his message was among his responsibilities. Normally, when some people accept a message, the attention diverts from those who have understood, to those who are still unwilling to listen and understand. But it was important to recognize that the former group, which may have given up its families and all its interests in order to follow the prophet, needed his special attention in recompense. He was to console them in their troubles and give them glad tidings of the consequences of remaining steadfast in their faith. If he had to ignore the leaders of the disbelievers to achieve this objective, he was to follow this course. The Qur'an gave special instructions to the Prophet (sws) on this.

And do not send away those who call upon their Lord morning and afternoon, seeking His countenance. Not upon you is anything of their account and not upon them is anything of your account. So were you to send them away, you would [then] be of the wrongdoers. And thus We have tried some of them

through others that the disbelievers might say, “Is it these whom God has favored among us?” Is not God most knowing of those who are grateful? And when those come to you who believe in Our verses, say, “Peace be upon you. Your Lord has decreed upon Himself mercy: that any of you who does wrong out of ignorance and then repents after that and corrects himself – indeed, He is Forgiving and Merciful.” (6:52-54)

Do not extend your eyes toward that by which We have given enjoyment to [certain] categories of the disbelievers, and do not grieve over them. And lower your wing to the believers. (15:88)

Displeasure at the Arrival of Ibn Umm Maktum

Surah ‘Abas contains reference to an event in which the Prophet (sws) was speaking to a group of Quraysh leaders and communicating the message of the Qur’an, when a companion, ‘Abdullah ibn Umm Maktum arrived. He was a maternal cousin of Khadijah (rta), and was blind. His arrival in the midst of the meeting with the Quraysh during his preaching displeased the Prophet (sws). He was concerned that this would provide an opportunity to the Quraysh to say that he was only being supported by the disabled and poor; that he had been able to convince them and now wished that they too, would come down to their level. Thus, they would never accept his message. With these thoughts regarding the requirement of preaching, the Prophet’s forehead was creased. The Qur’an addressed this as follows:

The Prophet frowned and turned away. Because there came to him the blind man, [interrupting]. But what would make you perceive, [O Muhammad], that perhaps he might be purified. Or be reminded and the remembrance would benefit him? As for he who thinks himself without need, To him you give attention. And not upon you [is any blame] if he will not be purified. But as for he who came to you striving [for knowledge] While he fears [God], From him you are distracted. No! Indeed, these verses are a reminder; So whoever wills may remember it. (80:1-12)

It is clear that, overwhelmed with emotions of compassion and mercy, and a desire to fulfill his responsibilities, the Prophet (sws) was worried lest the arrival of Ibn Maktum provide an excuse to the Quraysh to leave the gathering, and this led him to turn away from his companion, momentarily forgetting the guidance that had been revealed through the above verse from Surah al-Hijr. The style of address in Surah ‘Abas indicates as if the anger is directed towards the Prophet (sws), but it is not him, but the disbelievers who are addressed here. Imam Hamid Uddin Farahi clarifies this in his tafsir:

To understand this situation, consider a simile. Imagine a shepherd who is very dedicated and vigilant, and one of his sheep wanders away from his herd and is lost. The shepherd goes out to search for it, finding the signs of its feet and hearing its bleating too from various parts of the forest. The shepherd goes far, hoping to find it soon and apparently forgets his herd. On return, his master reproaches him for leaving his whole herd and going after a single sheep needlessly. He should have left it to its devices, and it would have served it well had it been eaten by a wolf. Where is the anger directed here – at the shepherd or the sheep? Obviously at the lost sheep, because love is expressed towards both the shepherd and his herd. The same situation occurs here. It only appears that the addressee is the Prophet

(sws), whereas, in actual fact, the burden of the censure is on all those who have continued to disbelieve. For the Prophet (sws), there are hidden expressions of love and kindness in these words."[1]

Thus, the Prophet (sws) was directed in the surah, not to use any means below his noble status, and unworthy of the Qur'an, to attract the proud and arrogant people towards Islam. People who were turning away from this great blessing were unworthy of being given any importance. Only those who had entered the fold of Islam and wished to adopt better and nobler characters, learn and to purify themselves, were the ones who needed his attention the most.

(*Translated by Nikhat Sattar*)

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1. Hamid al-Din al-Farahi, Majmu'ah tafasir Farahi, 257.

CHAPTER 19

The Year of Sorrows

The tenth year of prophethood was one of continuous pain and sorrow for the Prophet (sws). This is why the year is called the "Year of Sorrows" for him. During the year, his uncle, Abu Talib, who was the leader of the Banu Hashim tribe, passed away. Soon afterwards, his beloved confidante and wife also died. This was a most tragic event for him. Later, when he made an attempt to develop relations with the leaders of Ta'if, it was unsuccessful and he had to return without having made headway.

Abu Talib's Death

During his leadership of the Banu Hashim, Abu Talib took care of the Prophet (sws) with full attention and gave him the protection that was his right as a member of the tribe. However, his teachings could not impress him and he remained a follower of the religion of his predecessors. When he was on his death bed, the Prophet (sws) went to ask after his health and saw that both Abu Jahal and 'Abdullah ibn Abi Umayyah were also present. The Prophet (sws) asked his uncle to pronounce la ilaha illallah so that he could vouch for his faith when they met their God. Both Abu Jahal and 'Abdullah tried to deter Abu Talib, taunting him: would he turn away from 'Abd al- Muttalib's religion? The Prophet (sws) continued to call him to Islam, but he refused, saying that he would stay committed to 'Abd al-Muttalib's religion. He died in this condition.[1]

After Abu Talib's death, the headship of the tribe came to Abu Jahal, who was a diehard enemy of Islam. According to narratives, at first he reassured that the Prophet (sws) could continue his mission, but soon he developed an alliance with the opponents of Islam within the Quraysh and the Prophet (sws) could no longer enjoy the same protection of his tribe as before. The oppression of opponents increased manifold and he was continuously harassed. When he preached, Abu Jahal would follow him and create trouble, then as the leader of the tribe, whereas before he had done this as an individual.

Khadijah's (rta) Death

Biographers agree that Abu Talib and Khadijah (rta) died the same year, but there are differences in the dates, and the period between the two tragedies for the Prophet (sws). Some narratives say that they died within a few days of each other, while others put the period at one and a half to two months.

Khadijah's passing away held great problems for the Prophet (sws). She was his supporter and confidante, and perceptive to his nature. They had six children of whom four were daughters: Zaynab, Ruqayyah, Umm Kulthum and Fatimah. When she died, two daughters were already married: Zaynab was married to Khadijah's nephew Abu al-'As ibn al-Rabi', and Ruqayyah to 'Uthman ibn 'Affan, who was, at that time, an emigrant in Abyssinia. Thus, two daughters, 15 and 10-11 years old respectively, remained to take care of the house.

Khadijah (rta) had made major contributions to the cause of Islam. She used to reassure the Prophet (sws) during the various stages of his prophethood, witnessed his message and encouraged him to continue his preaching diligently. Apart from this, she also spent generously of her own wealth in the cause of Islam, thus relieving the Prophet (sws) from having to earn his own living. She was his companion throughout the troubles the Prophet (sws) faced as a result of his preaching, and remained Islam's fervent servant until the end. She fulfilled her obligations as the Prophet's companion and partner to such an extent that he did not even think of contracting a second marriage throughout this period. The Prophet (sws) continued to remember and speak of her qualities and sacrifices for a long time.

When it became difficult to run the house after her death, Uthman ibn Maz'un (rta)'s wife, Khawlah bint Hakim advised him to remarry and suggested two possibilities. One was Sawdah bint Zam'ah, who was the widow of Sakran bint 'Amr (rta) and had returned from Abyssinia. The other was that of 'A'ishah bint Abi Bakr (rta), who was single, but was promised to Jabir, son of Mutam bin A'adi. The Prophet (sws) liked both, but since 'A'ishah (rta) was already affianced, he married Sawdah (rta). Abu Bakr (rta) was keen to take this opportunity of gaining blessings through this relationship, and approached Mut'am ibn 'Adi's on his opinion regarding the engagement to his son. His wife raised her concern that he would turn their son away from their religion if he was to marry his daughter. Mut'am bin 'Adi supported his wife. Abu Bakr (rta) realized that it was useless to continue this relationship and broke off the promise. Then he told Khawlah bint Hakim that he was ready for 'A'ishah's marriage to the Prophet (sws). Thus they were married, but 'A'ishah's move to the Prophet's house was deferred according to the Arab custom.

Journey to Ta'if

When the Prophet (sws) did not get the support that was his right as a member of the tribe from the Banu Hashim under the leadership of Abu Jahal, the Quraysh increased their harassment and opposing leaders became even more aggressive in their abusive attitudes towards him. They left no opportunity to hurt him and Abu Jahal placed no restraint on this abuse. When the Prophet (sws) spoke about Islam, they would hurl sand upon him and would tell his listeners not to pay him any heed, because he wanted to snatch them away from Lat and Manat. It was during the course of this situation when he once reached home with his hair full of dirt and sand, that his daughter cried as she washed his hair and he consoled her.

Once, when he was offering his prayer standing next to the Ka‘bah, Abu Jahal and his friends were sitting close by, as usual. One of them asked if there was any person in the gathering who would go and bring the intestines of an animal and when Muhammad (sws) was prostrating, place it on his back. The most accursed person among them got up and brought the lump of intestines, waiting for the Prophet (sws) to prostate. As soon as he did so, he placed the intestines on the Prophet’s back. The Prophet (sws) remained in the same position and did not lift his head. His daughter, Fatima, hearing of the incident, ran to the Ka‘bah to remove the intestines. When the Prophet (sws) returned to a sitting position, he prayed to God thus: “O God, please deal with these leaders of the Quraysh; Abu Jahal, ‘Utbah ibn Rabi‘ah, Shaybah ibn Rabi‘ah, Walid ibn ‘Utbah, Umayyah ibn Khalaf and ‘Uqbah ibn Abi Mu‘it.” At this, the group was very rattled, because they knew that prayers in that city were always accepted. Narrator Ibn Mas‘ud (rta) says that he saw all those who were thus cursed by the Prophet (sws), lying dead in a pit after the Battle of Badr.[2]

This harassment was not limited to the Haram only. The accursed people would throw filth inside the Prophet’s house as well. He would ask his neighbours if this torture was in keeping with the etiquette of neighbourliness, but his appeals could not create any impact on people who were unaware of the rights of God and human kind.

When the Prophet (sws) saw that he had been excluded from the protection of his tribe altogether, he thought of an alternate source of protection. Makkah and Ta’if were twin cities in that the leaders of both were known and respected throughout the country. The Quraysh owned property in Ta’if. Similarly, the Ta’if tribes of Thaqif had residences in Makkah. Thus, people from both cities travelled across and also married into each other’s families. It was usual among Arabs to obtain protection of any reputable person and the elite did not decline any such request. The Prophet (sws), therefore, decided to try his luck in Ta’if. [3]

The Prophet (sws) took his adopted son, Zayd ibn Harithah (rta) with him and arrived in Ta’if. ‘Amr ibn ‘Umayr’s sons, viz. ‘Abdiyyalayl, Mas‘ud and Habib were influential lords. The Prophet (sws) invited them to accept Islam and also requested protection. Very unexpectedly, not only did they refuse to side with him and stand against the Quraysh, they also ridiculed his teachings. All three brothers held the same views. The Prophet (sws) did not think it wise to remain there any longer and started on his return journey. However, the three brothers instructed their slaves and other youth to follow and harass him. This they did, wounding both the Prophet (sws) and Zayd (rta). On his way, he found a vineyard and entered it to take some rest. This vineyard belonged to the Makkan leaders, ‘Utbah and Shaybah. When they saw him, they sent some grapes in a plate, in consideration of familial connections. Their Christian slave, ‘Adas, brought the grapes to him. When the prophet (sws) recited the bismillah…before eating, the slave was taken aback and said that people from that area did not use these words before eating. The Prophet (sws) was intrigued and asked him to introduce himself. He was a Christian from Neneveh. The Prophet (sws) told him that his origin was also that of a pious man called Yunus ibn Mata (sws) who was a prophet, the same as himself. Hearing this, ‘Adas kissed the Prophet’s hand and head.

When leaving Ta’if, the Prophet (sws) prayed to God very sorrowfully; “O’ God, I am feeble, my resources are limited and my efforts are weak. You are the Master of the weak. I have no trust on

anyone but You. You will give victory." It is narrated that an angel appeared and asked him if he wished to have Ta'if crushed between two mountains. The Prophet (sws) restrained him and said that he hoped that God would create people from within the progeny of these cruel individuals, who would worship only one God and would not include any others with Him.

On the way to Makkah, he stayed at Nakhlah, and sent a message to the Quraysh leader, Suhayl ibn 'Amr, asking for his protection. He replied, saying that the Banu 'Amir ibn Luyi (his family) could not provide protection to Banu Ka'b ibn Luyi (the Prophet's family). After this, the Prophet (sws) asked for protection from Mut'am ibn 'Adi, who was from the tribe of the Banu 'Abd Munaf. This request was accepted and the Prophet (sws) was asked to come to them. The Prophet (sws) spent the night at Mut'am's house, and in the morning, the latter took him to the Ka'bah with his sons, where he declared publicly that Muhammad (sws) was now under his protection and no one should dare hurt him.[4]

This narrative tells us that Abu Jahal did not meet his obligations towards the Prophet (sws) as a member of his tribe and supported his enemies, merely because of his prejudice and enmity. Otherwise, it was not possible that despite his connections with the Banu Hashim, the Prophet (sws) was able to obtain protection of a leader from another family and entered Makkah.

The Prophet's journey to Ta'if is often considered as his leaving the people of Makkah to join the Thaqif of Ta'if and to begin preaching to the three leaders; 'Abdiyyalayl, Mas'ud and Habib. This view is incorrect. If this were true, it would mean that the Prophet (sws) left his real addressees, i.e the Quraysh and changed his place of mission himself. The reality is that a messenger of God does not leave his first addressees, among whom he obtains his prophethood, without God's instructions. He is not allowed to leave those who have put their faith in him and expose them to the evil intentions of others. Just like a captain of a ship, he ensures that the passengers are guided safely to anchor, and only at the end, he leaves the sinking ship to save his own life. Because the tribe of Thaqif, like that of the Quraysh was strong, the Prophet's departure to find protection there where he could continue with his mission in Makkah was a comprehensible action.

Arrangement of Divine Satisfaction for the Prophet (sws)

When the Prophet (sws) would get upset by the trying conditions and the frustrating attitude of the disbelievers, he was given instructions to bring peace and solace to his heart. On return from Ta'if, the story of the jinn being influenced by the recitation of the Qur'an was related to him. This incident took place during his stay at Nakhlah, while returning from Ta'if. The Prophet (sws) was reciting the Qur'an in a loud voice during the night prayer, when a group of jinn happened to pass that way. They heard the recitation, and stopped in their tracks. When it ended, they resumed their journey and, reaching their community, told them about how they had heard a great and lofty message which told of accepting the oneness of a Creator and condemning the involvement of others with God, whereas their leaders were disrespectful to God and tried to lead them astray. This message had been revealed to the earth with great care and barriers had been placed to stop devils intercepting it during its revelation. This is why before the jinn could listen in and hear bits and pieces of what was happening, but now they were

pelted with meteorites when they attempted to do so. This reaction of the jinn was related to the Prophet (sws) to reassure him that there was nothing wrong in either the content of the revelation, or the manner in which he recited it. If there was anything wrong, it was with the hard heartedness of those who were listening, due to which the message did not influence them. If the inner self wished for guidance, then a non related community such as the jinn too, was so affected that it was ready to correct the ways of its members.

This story of the effect on jinn was related to the Prophet (sws) through a revelation.[5] It is clear that he neither met them nor did he speak with them. These jinn were already believers. When they heard the Qur'an, their faith in the Oneness of God was reinforced and they accepted the message and preached the same to their community.

Orders for the Late Night Prayer (Tahajjud)

Although the Prophet (sws) had been advised to be patient and steadfast in the prayer to handle the difficulties he was facing, and was implementing these instructions, under the new circumstances, when not only the Quraysh but the Banu Hashim, too, began to harden their stance, he was asked to begin a sixth prayer, tahajjud, and to increase the recitation of the Qur'an during the fajr prayer. This is the time when one is fresh in mind and soul and whatever is spoken through the tongue finds its way to the heart. Although this instruction was for the Prophet only, all believers started to follow it, because they were all living their lives under similar conditions and their problems were the same.

(*Translated by Nikhat Sattar*)

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1. Muslim, Al-Jami' al-sahih, vol.1, 31.

2. Bukhari, Al-Jami' al-sahih, Kitab al-wudu.

3. Ibn Hisham, Al-Sirah al-nabawiyyah, 419.

4. Ibn Hisham, Al-Sirah al-nabawiyyah, 381.

5. Details are found in Surah al-Jinn. The story is mentioned briefly in Surah al-Ahqaf also.

CHAPTER 20

The Phase of Predictions for the Prophet (sws)

Islam's Welcome in Yathrab

Yathrab was a central settlement, about as far as a ten day journey north of Makkah. Two tribes: the Aws and the Khazraj, of the same origin, lived here. They were Arabs by race and similar to the other Idolaters of Arabia in religion. According to research by historians, their ancestors came from Yemen and settled here. Adjacent to Yathrab were three habitations occupied by three highly influential Jewish tribes: the Banu Nadir, the Banu Qurayzah and the Banu Qaynuqah. The Banu Nadir and the Banu Qurayzah were from the original Israelites and scholars of the Torah. In terms of lineage, the Banu Nadir were perceived nobler than Banu Qurayzah, and this was an accepted fact amongst the Jews living in Khyber, Fadak and the valley of al-Qura, a journey of a few days north of Yathrab. These tribes had migrated from Palestine to settle here.

The neighbourhood of the Jews influenced the Aws and the Khazraj tribes in several ways. Despite being Idolaters, they were aware of the concept of tawhid and the Day of Judgement. Idol worship was less pronounced than in other idolatrous tribes. Some families of both tribes had accepted Judaism. According to Arab custom in a tribal culture, the rights of these Jews were protected and they were equal stakeholders in fulfilling their collective obligations and implementing the decisions of their tribes.

Jews are known throughout the world as a conspiratorial people. Their national characteristic is that they betray those who are kind to them. This is the reason why nations which provide refuge to them at one time, seek ways to get rid of them later. Due to this plotting nature, the Jews would employ all efforts to damage the Aws and the Khazraj tribes. The leader of these tribes, Malik ibn 'Ajlan played a key role in breaking the hold of the Jews and did not allow the latter to gain supremacy over his tribes. Thus, Aws and the Khazraj inked collaborative agreements with nearby tribes of Muzaynah, Sulaym, Juhaynah and Fazarah. The Jews resented this and plotted to create rifts between the Aws and the Khazraj, who began to wage battles with each other every now and then. As a result, the Arabs faced human and financial losses with each fight and no tribe was strong enough to confront the Jews in any matter. The latter, in possession of a divine book, were aware that a highly placed Prophet was due to come after Jesus (sws), and also knew of the preceding signs and the discerning features of the prophet. They knew that when he arrived, God would grant him success and glory, and his enemies would face humiliation. Whenever any trouble with the Aws and the Khazraj tribes arose, they would threaten the latter by saying that when the last Prophet came, they would believe in him and fight with them, and then their fate would be similar to that of 'Ad and Thamud.

The series of battles between the Aws and Khazraj, known as the Battle of Bu'ath lasted for over 100 years. The last battle occurred a few years after the prophethood of Muhammad (sws). The leaders of both tribes were killed in large numbers. At this, they realized their stupidity and began to ponder over ways to get out of this situation and declare a single leader, under whom both could lead a life of peace and collaboration. Narratives indicate that they had 'Abdullah ibn Abi Salul in mind for this position. Some people wished to make him king of both tribes.

Interest of the Khazraj in Islam

During the 11th year of prophethood, when the Prophet (sws) went out to the tribes to preach Islam, he met the people of the Khazraj. After introductions, he told them that he had been assigned by God as a messenger to bring people to the right path. He informed them of Islam's basic teachings and recited verses from the Qur'an. The people were very impressed and after mutual consultation, decided that he was the same Prophet of whose messengerhood the Jews had been informing them, and threatening with. Not wanting to let the Jews take a lead over them in accepting Islam, they told the Prophet (sws):

O Messenger of God! What we have left behind is a nation that is unique in infighting and creating chaos. May God bring them together through your blessings. We shall return to our people and communicate your message to them. We shall call them to the faith which we have accepted. If we are able to unite, there shall be no one more revered and respected than you.[1]

It is clear that those were the words of people who were exhausted and wounded, and tired of constant wars. When they were attracted towards the Islamic teachings, they recognized the potential of unity between warring tribes, because religious relationships are stronger than others, and the morals inculcated through faith are more sustainable than secular ones. The fortunate men from the Khazraj who accepted Islam included: As'ad ibn Zurarah and 'Awf ibn al-Harith from the Banu Najjar; Rafi' ibn Malik from the Banu Zurayq; Qutbah ibn 'Amir ibn Hadidah from the Banu Salamah; 'Uqbah ibn 'Amir ibn Nabi from the Banu Haram and Jabir ibn 'Abdullah from the Banu 'Ubayd.

The Prophet (sws) asked them about the conditions in Yathrab, especially regarding their relations with the Jews. He was told that they were collaborators (in the last battle of Bu'ath, the Banu Qaynuqah were with the Khazraj and the Banu Nadir and Banu Qurayzah had collaborated with the Aws).

When this fortunate group returned to Yathrab, they informed their tribe of the prophethood of Muhammad (sws) and his teachings. They presented their point of view about the possibility of unity among the tribes that had occurred to them. As a consequence, many people were influenced and they realized that, by being the first to accept Islam, they could gain superiority over the Jews. In other words, a major factor of the people of Yathrab in accepting Islam was the background of their submissive situation.

The Allegiance in the First Hill Track

The preaching efforts of the first Muslims in Yathrab resulted in several people, including those from the tribe of Aws, coming into the fold of Islam. During the hajj period of the 12th year of prophethood, 12 people took an oath of allegiance at the hand of the Prophet (sws). He taught them the Islamic instructions which they were to obey, and of the things they were to desist from. This oath was taken secretly on a steep hill, away from Mina. All those present vowed to be careful about what was allowed and disallowed in Islam, and to live their lives according to the teachings of the Prophet (sws).

Describing the situation in Yathrab, this group said that the message of Islam was being discussed in every house and there was great interest in gaining more information. However, no one knew much about it. If someone from the early days of Islam was to be sent to them as a teacher, this message would be grounded quickly within the hearts of other people too. The Prophet (sws) promised to do so and prepared a young man from the Quraysh, Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr (rta) to go to Yathrab, teach the Qur'an, explain Islamic principles and arrange for group prayers by leading as the Imam himself. When Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr (rta) went to Yathrab, he was welcomed by Asad ibn Zararah (rta) and he introduced him to influential people in Yathrab. Those who held negative views about Islam were unhappy to see a stranger in their midst. Mus'ab ibn Umayr removed their misgivings very diplomatically. Yathrab proved to be a fertile ground for Islam. When the leaders of both the Aws and the Khazraj tribes accepted Islam, no barriers remained for the rest of the people and they followed suit. In the stifling environment of Makkah, such happy tidings from Yathrab were a breath of fresh air for the Prophet (sws). Even the Qur'an consoled him at such times:

Did We not expand for you, [O Muhammad], your breast? And We removed from you your burden. Which had weighed upon your back And raised high for you your voice. For indeed, with hardship [will be] ease; indeed, with hardship [will be] ease. So when you have finished [your duties], then stand up [for worship]. And to your Lord direct [your] longing. (94:1-8)

In the early days of prophet hood, the Prophet (sws)'s heart was very heavy with a sense of responsibility. When the Quraysh persisted in creating barriers to spreading his message and became increasingly aggressive, the Prophet (sws)'s worries increased. But now a stage of relative ease had been reached. The Qur'an told him not to worry. In the future too, hardships would soon be replaced with ease.

Isra' and Mi'raj

The incidents of isra' and mi'raj have been popularly included as miracles in the life of the Prophet (sws) and people generally sway with wonder at the descriptions of these amazing experiences. However, the manner in which the incidents have been related in the Qur'an and Hadith indicates a specific quality of the Prophet (sws), which God had granted him specially. This was the integration of the spiritual legacy of both branches of Prophet Abraham (sws): the Ishmaelites and the Israelites; and it was a prediction of the Prophet (sws)'s great victory. The Qur'an says:

Exalted is He who took His Servant by night from al-Masjid al-Haram to the far away Mosque, whose surroundings We have blessed, to show him of Our signs. Indeed, He is the Hearing, the Seeing." (17:1)

Al-Masjid al-Haram means the mosque in Makkah that surrounds the Ka'bah, the centre of the Abrahamic tawhid and prayer. This mosque is the custodian of Abrahamic traditions. In it, the footprints of Ishmael (sws) and of the pious among his progeny are deeply ingrained. The declaration of God's Oneness through prayer, hajj and 'umrah, and connection with God and arrangements of training for piety are all present there. That is where Abraham (sws) brought his only son to be sacrificed in the name of God, and thus became an immortal example of practical demonstration of Islam's true message. Pious people will continue to take guidance from his action until the Day of Judgement.

The far away mosque is the Bayt al-Maqdis which was the result of the dreams of prophets David (sws) and Solomon (sws); the sign of obedience of the Israelites; a manifestation of God's light and guidance and blessings of the prophets from within the Israelites.

In isra', the Prophet (sws) was taken from the Mosque of Haram to the Mosque of al-Aqsa within one night, and was shown the spirituality and great signs and symbols of the two sacred places. Narratives tell of prayers being held with all prophets and messengers under the leadership of the Prophet (sws). This indicates that he was given supremacy over all messengers and thus, the status of the Imam of all prophets showed his qualities, the reverence with which he was held and the highest level of prophethood. This indicated that his personality was the amalgam of the best of all spiritual essence of both branches of the progeny of Abraham (sws): the Israelites and the Ishmaelites. Hence, in future, his persona would be the meeting point of both generations. Now, neither could the Jews claim the legacy of the prophets of the Israelites, nor could the Ishmaelites, in their present condition, retain a legitimate hold on the legacy of Abraham (sws). The isra' incident, thus held the message that the Prophet (sws) had been placed at the highest status and, if the progeny of Abraham (sws) insisted on its previous stance, it would cease to exist. The only right path for it was to believe in the Prophet (sws) and move forward under his guidance.

Prophets and messengers are teachers for their nations. It is necessary for a successful teacher to possess observatory skills and experience, as well as knowledge of facts. This is why God has used various ways and means of divine revelation for prophets. Matters that relate to facts are communicated through the guidance provided through revelation of texts, together, texts but where it becomes necessary to show wider views and several aspects would fill up books. As far as the physical body is concerned, it has limited facilities. The eye can see only up to a certain distance: when light increases beyond a limit, eyes are blinded. If noise level goes beyond limits, the ear's ability to hear is affected. This is why multiple aspects of the world that occur at more than one place do not come within the purview of the physical powers and skills of the human body. God, therefore, uses a type of revelation which embodies the manifestation of a secret to a messenger through his intuition. Prophets are thus able to see matters through their internal eye. Several Ahadith contain examples of such revelations to the Prophet (sws). For example, at one instance of in Friday gathering, he was shown some conditions of Paradise and Hell. He thought of breaking off a bunch of grapes from a tree of Paradise and show it to his companions. Similarly, he was taken from the Mosque of Haram to the Mosque of al-Aqsa. The Qur'an has used the term ru'ya for this experience, which is at a higher level than a dream. According to a Hadith, He said that he was between the states of being awake and slumber, when this incident took place.

‘A’ishah (rta), Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman (rta), Mu‘awiyyah (rta) and Hasan al-Basri believed that this was a spiritual journey, while Ibn ‘Abbas (rta) was of the view that this was a physical journey. The Qur’an calls it ru’ya and its purpose was to drive fear into the hearts of the Quraysh. Verse 60 of Surah Isra’, referring to three things, says that when God revealed that He was tightening the circle around them, or said that those who reside in Hell would be given cactus, which grew at the bottom of Hell, to eat, or told the Prophet (sws) that he would be taken to Isra through a ru’ya, the objective was to alert the Quraysh of the terrible fate that awaited them in this world and the next. But these warnings became an evil for them. They ridiculed them and did not try to learn any lesson from them. According to Ibn Kathir, the ru’ya mentioned in the Qur’an refers to the isra’ incident and those who assume it to mean something else are not correct.

Narratives also include the incident of the mi‘raj (ascension), which is an addition to isra’. This tells of the Prophet (sws) being taken to the heavens where he was introduced to other prophets. The surprising fact about the narration of this incident is that the list of prophets does not include Noah (sws), Hud (sws), Salih (sws), Lot (sws) and Shu‘ayb (sws), whose lives have been presented in the Qur’an as examples. Instead, the prophets who met Muhammad (sws) include Adam (sws), Abraham (sws) and Moses (sws), Aaron (sws), Joseph (sws), John the Baptist (sws) and Jesus (sws). Adam (sws) was the father of mankind, who was given the custody of God’s guidance, and his progeny was divided into good and evil. Abraham (sws) was the builder of the Ka‘bah, the practical demonstrator of the real essence of Islam and the ancestor of the Ishmaelites, who were the addressees of the Prophet (sws) and who he was calling to follow Abraham’s example. The other prophets belonged to the Israelites, who were made custodians of God’s guidance and were given the Torah. They were also those who had been associated with the worship at Bayt al-Maqdis. In other words, the meetings that took place during the incident of mi‘raj, were in the context of Baytullah and at Bayt al-Maqdis. Which spiritual experiences the Prophet (sws) came across, and what messages the other prophets gave to him are only within the knowledge of God. It is, however, clear that the Prophet (sws) was introduced to the other prophets as an extraordinary person, which shows his superior status and bearing over them. Thus, the relation of this incident, in addition to that of isra’, contributed to highlight the Prophet’s message. It indicated to the Quraysh and their friends the Jews that their customs and teachings were now invalid and that they were to be subjected to by Islam.

The addressees of the Prophet (sws) understood the purpose of isra’ immediately, and began a propaganda that he had started to brag, and that he was dreaming of ruling over both the Ishmaelites and the Israelites. His fancies and false desires indicated that he had ceased to be realistic due to his attachment to his views. While the Quraysh made fun of this incident, they also decided to test his knowledge of the Bayt al-Maqdis. Narratives indicate that the same Being Who had taken him to the Mosque brought it in front of his eyes again, so that he was able to observe and answer the questions raised by the Quraysh.

The Prediction of Independence of the Ka‘bah

The Quraysh were not only proud of their ancestry, but also of the responsibility they carried toward the Ka‘bah. In addition to being an Abrahamic legacy, it was their main source of grandeur and power. Their

view about the Prophet (sws) was that he could have enhanced his standing and prestige in society by remaining attached to his family, but he had isolated himself and was guilty of cutting off his connections with relatives, hence he was now like a broken branch of a tree which dries up soon after because it no longer receives sustenance from its trunk. Ka'b ibn Ashraf was a well known leader and poet of the Jews. When he came to Madinah, the Quraysh told him about the Prophet (sws) who had, according to them, cut himself away from his people, yet considered himself to be above them, whereas they were the ones who guided the pilgrims, provided water to them and were the sole bearers and custodians of the Ka'bah. Ka'b replied that indeed, they were superior to the Prophet (sws). In response to this, the Qur'an replied through Surah Kawthar:

Indeed, We have granted you, [O Muhammad], al-Kawthar. So pray to your Lord and sacrifice [to Him alone]. Indeed, your enemy is the one cut off. (108:1-3)

Ibn 'Abbas (rta), Sa'id ibn Jubayr, 'Ikramah, Qatadah and Mujahid have taken kawthar to mean plentiful blessings, which have been interpreted variously by exegetes as the pond or river in Paradise, the Qur'an or Paradise itself. The renowned exegetes of Nizam al-Qur'an, Imam Hamid al-Din Farahi, has included the Ka'bah within the plentiful blessings, because the meaning of plentiful, found in the word kawthar is indicated most by the Ka'bah. He writes:

If anyone reflects upon the characteristics of the canal which was shown to the Prophet (sws), he would realize that, in reality, it was a spiritual form of the Ka'bah and its surrounding environment. Various sources have shown that the common features are that it is a canal, palaces of pearls adorn its corners and its ground is set with rubies, coral and topaz. It has receptacles that are like stars of the skies. Its water is whiter than milk, sweeter than honey, cooler than ice. Its soil smells better than musk. Birds whose necks are like sacrificial animals descend upon it.[2]

After this, he writes with reference to Sahih Bukhari, that this canal was shown to the Prophet (sws) during his journey to Paradise. The Prophet (sws) inquired of Gabriel (asm) about this, and was informed that "it was the kawthar which had been granted to him by His God."

Imam Farahi considers the observations during mi'raj to be applicable to the Ka'bah, its environment, the feelings of the pilgrims and their spiritual thirst and the sacrifice of animals, and explains how the Quraysh leaders had, through their corruption, brought wrong rituals to the hajj and its practices. The Sunnah of tawhid and welcoming of the poor was eliminated and thus, the core reality of prayer and sacrifice was destroyed. It is because of this that they were condemned in Surah Ma'un. In the next surah, Kawthar, the prediction of the Ka'bah being taken away from the Quraysh and given to the Prophet (sws) was made. This was a great gift from God. Thus, he was to focus on the prayer and the sacrifice for God only. As far as his enemies were concerned, they had been routed. They had been now deprived of the blessings of the Ka'bah. Since the Prophet (sws) saw the Kawthar during mi'raj, it should be considered to be within the objectives of both isra' and mi'raj.

The main indications from this prediction were:

1. The Ka‘bah would be within the Prophet’s control and Makkah would fall to him.
2. A large number of people would come within the fold of Islam.
3. The enemies of God and His Prophet would face deprivation and failure.

The Prediction of Destruction of Enemies of the Faith

The role of Abu Lahab, the Prophet’s uncle, was based on enmity towards Islam from the beginning. Despite being aware of the Arab tradition of loyalty to relations and their consideration to be the highest form of piety, the attitude which Abu Lahab adopted towards his nephew was one that only a sworn enemy could have had. In the early days of prophethood, when the Prophet (sws) had gathered the Quraysh through a call from the mount of Safa, and warned them of the Day of Judgement, Abu Lahab abused him and walked away. When the Prophet (sws) invited members of his family for a meal, to talk to them about his message, he got up and refused to allow the Prophet (sws) to speak. When the Prophet (sws) communicated God’s message to people he met while walking around, Abu Lahab followed him to diffuse his influence, telling people not to listen to him and to keep up the prestige of Lat and ‘Uzza because the Prophet (sws) was trying to sway them from the ways of their forefathers. When some people of the Quraysh boycotted the Banu Hashim, Abu Lahab did not side with the latter, but supported their enemies. After Abu Ṭalib’s death, when the leadership of the tribe passed on to him, he removed tribal protection from the Prophet (sws), in contradiction to Arab custom. When the responsibility of public welfare passed to him, he committed acts of corruption and theft, although this wealth was to be used for the benefit of the poor and needy pilgrims. The cause of this enmity with the Prophet (sws) was his love of wealth and jealousy. Thus, the attributes of both the Pharaoh and Qarun had combined in his character.

During that period, while other predictions had come to the Prophet (sws), so too had that of destruction of his enemies, in which Abu Lahab was made a symbol. The Qur’an said:

May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined, and ruined is he. His wealth will not avail him or that which he gained. He will [enter to] burn in a Fire of [blazing] flame. And his wife [as well] - the carrier of firewood. Around her neck is a rope of [twisted] fibre. (111:1-5)

This was a prediction which came true when all of Abu Lahab’s supporters, who burned with envy of the Prophet (sws), were killed in the Battle of Badr. Abu Lahab had sent another man, who had been unable to return a loan of 4,000 Dirhams, to this war in his place. But this tactic did not help him evade death. He was stricken with smallpox and died. His children would not go near his body for fear of infection. His body became swollen and started to smell foul. When people raised objections, they removed the body after three days, kept it against a wall and brought down another wall on it. This was how he was buried. Thus, this enemy of God came to his end.

Exposure of the Wicked Leaders of the Quraysh

The Qur'an also exposed to the public, the leaders of the Quraysh who had been resisting the message of the Prophet (sws) and who had played an important role in misguiding their people.

The Qur'an lifted the veil from the morals of these leaders and informed the people that these wicked leaders were in control of the Ka'bah, but their characters were so low and debased that they were defiling the basic purpose of this sacred Abrahamic centre. They were not worthy of being given this responsibility any more. Some Qur'anic references to this point are:

"Then do not obey the deniers. They wish that you would soften [in your position], so they would soften [toward you]. And do not obey every worthless habitual swearer. [And] scorner, going about with malicious gossip - a preventer of good, transgressing and sinful. Cruel, moreover, and an illegitimate pretender." (68:8-13)

This is a description of the leadership of the Quraysh. They would swear false oaths and prevent people from going to the Prophet (sws); target the believers by calling them names and making lewd signs; spread misunderstanding through gossip and usurping the rights of others. They were hard hearted and disloyal. Some were without legitimate ancestors, in that they did not belong to the Quraysh, but had joined them and become their protectors for personal benefits. Akhnas ibn Shurayq was one such individual, who was a Thaqafi, but claimed to belong to the Banu Zahra branch of the Quraysh. For the sake of being called a Qarshi, he would agree sycophantically with the Quraysh leaders. [3]

The Prophet (sws) was instructed to refrain from being misguided by such people:

Woe to every scorner and mocker. Who collects wealth and [continuously] counts it. He thinks that his wealth will make him immortal. No! He will surely be thrown into the Crusher. And what can make you know what the Crusher is? It is the fire of God, [eternally] fueled, Which will cover the hearts directly. Indeed, Hellfire will be closed down upon them, tied to high columns. (104:1-9)

In these verses, the stingy leaders of the Quraysh, who counted their wealth gleefully, as if it was a means to eternal life, are referred to. When they saw others fulfilling the rights of others, they would make their lives miserable through ridicule and sarcasm.

Have you seen the one who denies the Recompense? For that is the one who drives away the orphan. And does not encourage the feeding of the poor. So woe to those who pray [but] who are heedless of their prayer - those who make show [of their deeds] and are stingy with the simplest of things. (107:1-7)

In these verses, the uselessness of the prayers of the custodians of the Ka'bah is referred to. They made a show of religious rituals that were empty of any spiritual essence, full of deceit. They avoided sharing simple things with their neighbours. When dealing with orphans and the needy, they would make faces and shove them out of their homes. It is obvious that such people could not be the custodians of the House of God, because connections with Him fill a person with gratitude and make him generous and kind. Such a person shares his God's blessings with others and considers it their right to be given whatever he can from his possessions.

When the Prophet (sws) would read out these verses, the leaders of the Quraysh became suffused with anger; the Prophet (sws) was bringing their real character out into the open and trying to lower their status in their eyes. Since no one's character can remain hidden, these people could not do anything against the Prophet (sws), except gnash their teeth.

Deliberation about Migration

The Prophet (sws) had been informed about God's law of sending punishment to the nations to whom their messengers have provided conclusive arguments, but refused to believe them and remained adamant on their practices and beliefs. Before this punishment, the messenger and his companions must migrate to another place. The situation was unfolding in a manner that the Prophet (sws) realized that he would have to leave the city. He began to think about where he would go if he were instructed to leave with his supporters. One possibility was Abyssinia but it was a completely different place from Makkah.

During this period, he dreamt that he was migrating towards a barren land where date palms grew in plenty. This area was between black and rocky lands. The Prophet (sws) thought that this might be Yamamah or Hijr. But he did not get a clear instruction at this stage to either migrate or to go to a specific place. The Prophet (sws) also began to prepare his companions mentally to think of migration and leaving the city soon, considering the way matters were proceeding and the verses promising punishment were being revealed. The companions thus began to prepare for migration on their own.

(Translated by Nikhat Sattar)

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1. Ibn Hisham, Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah, vol. 1, 429.

2. Farahi, Majmu'ah-i tafasir, 421-422.

3. Ibn Hisham, Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah, vol. 1, 320.

CHAPTER 21

The Second Pledge of ‘Aqbah

In the 13th year of prophethood, a group of 62 people from the tribe of Khazraj and 11 from that of Aws came for hajj. These 73 men and two women among them were evidence of Yathrab being a fertile and appropriate ground for the spread of Islam. It is obvious that not all those who had been influenced by the teachings of Islam had come for *hajj*; this showed that the group that did come had left behind a sizeable number of likeminded people. This was the period when the enmity of the Quraysh for the Prophet (sws) was at its peak and this news was also spreading to Yathrab. The connection between Yathrab and the Prophet (sws) was that one of the earliest companions, Mus‘ab bin ‘Umayr (rta) had been assigned to teach the Qur’an to people in Yathrab. Occasionally, people would come from Yathrab to meet the Prophet (sws), accept Islam at his hands and to learn more, as recorded by Ibn Kathir with reference to *Musnad* of Ahmad.[1] Thus, they were well aware of the conditions in Makkah and the problems faced by the Prophet (sws) and his companions. They also knew that the Prophet (sws) no longer had the protection of his tribe, Banu Hashim, and was living under the protection of others in Makkah. In Yathrab, they consulted amongst themselves: how much longer could the Prophet (sws) live under these dangerous conditions without any help and support? They decided to take him under their protection. The group of 75 had already accepted Islam. They had not gone to meet the Prophet (sws) to accept Islam, but as per details of the meeting, wished to bring the Prophet (sws) to Yathrab for this. Hence, biographies of the Prophet (sws) do not indicate any activity of theirs related to their acceptance of Islam. On the contrary, the time of meeting with the Prophet (sws) was decided during their stay in Mina and was kept a secret. Further care was taken in deciding that people would arrive in twos and threes to the assigned hill, and if anyone went to sleep or was left behind, he would be ignored so as to ensure that the Quraysh would get no inkling of the meeting.

According to Ibn Hisham, the Prophet (sws) came to the meeting place, accompanied by his uncle ‘Abbas ibn ‘Abd al-Mattalib, who had not accepted Islam until then. He started the discussion by saying: “O’ group from Khazraj! The status of Muhammad (sws) amongst us is well known to you. We have kept him protected from our nation so that he may not be harmed by those who hold different opinions from his. If he now wishes to go with you, and if you will abide by the promises which you make and can protect him from his enemies, then accept this responsibility. But if you believe that after he goes with you, you will forsake him, then, end this matter here and now, because he is safe amongst his people and in his city.” The group said that they understood his stance, and requested the Prophet (sws) to speak and take action according to what he thought would be best for himself and his God.

Ibn Kathir has quoted Jabir (rta) with reference to Imam Ahmad, saying that ‘Abbas was present at that time, and that when the Prophet (sws) was taking promises of allegiance, he was holding his arm.[2] Upon reflection, it appears that some difficulties arise in accepting the presence of ‘Abbas ibn Muttalib. For

example, no role of ‘Abbas is seen from the time of the beginning of prophethood until this moment, in demonstrating any concern for his nephew; whereas his other uncle, Hamzah (rta) accepted Islam as a point of honour and stood against its enemies openly at all times. ‘Abbas was also present in the meeting in which the Quraysh had decided to kill the Prophet (sws). When the Battle of Badr took place, ‘Abbas not only participated in it, but also promised to feed the entire army for a day. He was involved in all battles of the Quraysh against the Prophet (sws) and accepted Islam only close to the time of Islam’s conquest of Makkah. Secondly, Abbas was, at that time, a non Muslim, and this meeting was being held secretively. What could have been the wisdom of having him present? An appropriate person would have been Abu Bakr (rta) or Hamzah (rta), who had accepted Islam at the Prophet’s hand and were very loyal to him. Thirdly, ‘Abbas addressed the Khazraj, whereas those present included people from both the tribes of Khazraj and Aws. If he was addressing all people of Yathrab, why did he distinguish between Aws and Khazraj? It was also not true that Banu Hashim gave protection to the Prophet (sws) in those times. It has been stated above that the Prophet (sws) no longer had their protection but was living in Makkah with protection from Mut‘am ibn ‘Adi. The speech as quoted seems to indicate as if all matters related to migration had been settled and the Prophet (sws) had agreed to go to Yathrab, and that all this was known to ‘Abbas.

The fact was that the group from Yathrab had come to invite him. It was discussed and the Prophet (sws) gave his views, but did not agree until the end; he could not have done so without a decision from God. Messengers do not take decisions to migrate without God’s approval. The Prophet (sws) had already been instructed to wait for God’s instructions with patience and not to be hasty like the Fish Prophet (Yunus (sws)). In view of all these considerations, the narrative quoted above is doubtful. ‘Abbas ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib was neither present at the occasion of the allegiance of ‘Aqbah, nor did he make any speech. There was a gentleman named ‘Abbas bin ‘Ubadah (rta) amongst the Yathrab group, who may have made this speech, which was attributed to ‘Abbas ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib due to an error. The former’s speech is mentioned later, and it is similar in content to the speech quoted earlier. This ‘Abbas belonged to the tribe of Khazraj and it is understandable that he may have addressed his tribe in his speech.

When members of the group requested the Prophet (sws) to address them and to tell them what his expectations from them were, he answered that he called them towards God. They were to worship Him only and not attribute anyone as a partner to Him. He recited the Qur’an and asked them to follow its teachings.

When the members invited him to come to Yathrab, he said that if they were to protect him and his family in the same way as they did their wives and sons, he would take them up on their promise. This was the time when other migrant Muslims could have been included, but narratives do not indicate any references to this. However, the manner in which the people of Yathrab (Ansar) welcomed them, appears to be a fulfillment of the promise made in ‘Aqbah. The fact is that a messenger of God does not migrate alone: he is accompanied by other followers of his faith when he moves to another place. Bara’ ibn al-Ma‘rur took hold of the Prophet’s hand and said that they were brought up in the midst of battles; they knew well the arts of archery and fencing. They had been taught by their elders and would take all measures to protect him.

At that moment, relationships between the Aws and the Khazraj and the Jews also came under discussion. Abu al-Haytham ibn al-Tahyan said: “O’ Prophet, we have existing agreements between the Jews and us. We will need to end these and cut off our relations with the Jews. If we do this and God grants you victory, would there be a possibility that you return to your people and leave us?” The Prophet (sws) smiled and said: “No. This shall not be the case. This shall be a friendly agreement. We shall be one entity, whether in taking revenge for blood, or forgiving it. Our responsibility shall be combined. I shall be from you, and you shall be from me. Whoever fights with you will have to fight with me. Whoever you reconcile with, I shall be reconciled with them.”

The Jewish tribes with whom the Aws and the Khazraj had agreements were: the Banu Nadir, the Banu Qurayzah and the Banu Qaynuq‘a. They were ready to cancel their agreements. Other Jews were those who belonged to the tribes of Aws and Khazraj themselves. The manner in which the Prophet’s response has been quoted in narratives shows that the issue of combined responsibility may have referred to the second category of Jews. Thus, they might have discussed a policy to deal with those Jews and to accept their separate identity. The Prophet (sws) may have reassured them that they would be considered along with the Muslims of Aws and Khazraj. It is possible that the narratives have not retained all the points of his speech.

Banu Salim’s ‘Abbas ibn ‘Ubadah al-Khazraji informed his people about the inherent dangers of the future in very clear terms. He said: “O! Khazraj; do you know what the reality of this allegiance is? As a consequence of this, you will be required to fight with all people, white or black. In this struggle, if you can remain committed to your promise despite losing your wealth and possessions and your honourable men, only then take this step; and if you do so, it will be good for you both in this world and the next. But, if you start thinking that the loss of your wealth is a hardship and the killing of your good men a great loss, and that it would be better that you leave the Prophet (sws), then it would be better if you do not take this oath now, because the other option will be a great disgrace for you, both in this world and the next.”

The speeches of several representatives from Yathrab and their request of clarity from the Prophet (sws) show that the consequences of their invitation must have been thoroughly debated and the members of the group declared it to be their unanimous desire. Possibilities of battles after the Prophet’s migration were discussed and the Aws and the Khazraj both promised their firm commitment to defend him with their lives. Their relations with the Jews were also discussed. The Prophet (sws) gave his promise that these would be respected and he would accept the decisions taken by the Aws and the Khazraj. He further vowed not to leave them. At the end, they left the final decision to him. The Prophet (sws) asked them to listen to and obey him under all conditions: happiness or sorrow; prosperity or hardships; poverty or well being. The group asked about the benefits to them if they were to follow his instructions. He said: Paradise. The group agreed and asked him to hold out his hand to take the oath. He took their allegiance to listen to and obey him, but did not promise to migrate at this stage. This oath of allegiance is called the second allegiance of ‘Aqbah.

After this, in order to organize matters in Yathrab, the Prophet (sws) set up a group of 12 men as its leaders. Their assigned responsibilities included explaining the obligations of their faith to the rest;

correcting their day to day matters and ensuring that they adhered to the allegiance. The people of Yathrab had accepted the Prophet (sws) not only as their religious, but also as their political leader. They returned after promising to obey him at all costs.

Of the 12 leaders, nine were from the Khazraj and three from the Aws. These were:

The Tribe of Khazraj: As‘ad ibn Zurarah (rta); Sa‘d ibn al-Rabi‘ (rta); ‘Abdullah ibn Rawahah (rta); Rafay‘ ibn Malik (rta); Abu Jabir ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr (rta); Bara’ ibn al-Ma‘rur (rta); Sa‘d ibn ‘Ubadah (rta); Mundhir ibn ‘Amr (rta); ‘Ubadah ibn Samit (rta).

The Tribe of Aws: Usayd ibn Hudayr (rta); Sa‘d ibn Khaythamah (rta); Rafa‘ah ibn ‘Abd al-Mundhir (rta).

After taking the oath, all of them went to their tents. The Quraysh heard of the meeting and tried to extract information from the people inside the tents. All of them expressed their ignorance. When they were returning to Yathrab, the Quraysh got hold of Sa‘d ibn ‘Ubadah (rta) and brought him to Makkah. He was threatened and bullied and told that if they protected the Prophet (sws), they would earn the enmity of the Quraysh and would be responsible for the consequences.

The Prophet (sws) and his companions had found a strong sense of relief in this allegiance. Here was a land that was offering them a warm welcome. Many people there were of their own faith and now held the same hopes and aspirations. The Prophet (sws) would not face the resistance there, which he had experienced in Makkah. Thus there were definite indications for the spread of Islam there.

The Prophet’s maternal relations also lived in Yathrab. The Dar al-Hijrah, which had been shown to him in his dream had saline soil, was located between two rocky places and had tall plenty of date palm trees. Yathrab met these signs far more than either Yamamah or Hijr. Yathrab’s selection at the time of the taking of the oath of ‘Aqbah, as a definite alternative to Makkah, greatly lightened the burden on the Prophet’s heart.

Permission to People of the Faith to Migrate

After the oath was taken in ‘Aqbah, the Quraysh made life for Muslims even more difficult. Worried, the latter would come to the Prophet (sws) and ask for permission to leave Makkah . He would ask them to be patient and to wait for instructions from God. One day, he met his companions with happiness on his face and told them that he had been told definitively that the signs he had seen in his dream about the Dar al-Hijrah were those of Yathrab. Hence they should prepare to migrate and, as they become ready, they should go and meet their Muslim brethren of the Aus and the Khazraj who would be waiting to welcome them. Muslims, in singles or in groups began to migrate as per this instruction. In general, the Quraysh did not bar them from migrating, since they thought it would be better if they were rid of these thorns which were giving them so much trouble. There were occasional incidents of Muslims being hassled due to the mistaken sense of honour of the Quraysh.

According to biographers, the first person to migrate was Abu Salamah ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abd al-Asad Makhzumi (rta). He was the same courageous man who had migrated first to Abyssinia. When he had returned to Makkah, he was disowned by his tribe. When he searched for protection, Abu Ṭalib agreed, but Abu Lahab was angered by his brother taking responsibility for a Muslim from another family, at which Abu Ṭalib told him that he was his nephew. Things changed after Abu Ṭalib’s death and Abu Salamah again looked for protection. As soon as he became aware of the allegiance of ‘Aqbah, and of the fact that conditions were favourable for Muslims in Yathrab, he packed up and put his son Salamah and his mother on a camel. He was stopped by his wife’s family, the Banu Mughirah who refused to allow their daughter to leave. When the Banu Makhzum came to know of this, they also arrived to claim Salamah. Umm Salamah’s husband left on his own; the child was taken into the Banu Makhzum’s custody and Umm Salamah (rta) was left alone. She would shed tears for her son and husband and wait for the latter to return. One year passed in this suffering. Then one of her relatives took pity on her and he sorted out matters between the two families. The child was returned to the mother and they were given permission to leave Makkah. She mounted a camel and started her journey to Makkah alone. She was met on the way by ‘Uthman ibn Ṭalhah, who expressed surprise at her traveling by herself. He accompanied her all the way to her husband in Yathrab and then went back to Makkah.

‘Umar (rta) made a plan with Abu Jahal’s brother, ‘Ayyash bin Abi Rabi‘ah (rta) and Hisham ibn Abi al-A‘la’s (rta) to migrate. Hisham (rta) was locked up in his house by his family and he could not reach the meeting place. ‘Umar (rta) and ‘Ayyash (rta) travelled together and reached Yathrab. Abu Jahal and his brother Harith ibn Hisham went after them immediately and told ‘Ayyash (rta) that his mother had vowed that she would not comb her hair and would sit in the sun continuously, until he returned. As the love for his mother rekindled in his heart, ‘Ayyash (rta) got ready to leave with his brothers. ‘Umar (rta) tried to convince him that this was a mere ruse to get him back, but he did not agree. On the way, his brothers bound him with ropes, took him to Makkah and locked him in a house. Abu Jahal told the people in Makkah to give the same treatment to their stupid family members, as he had to his silly brother.

After the Prophet (sws) migrated, he placed the matter of ensuring the release of the two companions who were incarcerated in Makkah, before his other companions. Walid ibn Walid ibn Mughirah (rta) offered his services. He went to Makkah, located the whereabouts of then two companions and brought them to Yathrab.

When Suhayb ibn Sanan (rta) started on his journey to Yathrab, he was stopped. The idolaters told him that when he had come to Makkah, his hands were empty; Now that he was leaving, he had a lot of goods. They would not allow him to leave. He asked if they would let him go if he were to return all the wealth. They answered in the affirmative. He gave up whatever he was carrying and migrated empty handed.

Throughout this period, the Prophet (sws) remained in Makkah and continued to pray:

And say: “My Lord! Cause me to enter a sound entrance and to exit a sound exit and grant me from Yourself a supporting authority.” (17:80)

When Abu Bakr (rta) requested for permission to migrate, he said: “Wait. Let me also get instructions to migrate.” He asked if he would travel with him and was answered in the affirmative. Thus, Abu Bakr (rta), too, started to prepare for migration.

(*Translated by Nikhat Sattar*)

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1. Ibn Hisham, Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah, vol. 1, 432.

2. Ibid., 433.

CHAPTER 22

Migration to Madinah

The Plan to kill the Prophet (sws)

The Quraysh lost their patience in the new circumstances. They decided to take serious steps to deal with the situation. They expressed general satisfaction at the migration of Muslims to Madinah, but started planning for decisive action against the Prophet (sws). A meeting of all leaders was held in Dar al-Nadwah and three steps were deliberated upon. One was to arrest Muhammad (sws) so as to preclude his communication with anyone else; the second, to ask him to leave Makkah so that he would be cut off from his roots and there would be an end to his message. The third related to a plan to murder him in such a manner that no single tribe could be blamed, but the responsibility of his death would be shared among all tribes. Objections were raised against the first two suggestions, because in case of an arrest, the Prophet's companions would attempt to get him freed and there was danger of a civil war erupting in the city. In case of exile, he could become active outside of Makkah and re-gather his forces which could create a problem for the Quraysh. Hence only the third option was considered as implementable. The most appropriate plan for this was suggested as one in which one individual from each tribe would arm himself and surround the Prophet's house. As soon as he came out, they would attack him simultaneously and kill him. In this way, because the Quraysh would all be on one side, the Banu Hashim would not be in any position to claim retribution or blood money. All decisions that were necessary to implement this plan were taken. When a nation decides to kill a messenger of God, all conditions for his and his companion's migration are fulfilled. This is because God's law does not allow any harm to come to His messenger and removes him safely after destroying the plans of his enemies. The disbelievers get nothing except defeat and disappointment. When the time came to put the plans made in Dar al-Nadwah into operation, God instructed the Prophet (sws) to migrate to Madinah. He went to Abu Bakr's (rta) house in the afternoon and told him to make necessary arrangements. He had bought two camels earlier and had asked a confidante, 'Abdullah ibn Ariqat al-Laythi to accompany them as a guide. The example of the Ashab-i Kahf (People of the Cave) had already explained that the faithful had taken refuge from the repression of disbelievers in a cave. At this time, a temporary shelter was required and the Cave of Thawr which is located a few miles south of Makkah at the summit of the Thawr Mountain was selected for this purpose. It is extremely difficult to reach the top of the mountain. Most probably, arrangements for necessary provisions and information about movements of the Quraysh had also been made.

The Journey of Migration

According to narratives, the Quraysh surrounded the Prophet's house the night of the same day when they had made plans to attack him. The Prophet (sws) instructed Ali (rta) to spend the night at his house and settle his matters. As night fell, he threw a handful of sand over those besieging his house and left it. The disbelievers found that he was gone in the morning. As the Prophet (sws) shifted to the cave of Thawr in the darkness of the night, the Quraysh sent out horse riders in pursuit towards Madinah. When they could not find any clue, they searched the area around Makkah until some people began to move towards the cave. Abu Bakr (rta) was worried in case they caught them but the Prophet (sws) consoled him by saying that since God was with them he was not to worry. When the disbelievers reached the cave, they returned, seeing that not only was it difficult to reach, there was also no way to enter it. Abu Bakr (rta) used to say that if these people had looked inside the cave, they would have seen them, but God had placed a veil over their eyes.

Abu Bakr's son 'Abdullah kept them informed of what was happening in the city. When three days had passed and the Quraysh gave up hope, the Prophet (sws), his slave 'Āmir ibn Fahirah (rta) and guide 'Abdullah ibn Ariqat left for Yathrab on camel back through a less well known path in the valley of the Mountain of Thawr.

The Quraysh announced in Makkah that if anyone gave information about Mohammed's (sws) whereabouts, he would get one hundred camels as a reward. Several greedy people searched far and wide but to no avail. However, Suraqah ibn Malik ibn Ja'tham of Banu Mudlaj saw two camels and started to follow them. When he was close, his horse stumbled and fell down along with its rider. Suraqah got up and started again. When he got close, again his horse was stuck in the sand up to its ankles. Suraqah realized that God did not like this action of his: he apologized to the Prophet (sws) and returned to Makkah.

There were many people who recognized Abu Bakr (rta) easily, while only a few knew the Prophet (sws). When acquaintances met them, they would greet Abu Bakr (rta) and would also ask who was the gentleman accompanying him on the camel. Abu Bakr (rta) would reply that he showed him the way. Thus, he was telling the truth because it was the Prophet (sws) who gave him guidance and he was also saved from identifying him by name.

According to Ishaq al-Nabi 'Alawi's research, this small caravan left Makkah on 5th Rabi' al-Awwal and reached the suburbs of Madinah on Monday, 12th Rabi' al-Awwal. This was 22nd November, 622 A.D.[1] It was a festive occasion in Qaba. The people of Yathrab had opened their hearts for the Prophet (sws). Every day, they would sit on the ground for hours on end, staring at the road coming from Makkah, waiting for the Prophet's arrival. Elders, the youth, women, men, everyone had made preparations to greet him as well as they could. A man saw from atop a hill that some travelers were on their way. He called out aloud, "O' People, he for whom you were waiting has arrived." People rushed forward and brought the Prophet (sws) in a procession to Qaba where he stayed at Banu 'Amr ibn 'Awf's leader Kulthum ibn Hadam's house.

Temporary Stay in Qiba'

According to narratives, the Prophet (sws) sat down under a tree on reaching Qiba' and Abu Bakr (rta) addressed the people and gave instructions. Both were wearing clean clothes and did not have much age difference between them. Many people who had not met the Prophet (sws) earlier assumed that Abu Bakr (rta) was him. Later, when the sun fell on the Prophet (sws) and Abu Bakr (rta) shielded him with a cloth did they realize their mistake.

During his stay in Qiba, the Prophet (sws) selected a wasteland that belonged to Kulthum bin Hadam, and which was used for drying of dates, for the construction of a mosque and laid the foundation of Masjid-i Qiba'. In honour of that mosque, the Qur'an says that the foundation of that mosque was laid on piety from the very first day. It was that mosque which was worthy of the Prophet (sws) performing his prayers instead of the one built by the hypocrites in 9th hijrah. The Prophet (sws) had that mosque destroyed later.

The Jews of Yathrab were neither unaware nor unconcerned about the changes occurring in their cities. Thus, when the Prophet (sws) reached Qiba', just as he was welcomed by the tribes of Aws and Khazraj, he was also welcomed by the Jewish elite. Authentic sources in narratives identify Ḥuyy ibn Akhtab who was leader of the Banu Nadir and his brother Abu Yasir who had both come to meet the Prophet (sws). It is obvious that they must have had an opportunity to say something in the meeting. They must have tried to judge for themselves what had been hearsay so far. The views they exchanged about the Prophet (sws)'s personality among themselves while returning from Qiba' to Yathrab have been preserved in narratives. When Abu Yasir enquired of his brother as to his opinion and the next steps to be taken, Ḥuyy had replied that he was the same prophet who has been referred to in their books, but they could not accept him and were to resist him. This was the summarized decision in the light of which the subsequent attitude of the Jews was developed and the Qur'an explained that these people recognized the Prophet (sws) much as they recognized their own sons, but did not wish to have faith in him.

However, there were the Jews who recognized the truth when they saw it and they expressed their devotion on meeting the Prophet (sws). A well known Jewish scholar, 'Abdullah ibn Salam said that when the Prophet (sws) came to Madinah after migration, he also made haste to meet him along with others. When he saw the Prophet's face, he said that this could not be the face of a liar. The first words he heard from the Prophet (sws) were: "O People, obey Islam; feed the poor; do good to your near ones; pray when others are asleep. You will then enter Paradise."[2]

After a two week's stay in Qiba', on Friday, the Prophet (sws) proceeded towards the main settlement of Yathrab, and led the Friday prayer at village of Banu Salim. Various tribes of Khazraj and Aws requested him to grant them the honour of staying with them permanently, but the Prophet (sws) excused himself by saying that his she camel had been given this responsibility by God to determine his abode. Wherever she decided to sit, that would be where he would settle. If one looks at the situation in Yathrab, accepting one request could have created an environment of resentment and mistrust in the minds of other people. The answer given by the Prophet (sws) enabled him to retain objectivity throughout. The

she camel trotted towards and sat in the area that belonged to the Banu Malik al-Najjar. The Prophet (sws) stayed at an adjacent house which belonged to Abu Ayub Ansari (rta) for about seven months.

After the Prophet's migration, Yathrab became known as Madinah al-Rasul (the city of the Prophet). Later, the name became just Madinah and it is still known by this name.

Difference between Migration and Change of Place of Residence

In these times, the West has aimed to distort the image of Islam and made attempts to create hatred for its teachings, under which they have termed jihad as terrorism. They have also rephrased migration as change of place of residence, in the manner that people do to gain education or seek better economic opportunities. To give credence to their statements, they incite and pay Muslim researchers to repeat these and claim that Muslims of that period moved to another place as a result of their own free will and desire. However, it must be well understood that the migration was not at all the resettlement of residence which implied that the Prophet (sws) had either shifted his centre of preaching from Makkah to Madinah happily and willingly, because Madinah had a good climate, or it was a more central place from where his message could be spread more easily, or it was because his companions were demanding a better and more prosperous place to live in. Migration was not an easy risk that the followers of the new faith had decided to take. The West also terms the migration as a "flight' of the Prophet (sws), to demean him. They try to show that he left Makkah because he was frustrated by the situation and did not possess the strength to tackle the issues and thus fled from Makkah. None of the above explanations is valid for the migration. On the contrary, this migration was the equivalent of standing by one's faith so steadily, as to forsake one's family, tribe, motherland and wealth and property and give oneself up to great dangers. The immigrants had to begin their lives anew. This migration was not a temporary one that after victory over Makkah, Muslims could reclaim their property and retain their residence there. It is true that companions, who fell ill after going to Makkah by chance, became very depressed. An example is of Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas (rta) who fell ill in Makkah. When the Prophet (sws) went to see him, he expressed his concern that he may pass away in Makkah. The Prophet (sws) consoled him and told him that he would not remain behind but would return to his place of migration where he would live to raise his levels in Paradise. There would be several nations which would benefit through him and others which would suffer. This prediction came true. During 'Umar's caliphate, the Iranian reign was brought to an end by Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas (rta). Thus, migration was a process that became an instrument for raising the levels of the immigrants in Paradise.

It was a fact, too, that as time passed, the leaders of the Quraysh became so resistant to the message of the Prophet (sws) that they were not even ready to listen to it being mentioned. They subjected every person who became a Muslim to extreme torture and inflicted the most brutal of punishments on those who mentioned the name of God; not only the slaves but well to do and respected members of society were also not safe from these punishments. Every coming day would increase the trials for the Muslims. This was the reason why the Prophet (sws) had instructed them to migrate to Abyssinia first, where the king was known for his justice, and had turned to Madinah in the last stage and called it (Dar al-Hijrah),

the place of migration. Here, two main tribes, Aws and Khazraj, had converted to Islam and had expressed the desire to welcome Muslims from Makkah into their city.

The Qur'an mentions the migration in words that specifically include the tyranny of the Quraysh, the forced displacement of the Muslims from their homes and departure from their motherland.

[They are] those who have been evicted from their homes without right - only because they say: "Our Lord is God." (22:40)

So those who emigrated or were evicted from their homes or were harmed in My cause or fought or were killed. (3:195)

The best of the people in society were also accorded this treatment. Abu Bakr al-Ṣiddiq (rta) was a notable citizen and a wealthy member of the society in Makkah. Deeply worried by the situation, he also started his journey towards Abyssinia and on the way, he met a friend, Ibn al-Daghnah. When the latter found out the reason for Abu Bakr's (rta) departure, he brought him back to Makkah and declared that he was responsible for Abu Bakr (rta) from then onwards and was his protector. According to western scholars, if the Quraysh were so tolerant, they could have objected to the verses just quoted and said that it was merely an accusation: they had not targeted any Muslim. In fact, Muslims were living in peace and prosperity among them.

People who had not been able to migrate on time had had their lives made so difficult for them by the Quraysh that they would pray:

Our Lord, take us out of this city of oppressive people and appoint for us from Yourself a protector and appoint for us from Yourself a helper? (4:75)

The words of this prayer show the extent to which the cruel Idolaters had made it difficult for Muslims to live in their own motherland, that the shelters of their homes were no longer safe. They were so weary that their own city was a city of tormentors and their circumstances so hopeless that they could see no way out. They placed their entire trust in God, to open a door of escape for them. Those who prayed thus, as quoted in the Qur'an, were not only men, but women and children too, on whom the collective conscience of human beings hates to inflict pain and torment.

It was impossible for most immigrants to take their wealth and leave their city with the knowledge of their tribes. They left their entire belongings in Makkah and arrived in Madinah in a state of poverty and need. It was not an easy task to resettle them. The Ansar's desire of sacrifice and selflessness enveloped a large number of migrants in love and kindness and gave them the comfort of home. Otherwise, the idolators would have thrown the Muslims out such that they would have had only their faith and sincerity left with them. This is a reflection of the migration that our enemies call a resettlement of location which Muslims made for their own convenience.

The Quraysh had conspired to harm the person of the Prophet (sws) and in the words of the Qur'an, their aim was to "arrest you or kill you or exile you from the city." The decision made after much debate in Dar al-Nadwah was to kill him. To implement this, the Prophet's sleeping quarters were surrounded

and when God removed him safely from there, a price on his head was announced and murderous warriors were sent out to search for him. The Prophet (sws) reached Yathrab safely under the protection of God but the Quraysh had not left any tactic unexplored to kill him. The Prophet (sws) did not leave Makkah because he wanted to, but because he was forced to. On the day of victory over Makkah, he said, very wistfully: "O Makkah, you are so pure and beloved to me. Had my people not forced me, I would never have left you and settled somewhere else." This sentence shows the reasons for the Prophet's migration, whereas the Orientalist scholars of the West believe that this was a way of escape for the Prophet (sws) for which the Quraysh were not to blame. It is a wonder why researchers evade giving views based on justice because of their prejudice.

The Quraysh, who had shown such active attitudes in resisting the truth, were not expected to remain quiet, tolerate the increasing strength of Islam in Madinah and not make efforts against it. They wrote to 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy, the leader of Yathrab: "You people have given shelter to our man. We swear by God that either you fight with him and banish him, or we shall mount an attack on you with full strength. We will kill all your able bodied men and keep your women for ourselves." The quality of the research of the orientalists is that, according to them, the Quraysh who wrote this letter did not have any resentment against Muslims after their migration and that the Muslims themselves were responsible for starting every injustice and every war.

Why did Divine Punishment not come on the Quraysh after Migration?

The reason for migration is the enmity and ill-will towards Muslims and the truth, but, for the results to become obvious, there is a practice of God which usually remains hidden from the eyes of our researchers. It is known that the nations of Noah, Lot, 'Ād, Thamud, the people of Madyan, those of the Pharaoh had all denied their messengers. When all the guided people of these nations had accepted the faith, the faithful migrated with their messengers and no believer was left behind. Then, God sent his punishment on the non believers who had insisted on their wrong beliefs and were all destroyed as a result.

Muhammad (sws) was a prophet of God. He was given prophethood within the Ishmaelites and his immediate addressees were the Quraysh. In his 13 year long preaching, a substantive number of people became Muslims but the Quraysh leaders did not accept the path towards the truth. They not only remained firm on their ancestral religion, but used their power and influence to terrorize and punish the Muslims, after which migration became a necessity for the latter. According to God's law mentioned above, His punishment should have been sent to the Quraysh but this is not to be found anywhere. It is not possible that the practice that He used with other nations changed. However, it is important to understand the reasons why His punishment did not come on the Quraysh at that time.

One aspect of the migration to Madinah is that while the Quraysh showed great alacrity in getting the Muslims out of the city, at the same time, they stopped some of their relatives in order to torment and harm them. For example, the verse of Surah al-Nisa' quoted above shows how the Muslims who were captives among the Quraysh would pray to be delivered from that place of torment. Muhammad (sws)'s

own daughter, Zaynab (rta) was not allowed to leave Makkah. Many leaders made the open departure of Muslims a matter of ego and, later, they had to leave under cover of the night. Abu Jahal's step brother, 'Ayyash ibn Abi Rabi'ah had reached Madinah after migration, but was tricked into returning by Abu Jahal and kept confined in a locked up empty house.

The second aspect of migration is that, although the instruction to migrate had been given, there were still several people left in Makkah who believed that Islam was the true faith. They were impressed with the Prophet's teachings, but were unable to migrate because of some difficulties. Some people from these reached Madinah later. For example, the Quraysh sent an army toward Juhfah in Shawwal, 1st century hijrah. A group of companions, under the leadership of 'Ubaydah ibn al-Ḥarith was also there. Miqdad ibn 'Amr and 'Utbah ibn Ghazwan saw this as an opportunity and joined the group of Muslims. It is obvious that the two had become Muslims but had been unable to migrate. During the expedition of 'Abdullah ibn Jahash, when two people from Makkah were arrested and brought to Madinah, Ḥakam ibn Kaysan accepted Islam, which shows that he had become convinced of the truth of Islam but it was only then that he could declare his allegiance openly. In the battleground of Badr, when the Prophet (sws) looked at the army of the Quraysh, he said to his companions: "I see from some of these faces that they have been brought against us by force…" In later stages too, people accepted Islam regularly and would keep coming to Madinah from Makkah, thus increasing the population of Muslims. These signs indicate that the people of Makkah still had the capacity for faith in them. It was the brutal behavior of their leaders that prevented from accepting Islam openly and that forced the faithful to migrate. Had the punishment that came on earlier nations after the migration of their messenger been sent on the Quraysh after the Prophet (sws) migrated, countless Muslims and those who were ready to accept the new faith would also have been destroyed. Such a situation would have been against God's practice.

The third aspect of migration was to re-gather and regroup the collective strength of the Muslims. The people of that region were able to develop their views independently and be with the Prophet (sws) after accepting his message. In such a conducive environment, it was easier for Islam to spread faster. Soon, the political position of the Muslims became strong. It became possible for Muslims to become a force that could fight the Quraysh, destroy their arrogance and bring them to the fate they deserved.

These are the factors due to which the Quraysh were not subjected to punishments similar to those that had been sent to other nations that had denied their messengers. In this case, the nature of punishment was such that after migration, Muslims were ordered to kill the Idolaters and were told that this should continue until Islam overpowered all other religions of Arabia. God's support and help was promised in this fight. Punishment in the form of wars was meant to not only destroy the arrogant Quraysh leaders, but also to serve as a warning to other enemies.

The Permission for Qatl

Tired and angry with the oppression of the Quraysh, when the faithful would request the Prophet (sws) before hijrah to fight and obtain their rights which the enemy had suppressed, he would ask them to be patient. After migration, they were given permission to fight:

Indeed, God defends those who have believed. Indeed, God does not like everyone treacherous and ungrateful. Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought, because they were wronged. And indeed, God is competent to give them victory. [They are] those who have been evicted from their homes without right - only because they say: “Our Lord is God.” And were it not that God checks the people, some by means of others, there would have been demolished monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of God is much mentioned. And God will surely support those who support Him. Indeed, God is Powerful and Exalted in Might. [And they are] those who, if We give them authority in the land, establish prayer and give zakah and enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong. And to God belongs the outcome of [all] matters. (22:38-41)

While these verses give permission to fight and its reason, they also indicate that the faithful would have power in the area. Their main responsibilities would be to maintain prayer, establish a system of zakah, and ensure the doing of good and removing evil from society. Thus, we see that the Prophet (sws) made arrangements for collective prayer, although neither a mosque had been built nor was a suitable place available. He would perform his prayers in any open place which was for any other use and others would follow his example. As the rule of the Muslims took root, the Prophet (sws) gave form to other instructions given in the above verses. As far as fighting is concerned, the reasons to take it up are created by circumstances and it is not to be adopted by individuals. It has become clear, however, that if war becomes necessary because circumstances so demand, then Islam will not create a barrier.

(*Translated by Nikhat Sattar*)

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1. Ishaq al-Nabi ‘Alawi. Sirah in the Light of Chronology.

2. Ibn Sa‘d, Al-Tabaqat al-kubra, vol. 1,159.

CHAPTER 23

The Madinan Phase of Prophethood

Initial Activities in Madinah

The issue of his residence after arriving in Madinah being settled, the Prophet (sws) sent Zayd ibn Harithah (rta) and Abu Bakr al-Siddiq (rta) to Makkah to bring their families. Sawdah (rta) brought the Prophet's daughters, Kulthum (rta) and Fatimah (rta), and 'Abdullah (rta) brought his mother and sisters. Hence, 'A'ishah (rta) came with her brother. Zaynab (rta) was prevented from migrating by her husband: Abu al-'As ibn al-Rabi'.

The Construction of Masjid-i Nabawi

The Prophet's she-camel had trotted off to sit on the grounds belonging to Banu Malik ibn al-Najjar. This was a spacious land with a few graves and date palms. The Prophet (sws) inquired about the ownership of the land, saying that he wished to buy it. He was informed that the land belonged to two orphans, Sahal and Suhayl. When they and their guardian were called, they wanted to give away the land without taking any compensation, but the Prophet (sws) did not agree and purchased the land after making a payment for it. It was leveled out and the construction of the mosque was started. He himself and other Muslims participated with great religious fervour in the construction. During the work, the Prophet (sws) would say:

"O God! There is no benefit other than the benefit of the Hereafter, so forgive the *muhajirun* and the *ansar*."

The mosque was built with unbaked bricks. The pillars for the roof were constructed of the trunks of the date palm trees and the roof was made of their branches and leaves. To the east were small rooms where the Prophet (sws) kept his residence. Pebbles were laid out on the floor of the mosque. In subsequent times, this mosque became the centre of all religious activities. Everyone prayed there; people went there to consult the Prophet (sws), accept Islam and obtain knowledge of its teachings. There, too, tribes would go to negotiate with the Prophet (sws). Whenever there was an important issue, people were called to the mosque and when they gathered, matters of collective significance were settled there.

Initially, there was no pulpit, and the Prophet (sws) would give his sermon while sitting with his back against a tree trunk. Later a woman companion had a pulpit made by her slave who was a carpenter and

placed it within the mosque. In the earlier days, there was also no arrangement to call people for prayers. Since they were required to come five times a day, they discussed what could be the best methods for calling them. They thought of the practices of the Jews and Christians, such as sounding a conch or bells, but they did not feel satisfied. According to narrations, a companion called ‘Abdullah ibn Zayd Ansari (rta), or possibly ‘Umar (rta), too, heard the words of the adhan in their dreams and related this to the Prophet (sws). The Prophet (sws) said: “Insha’Allah, this is a true dream.” Then he instructed Bilal (rta) to recite the same words loudly, while standing at a high place.

When the Prophet (sws) reached Qaba, he constructed the Mosque of Qaba while staying with Banu ‘Amr ibn ‘Awf. Then he went to Madinah where the first thing he did was to build a mosque. This shows the importance of mosques in a Muslim society. It is a fact that Islam wishes to connect human beings firstly to God, and then to their fellow beings. Hence, the two basic tenets of Islam are to maintain the prayer and pay the *zakah*. The mosque holds a particular significance for prayers. This place meets the needs of mentioning Allah, religious learning and discussions and developing relations with each other in the best possible way. This is why the Prophet (sws) built the mosque as a priority. Following his example, mosques would occupy a central place for subsequent generations of Muslims whenever they populated new cities.

‘A’ishah’s Formal Departure after her Wedding

The *nikah* between the Prophet (sws) and ‘A’ishah (rta) had been formalized while they were in Makkah. When several months had passed after migration to Madinah, Abu Bakr (rta) inquired as to why the Prophet (sws) was not asking for ‘A’ishah (rta) to go to his house. The Prophet (sws) excused himself by saying that he did not have any resources to meet the expenses. He was then given an amount as a loan and ‘A’ishah (rta) came to live with him in the month of Shawwal. She occupied quarters next to the mosque while Sawdah (rta) lived in another set of rooms.

Developing Familiarity with the New Environment

The first priority for the Prophet (sws) was to become familiar with the location and its people. This covered an extensive area and it was not possible for the Prophet (sws) to ignore any of its aspects. It will be enough to mention the groups that were present within and around Madinah to understand this.

1. Muslim Ansar: several people from the tribes of Aws and Khazraj had accepted Islam. Although they had become familiar with the tenets of Islam through the untiring efforts of Mus‘ab ibn Umayr (rta), they harboured the desire to spend time with and learn from the Prophet (sws) directly, and the need for this was also obvious.

2. The immigrants: many had reached Madinah and continued to come. Some brought their belongings and savings; others were in dire straits when they reached Madinah. It was a very difficult task to rehabilitate them.

3. Original Jews: three Jewish tribes lived in the suburbs of Madinah in separate settlements, which had their worship places and madrasahs. Their power and influence was felt in the entire region. Being the People of the Book, they were also addressees of the Qur'an. Before migration, they had been addressed indirectly, but now that the Prophet (sws) was residing in their neighbourhood, they were being addressed directly. It was thus essential to interact with them.

4. The Jews of the Aws and the Khazraj: Aws and Khazraj were idolaters but many of them had accepted Judaism. Thus their population comprised of Muslims, Jews and idolaters. It was necessary, therefore, to deal with them on the basis of their respective religious affiliations, and this required knowing them well.

5. The tribes around Madinah: the tribes living around Madinah had prior relations with the Aws and the Khazraj. In addition to keeping in touch with them for religious reasons, it was necessary to maintain relations with them on a political basis. Because of the threats given to the Khazraj by the Quraysh, it had become important that the Prophet (sws) develop contacts with the leaders of these tribes and sign agreements with them, if necessary.

It is obvious that the Prophet (sws) worked at every level and in the short time available, became familiar with the whole region and its conditions, and took actions afterwards in the light of this knowledge. The first steps he took were two; both were timely and had far reaching consequences. The first was to create a strong bond of fraternity between the Ansars and the immigrants and the second to establish a code for the rights and obligations of all the tribes through a written agreement that is commonly known as the Covenant of Madinah.

Fraternity

By that time, most of the households of both tribes, the Aws and the Khazraj had become Muslims. A significant feature was that many of the leaders and influential persons were working for Islam proactively. On the other hand, a large number of immigrants had reached Madinah safely and, because they were arriving continuously, their numbers were increasing. During the times of the *jahiliyyah*, mutual support and help between Arabs was based on familial and tribal affiliation. The immigrants had been cut off from their own families and had no security under the new circumstances. The Qur'an provided new foundations to organize an Islamic society and established a new guardianship between the Ansars and the immigrants, based on faith, Islam and migration and jihad. Thus, it is said in Surah Anfal:

Indeed, those who have believed and emigrated and fought with their wealth and lives in the cause of Allah and those who gave shelter and aided- they are guardians of each other (8:72)

Based on these foundations, the Prophet (sws) united the Ansars and immigrants in such a bond that remains an outstanding achievement in history and is known as fraternity.

It was not possible to build new houses in the settlements of those times to accommodate the new arrivals. Those people, who had faced great hardships and left their homeland to go to Madinah, could not be left without any help and support to fend for themselves. But the lack of resources was a barrier to building new settlements for them on a priority basis. To resolve this issue, the Prophet (sws) adopted the solution of declaring each of the immigrants a brother to one of the well to do Ansar men, who would be responsible to set up the former, establish him and to support and protect him. An alternate would have been to make the leader of a tribe responsible for boarding and lodging a certain number of immigrants in a group, who would then handle the issue according to his own will. But the procedure adopted by the Prophet (sws) was unique and full of wisdom. In this manner, he distributed the immigrants throughout the different branches of the Aws and the Khazraj. To appreciate the extent of and scope of the fraternity scheme, it will be enough to look at the list, preserved in the annals of history, of the Ansar brothers of the leading personalities of the immigrants.

Immigrant	Ansar	Tribe
Abu Bakr al-Siddiq	Kharijah ibn Zuhayr	Khazraj-Banu Harith
‘Umar ibn al-Khattab	‘Utban bin Malik	Khazrj-Banu Salim
‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan	Aws ibn Thabit	Khazrj-Banu Najjar
Abu ‘Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah	Sa‘d ibn Mu‘adh	Aws-Banu ‘Abd al-Ash hal
Zubayr ibn al-‘Awwam	Salamah ibn Salamah	Aws-Banu ‘Abd al-Ash hal
‘Abd al-Rahman ibn ‘Awf	Sa‘d ibn al-Rabi‘	Khazraj-Banu Harith
Zayd ibn Harithah	Usayd ibn Hudayr	Aws-Banu ‘Abd al-Ash hal
Hamzah ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib	Zayd ibn Thabit	Khazraj-Banu Najjar
Mus‘ab ibn ‘Umayr	Abu Ayyub	Khazraj-Banu Najjar
Talhah ibn ‘Ubaydullah	Ka‘b ibn Malik	Khazrj-Banu Salamah
Abu Hudhayfah ibn ‘Utbah	‘Abbad ibn Bishr	Aws-Banu ‘Abd al-Ash hal

Bilal ibn Rabah	Abu Ruwayhah	Banu Khath‘am
Abu Zir Ghifari	Mundhir ibn ‘Amr	Khazraj-Banu Sa‘idah
Salman al-Farisi	Abu al-Darda’	Khazraj-Banu Harith
Hatib ibn Abi Balta‘ah	‘Uwaymar ibn Sa‘idah	Khazraj-Banu ‘Amr ibn ‘Awf
ridwanullah ‘alayhim ajma‘in		

With the help of several people, researchers have managed to collect over 50 names of the Ansar brothers of the immigrants. The fact is that the number was much larger, but a record has neither been kept, nor was this required. This was not only a one time understanding, immediately after the migration, but as the immigrants kept coming, they were allowed to benefit from this arrangement on a continuous basis. Thus, Mu‘awiyyah ibn Abi Sufyan was bonded with Hattat ibn Yazid at the time when the former reached Madinah after the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah. The migration process stopped after the victory of Makkah. At that time, when people asked permission to go to Madinah, the Prophet (sws) said: there is no need to migrate after the victory of Makkah. Therefore, this victory should be considered the end of migration.

The extent to which the Ansars took part in supporting and helping the cause of Islam can be judged by the famous experience of ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn ‘Awf (rta), when he was sent to Sa‘d ibn al-Rabi‘ as his brother. Sa‘d offered to divide his property, land and wealth into two, of which each of them would take one part. He also offered to divorce one of his two wives, so that ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn ‘Awf could marry her after the mandatory waiting period. ‘Abd al-Rahman (rta) thanked him for this offer, saying that his belongings should remain with him and asked to be taken to the market, where he would make an assessment and start trading so that he would not be a burden on him. Sa‘d (rta) took him to the market. ‘Abd al-Rahman (rta) established his business in a short time and was able to stand on his own feet.

Some Ansars tried to give a portion of their orchards to their immigrant brothers so as to enable them to sustain themselves on the produce. When the Prophet (sws) found out, he prevented the Ansars from doing so. The immigrants suggested that the Ansars should remain the owners and that, they, themselves, would work on them and earn their living. This offer was a sensible one and it was chosen for settling their mutual arrangements. According to the narratives of Jabir (rta), the Ansars wanted to gift houses and land to their immigrant brothers for life, but the Prophet (sws) stopped them, saying that they should keep their inheritance for themselves, as gifting these to others would create a system of inheritance among the receivers.

These narratives demonstrate that the immigrants did not put an unnecessary burden on the Ansars, but they created a position for themselves within the Madinan society through their hard work. However, as far as brotherhood and fraternity was concerned, this was retained throughout their lives

and it was given great importance. It is narrated that, when Bilal (rta) received a stipend during the times of 'Umar Faruq (rta), he had this entered along with his Islamic brother, Abu Ruwayhah of the tribe of Banu Khath'am.[1]

Anas ibn Malik's mother Umm Sulaym (rta) gave a date-grove to the Prophet (sws) for his use. He gave it to Uthamah ibn Zayd's (rta) mother Umm Ayman (rta). When the conditions of the immigrants improved after the victory of Khaybar, they returned the gifts of the Ansars. The Prophet (sws), too, returned the date-grove to Umm Sulaym (rta), and gave some trees of another garden to Umm Ayman (rta) for her use.[2]

The Qur'an has also praised the generosity, big heartedness and lack of greediness of the Ansars and has thus presented their character as a model to be emulated until the end of the world.

And those who, before them, had homes [in Madinah] and had adopted the Faith, love those who emigrate to them, and have no jealousy in their breasts for that which they have been given [from the booty of Banu Nadir], and give them [emigrants] preference over themselves, even though they were in need of that. And whosoever is saved from his own covetousness, such are they who will be the successful. (59:9)

This verse shows that the Ansars were so generous and loving towards the immigrants, that they were in no way discouraged by the continuous pouring in of the immigrants, and that every new person who came shared in their wealth. They greeted every new comer and sacrificed their own needs to meet the needs of the immigrants. They were free of greed and envy and fulfilled the requirements of Islamic brotherhood and fraternity from the bottom of their hearts. The Prophet's (sws) advice in this regard was always a beacon of light for them, when he would say:

"Do not keep any grudge among yourselves; do not envy each other; do not turn away your face from each other; O servants of God! Be brothers to each other."

When good feelings exceed a certain level, and a person goes beyond set limits, it becomes necessary to put a stop to them. The feelings of fraternity by the Ansars can be assessed by the offer made by Sa'd ibn 'Abd al-Rabi' (rta), as quoted above. It can be deduced that some people, taking this relationship to be above all others, began to ignore the rights of relatives. Our biographers write that Ansars started to consider the rights of the immigrants over their property and ignore those of their blood relations. At this, the following verse was revealed:

But kindred by blood are nearer to one another regarding inheritance in the decree ordained by Allah. Verily, Allah is the All-Knower of everything. (8:75)

This means that relatives were inheritors, not the Islamic brothers whose relationship had been developed through fraternity. Thus, fraternity and support of each other would not affect the laws and rights that were based on blood relations and that had been taught by the shari'ah. This instruction was given to keep the excessive sentiments in control and within limits. This did not mean that the fraternity

system would be brought to an end. This is why it continued according to need, until the victory of Makkah.

The Objectives of Fraternity

The rehabilitation and economic support for the immigrants was a factor in the plan for building of fraternity, but this was not its objective. All immigrants had not come after losing all that they owned. Several still possessed their wealth. They may have needed temporary help, but did not require constant support. The process of migration had begun even before the arrival of the Prophet (sws) in Madinah. Had this issue been so serious, its pressure would have been felt before or just after migration and the scheme would have started immediately. In contrast, it began a few months after migration, after the immigrants had made a place for themselves in society, or, at least, did not offer as much pressure. Therefore, in our view, the need for fraternity arose more for social than economic reasons.

It has been observed generally that when people shift to a place from other locations in large numbers and are able to participate in its society, markets and trade, sooner or later, the original residents begin to feel resentment and hatred towards them. It becomes easy to incite such feelings and cause the two groups to fight each other, when such conspiratorial elements are also present. In Madinah, the Jews had been very successful in creating rifts between the Aws and the Khazraj in the past. It was not beyond their conspiratorial elements that, slowly, they might bring the young men of the Ansars as adversaries confronting the immigrants. This danger could be thwarted by spreading out the pre Islam immigrants among the miscellaneous tribes and households of the Ansars, so that, on the one hand, they would help develop a true understanding of Islam among the Ansars and train them, and, on the other, demonstrate through their behavior that they appreciated the Ansars and that both of them were flag bearers of truth. They did not have base, worldly desires on account of which they had come together. Rather, they were soldiers of Allah and would live and die together. This scheme of fraternity helped a great deal in building an environment of trust between the Ansars and immigrants. Later, at various times, the agents of the Jews attempted to incite the emotions of the Ansars against the immigrants, but the spirit of unity and collectivity among the latter groups did not allow their schemes to succeed. Every tribe had some immigrants whose influence was felt within that tribe and the members gave great importance to their advice. Thus, at such times, they played their roles and ensured that no differences between the Ansars and immigrants were allowed to surface. We have seen that on several occasions, the fraternity prevented the Madinan society from crises; to the extent that, after the demise of the Prophet (sws), the issue of selection of the caliph was addressed in a cordial manner and the voices against anyone from the Quraysh becoming the caliph were silenced. If the Prophet (sws) had not set up this system of fraternity, the forces against Islam would have ignited the flames of regional and tribal prejudices and succeeded in shattering the unity of Muslims into pieces.

(*Translated by Nikhat Sattar*)

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1. Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, Al-Jami‘ al-sahih, vol. 2, 10.

2. Ibid., vol. 2, 89.

CHAPTER 24

Address to and Debate with the Jews

During the Makkan phase of the prophethood of Muhammad (sws), the People of the Book in general and the Jews of Yathrab in particular had been giving advice to the Quraysh about how to tackle the invitation to Islam. Even when they came to the forefront, they tried to prove that Muhammad (sws) did not have the characteristics which, according to divine books, prophets of God were supposed to possess, by raising questions and objections about the perceived lack of a foundation for the new proclamation of prophethood. Further, that their status as the real inheritors of the heavenly faith had been retained and that they occupied the position of the most favourite nation of God and were assigned the responsibility to guide others. Only they possessed the divine revelation that could lead to the right decisions among various matters related to people. The Prophet (sws)'s teachings accepted that the People of the Book had been custodians of divine revelations in the past, but their current beliefs and practices negated the divine religion. In reality, they had failed to fulfill the responsibilities that they had been charged with for the implementation of the *shari'ah* and for which they would be questioned on the Day of Judgement. The Prophet (sws) declared his message to be the continuation of the pure religion of monotheism and impressed upon both the Jews and Christians that it was their responsibility, as recipients of divine guidance, to recognize their obligations and move forward to accept the new guidance sent by God. Additionally, they were to declare faith in Muhammad (sws) and thereby assist in spreading God's message in the world. They were cognizant of the imminent prophethood of a highly placed messenger as written in their divine books and they had vowed to their own prophets that when that last prophet came, they would profess faith in him and help him in achieving his mission. Therefore, if at that time, the People of the Book began a confrontation against Islam, they would be acting against their promise.

In Makkah, the People of the Book were not the main addressees of the Qur'an. There, the Qur'an spoke to the idolaters of Arabia, especially the Quraysh who were the leaders of the Arabs. The situation changed after the Prophet (sws) migrated. The style of the invitation to the message changed and the People of the Book were addressed directly.

Shibli Nu'mani (1914 AD) has tried to establish that the Banu Naḍir, the Banu Qurayzah and the Bani Qaynuqa' were originally Arabs who later accepted Judaism. Had this been true, the Qur'an would not have addressed the Jews by the term " O Bani Isra'il". It is clear that the Qur'an has called the original Jews as Bani Isra'il and the converts or all Jews in general as Ahl al-Kitab) (People of the Book). Ibn Kathir has written with reference to al-Tabari that these three tribes had settled in the area after the attack of Nebuchadnezzar.

The main enemies of Islam were the original Jews who had great political resources and influence. They were well connected with their co-religionist tribes in the north of Hijaz and Arab tribes were impressed by their dominance in knowledge. They were friends with the Quraysh, who took advice from them in support of their anti Islam activities and learnt new ways to torment the Prophet (sws).

The Bani Isra'il (the original Jews) have always been under several misconceptions about themselves. For example, that:

· They are God's progeny and His favourite and beloved group. Because of their relationship with those He loves, they have always been worthy of His rewards and shall remain so.

· God has assigned them the responsibility of religious leadership. This status of theirs shall remain until the Day of Judgement. Hence no prophet can be born outside of the Bani Isra'il.

· Because they are children of religious elders, they will not be punished by Hell. If any Jew's serious crimes warrant a punishment, he may be punished for a few days in hell and then removed from there.

All Jews of Madinah believed the above and would try to impress the Arabs of their superiority by boasting about these presumptions. On the other hand, they had been waiting for a great messenger as predicted in their books. Their scholars opined that the time for such a messenger to come had arrived. When he came, he would bring with him only glad tidings and successes. They also believed vainly that this messenger would be from among the Bani Isra'il. When, after migration, they found the Prophet (sws) amongst them and heard his speeches, they felt frustrated because the Prophet was from the Bani Isma'il, whom the Jews had always viewed with scorn. Hence, they felt a deep sense of being undervalued. The fact that the Prophet (sws) was not from amongst the Bani Isra'il became a barrier against the Jews accepting Islam and they were consumed with envy.

Under those conditions, the first priority for the Prophet (sws) in relation to the original Jews was to remove such vain presumptions from their minds so that they could open up their hearts and minds to Islam. Since the Jews had developed their arguments for every issue and had created a web of vanity around them, it was necessary to clarify and bring to light facts through detailed discussions. This paved the way for debates with the Jews, as a result of which a few Jewish scholars accepted Islam. However, the vast majority did not change their views then, or later. It is important to identify the Prophet (sws)'s message and the key points of his arguments here.

Privileges of the Jews

When God showers blessings upon any nation, He wants it to be overcome by gratitude, to prostrate to Him with utmost sincerity and to accept His guidance. The Jews were asked to think about the

conditions they were living in as slaves of the Pharaoh. Their sons were slaughtered and their daughters were left alive. God did them a favour by drowning the Pharaoh and his men in the sea and gave freedom along with their belongings to the Jews. Instead of leading their lives as grateful servants of God after gaining this freedom, they instigated His anger by worshipping a self made idol of a calf while Moses (sws) was away. At the expression of shame and repentance by a few people, God forgave them so that they may be grateful. God sent upon them a great favour by revealing a book of guidance, the Torah, but, instead of believing their prophet, they started demanding to speak with and see God themselves. Even then, God did not seize them so that they may be guided towards gratitude. After crossing a river, when the Bani Isra'il were travelling in a desert, God blessed them with a special favour by sending clouds as a protection against the sun. When they were short of water in the forest, He started the flow of twelve springs from the mountains. When there was shortage of food, He sent mann o salwa. So many blessings and favours should have been enough to create a sense of deep gratitude within the heart of any human being, but the barren hearts and minds of the Bani Isra'il remained unaffected. They complained constantly about everything and continued to bother their prophet, Moses (sws). They considered the blessings from God as their right. Favours are never anyone's right; it is up to God to give anyone whatever He decides to, and then test him to see whether he retains an element of gratitude within him or not. The Bani Isra'il were told that when they adopted an attitude of arrogance instead of penitence, God punished them. When they were told to enter the settlement, uttering words of repentance, they made fun of this injunction and God sent a divine punishment to them. When they demanded lentils and vegetables of Egypt instead of the mann o salwa sent by God, He imposed humiliation upon them. Bani Isra'il's history tells us that the favours they had were neither a result of being progeny of respected elders nor of their personal attributes. It was entirely due to God's blessings. He does not send his favours on the basis of being a member of a particular family or relationship with a group, He only values the sincerity of faith, good deeds and belief on the Day of Judgement. Only those who meet these criteria are considered worthy of reward.

The Bani Isra'il were an ungrateful people even in the past. This has been stated in the Psalms, although it is known that this book was revealed many hundreds of years after the revelation of the Torah:

He parted the sea into two to enable them reach the shore and had the water stand up as a wall. He showed them the path through clouds during the day and by the light of the fire during the night. He ripped out mountains in the forests and had them drink as if from the sea. He started springs from the mountains and had water flowing as if from rivers. Even then they continued to sin against Him and rebelled against His truth in the forest. And they demanded food according to their desires, thus trying God in their hearts. In fact, they ranted against God and said: "Can He lay a table in the forest? Look, when he struck a mountain, water sprang and rivers began to flow. Can He give bread also? Will He give meat for His people?" Hence God was angered and a fire raged against Jacob and punishment came upon Israel. This was because they did not have faith in God and in His salvation and even then He instructed the heavens and opened up the skies and showered *man* over them and favoured them with heavenly food. Human beings ate the food of angels and thus, by sending them food, He made them satisfied – in spite of all this, they continued to sin and did not have faith in His amazing actions, and so He destroyed their days with sluggishness and their years with terror. They flattered Him with their

mouths and lied to Him through their tongues, because their hearts were not sincere towards Him and they were not loyal to Him. (Psalms, 78:13-37)

God's Covenant

The second presumptuous belief of the Bani Isra'il which the people in Madinah held and which continues to date, is that God had made a covenant with them that He would make them the leaders of nations until the end of this world and that they would always possess the status of a special group. The characteristic of a covenant is that it is made between two parties, and is never one-sided. Hence, under it, the rights and obligations are applicable to both parties. The Jews remembered the clause relating to their status and position but forgot that whatever they were to achieve was to be achieved after fulfillment of the responsibilities which they had under the covenant. Otherwise, the covenant would become a yoke around their necks.

The Jews were informed that their responsibility under the covenant was that they hold on to the Book of God steadfastly and take guidance from it in their lives. In reality, they devised ways to escape its instructions. They would keep their prophet entangled in questions and answers, seeking to free themselves of the divine instructions. They criticized his every argument. They made changes in the word of God and gave it the meaning they desired. They wrote decrees themselves and pretended that they were from God. Their scholars, instead of making their people aware of the facts of religion, presented such a wrong picture of religion that they remained under dreams of salvation and vain presumptions. They told them that whatever their sins, they would be subjected to the fire of Hell only for a few days, because of being Jews, whereas there is no basis for this belief. God has not given such leave to anyone and He is not bound to fulfill such a wrong expectation. The belief that He has given is the same for all nations, and that is that when any person adopts a life of sin and it overpowers him, such a person shall be thrown into Hell and this will not last for a few days, but forever.

In addition, the Jews were informed of specific agreements which they had made and did not honour. For example, they had agreed that they would not worship anyone except God; they would be kind towards their parents and adopt a gracious attitude towards their relatives, the orphans and the poor. They would make arrangements for prayer and zakah. However, they acted against these instructions as a matter of routine. They had promised that they would neither kill their people, nor banish them from their homes. The Jews found a way out of this promise by using other people to kill Jews opposing them and to destroy their homes. When the revengeful activities ended, and people were taken prisoners and became homeless, the Jews would demonstrate their piety by paying ransom to free the prisoners. Then, God had made them promise that they would continue to spread the message of God amongst people and would not hide anything from them. Instead, they divided the Torah into pieces and did not let people know about it. A special clause of the covenant was that they would arrange for prayer and zakah, believe in the prophets of God and support them and help the cause of religion through financial means. But the Jews resisted every clause of this covenant and were guilty of breaking it. One particular clause was made with them regarding the last Prophet (sws). They were told that since they had been blessed with a Book and guidance, so when the last great Prophet, whose characteristics they had been informed of, came, they were to believe in him and stand up in his support. When this

covenant was made, the Bani Isra'il were asked specially if they would abide by this and fulfill this responsibility. Everyone agreed without any hesitation. But, when the last Prophet (sws) came, their attitude was obvious to all, in that they were the first ones to deny him and never ceased to oppose him.

Belief in Divine Revelation

The covenant made about prophets with the Jews required that in every period of time, they should believe in the messengers who came and stand up in their support. But their history gave evidence to the fact that they would kill all such messengers who came with a message or call which the Jews did not like. In the last period, a noble prophet like Jesus (sws) was sent and the Jews conspired against him and were the cause of having him arrested by idolatrous rulers. When the Prophet (sws), for whom a special covenant had been made and they had been informed about his special characteristics, came, they denied his prophethood despite being aware of his veracity and were adamant on opposing him.

The Jews would change their stance from time to time in response to the invitation from the Prophet (sws). At one stage they said that they possessed a book already; they believed in it and their hearts did not open up to distractions. God had sealed them off from misguided utterances. The arguments for this were to question their faith which allowed the killing of God's messengers and despite clarity in what constituted idolatry, gave people freedom to make an idol and start worshipping it and that while the Book of God was present, religious scholars would give their attention to magic, amulets and spells. Did they believe, after reading the Book of God that its requirement was for them to love this world and fear death? The people of faith do not fear death, but these people did not have the courage to pray for death: instead, they wished for a life that would span over thousands of years.

At one stage, the Jews said that they were not satisfied at the Qur'an being a divine Book. They were told that no other book contained all the features of which they had been warned in their own books. That was the only book which had come with manifestation of all these characteristics. A group of the People of the Book had already recognized it and the fact they had professed faith in it was proof against the Jew's deliberate refusal. If anyone was doubtful that this was not divine revelation, he should come forward and compose a *surah* like it. They would realize that such a feat was not possible through human effort.

To confuse people, the Jews would also tell them that the *shari'ah* instructions of the Qur'an were different from those of the Torah. Had the two books been sent from a single source, why should there have been a difference? Did God change His thinking or his standards? God addressed this objection by asking them whether they were doubtful that He was in control of everything. Were they not willing to believe that the kingdom of the heavens and earth was His and that He decided which instruction to give to his people and which not to give? If The Lord of the world decided to cancel or change any of His instructions, people were given a better and wiser injunction. In the past, the Jews had made several *shari'ah* instructions difficult for themselves due to their mischievous ways. The time had come for these to be cancelled and replaced with simple instructions that followed the nature of humans

which they could follow regardless of the period they lived in. This is why the Jews found the Qur'an different from the Torah.

Relationship with Abraham (sws)

The Prophet (sws) was given prophethood among the nation of Abraham (sws), whose religion was based solely on monotheism and close to the nature of humans. Abraham (sws) brought forth arguments from the signs around him in the world and gained access to an understanding of the attributes of God. The Jews, in contrast, were inclined towards creating difficulties. They would criticize the instructions and, through posing legal intricacies, made religion difficult for themselves. The bases of arguments in the Qur'an had been built around observations of the external world and the ability of humankind to grasp an understanding, as well as on its natural inclinations. That was also the well known approach of Abraham (sws). Although the Bani Isra'il were from the progeny of Abraham (sws), they highlighted their relationship with Isaac (sws) and Jacob (sws) much more and took great pride in it. The Prophet (sws) belonged to the Bani Isma'il, who were spread out all over Arabia and considered Abraham (sws) their ancestor and were proud of this. When the Jews saw this, they started the propaganda that Abraham (sws) had no relationship with Makkah and that he was a Jew; becoming a Jew was the only way out for salvation. This was a historically wrong statement. The Jews were told that this stance was an open lie and akin to distortion of history.

Historically, when Abraham's (sws) grandsons and great grandsons moved from Canaan to Egypt, the Bani Isra'il became one nation after several generations had passed. The Coptic nation began to oppress them and made them their slaves. It was during this stage of slavery that Moses (sws) was born and as a result of whose preaching, the Bani Isra'il came somewhat closer to religion and whose efforts brought them out of Egypt. The Torah was revealed at that stage and it was several centuries later that Judaism, as a religion was recognized. To state that Abraham (sws) was a Jew was a blatant lie.

The Jews, other People of the Book and the idolaters were informed of the true history of Abraham (sws). They were told that, firstly, just as he was an upholder of the religion of monotheism, so too were his children not in the least affected by any doubt and that he would instruct them, on his death bed, not to put any restriction in the way of the religion of nature. Secondly, all the signs of Abraham (sws) are to be found in Makkah. The Bani Isma'il in general and the Quraysh in particular, all of whom resided in Arabia, considered him as their ancestor. The building that he constructed, the Ka'bah is in Makkah. The great forms of worship, sacrifice and *hajj* that were established during his time are related to this centre of worship and they continue to date. The supplications he had made regarding peace in the city were accepted and this House of God is still a cradle of peace. On the other hand, no such signs associated with Abraham (sws) can be found in any sacred place of the Jews. Thirdly, at the time of construction of the Ka'bah, Abraham's (sws) only son, Isma'il (sws) was with him. At this stage, he prayed to God to send a great prophet from within his progeny, who would read out God's word to his people, educate them on the *shari'ah* and religion and train their morals. Thus this supplication was meant for the coming of the prophet from within the children of Ishmael: it was accepted and

Muhammad (sws) was sent. His responsibilities were the same as stated in Abraham's (sws) supplication.

After clarifying these points, the Jews were invited to emerge from their shell of prejudice, if they had even a semblance of allegiance to the truth; to profess faith in the Prophet (sws) and adopt the way to piety, which was a demand of the covenant they had made with God. The Jews had no answers to such well rounded and reasonable arguments. They were burning with envy because the crown of prophethood had been taken away from them and placed on the head of an individual of the Bani Isma'il. They began to plan to make the Prophet (sws)'s invitation a failure, and in this, they made ample use of their agents and spies.

Intrigues of the Jews against the Prophet (sws)

Jews have always been famous for conspiracies. Their sense of superiority over other nations has emboldened them for every kind of oppression against their opponents. Because their population is low, they rely on their skills to plot and conspire to achieve their objectives. They are satisfied if the results of their plotting are fruitful; otherwise, they do not hesitate in harming their opponents, or, even killing them. This is the reason that they pooh-poohed any voices of reform that arose from within their ranks and denied prophets and conspired to murder them. With this historical background, how could the Prophet (sws) and his companions remain safe from the vengeful activities of the Jews? The Jews tried on their centuries old tried and tested tactics on the Prophet (sws) and his companions one after the other.

Before the arrival of the Prophet (sws) in Madinah, the Jews had kept the Arabs in awe of their alleged religiosity on account of being the People of the Book. They made a great show of it. They were also the centre of veneration by the Arabs because they were highly skilled in all sorts of magic and spells. Hence, in response to the message of the Prophet (sws), they first attempted to cash in on their supposed piety. They said that there was nothing new in the invitation for them: they were, themselves, believers in God, divine books and the Day of Judgement, and so the invitation was not meant for them. Only those who did not believe in these things earlier may profess faith in this. When the common man observed that there was essentially no difference between the basic beliefs of Islam and Judaism, he would be influenced by the stance of the Jews and agree that demanding their faith in the new religion was uncalled for. The Jews would take their argument forward and say that in the presence of the People of the Book, bringing a new message based on the same principles was the basis of anarchy in society and that Muslims were creating hatred between people whereas they (the Jews) were peace loving people and wanted to maintain harmony. There should be no distinction because of faith and idol worship among people. That would result in hostilities; hence everyone was to make a collective effort to protect the society against such a situation. When the Jews were asked that if this message was not new, why did they not accept it in the same way as Muslims, their enmity would become obvious and they would start using highly derogatory remarks about the Muslims, saying that the situation had

worsened because of the stupidity of those people. Had they not been so foolish in the beginning, things would have been under control.

Some clever Jews would mingle so easily among the Muslims and talk about their faith in Islam so seriously that their own people wondered if they had accepted Islam in secret. In reality, this was a snare that was used in order to become included in Muslim groups and harm their cause. When they were in their private meetings, they defended their strategy and told their friends that they had adopted it to create a false sense of satisfaction among the Muslims and make them unaware of their real purpose. These people would ask strange questions of the Prophet (sws), apparently for the sake of enhancing their knowledge, but in fact, to torment the Prophet (sws). Examples of such questions are found within the books of Ahadith. The books on Sirah include names of several rabbis who attended the meetings of Muslims as their friends and well wishers but did not let any opportunity to hurt the Muslims pass by.

Such an attitude is fruitful only temporarily. If conditions do not change, this hypocrisy can be maintained for long periods of time. However, in the rapidly changing scene after migration, when the struggle between truth and falsehood was at its peak, it was not possible for anyone to hide his real feelings and intentions for long. Even in the context of collective events, whenever the hidden evil of the Jews became obvious, they were unable to offer any valid justification. This period was as if there was a massive thunder storm; thick clouds had darkened the vision; lightning would strike at times and the clouds would burst. In this condition, a group would be on its way, walking a small distance in the light of the lightning, but stopping when it became dark. The thunder would bring a message of death for them and they would force their fingers into their ears every time. The situation of these Jews was exactly that of such a misguided group. The success of the Prophet (sws) was blinding their eyes. Accepting Islam called for throwing away their interests and they saw their death in making such a sacrifice. They would try to find their way by lying or deception, but were unable to get beyond that and would become fazed. With the passage of time, it became clear to them that they had to either accept Islam or openly declare themselves its enemies.

The Game of Islam and Disbelief

Some Jewish scholars used a unique tactic to dissuade people from accepting Islam by sending their agents to the Prophet (sws) with the apparent intention of accepting Islam. These people would accept Islam and it would become widely known among the Muslims that such and such Jews had professed faith. When they believed that everyone knew about their acceptance, they would suddenly declare that, having been within the fold of Islam, they had become aware of its shortcomings and they were not willing to put their faith in danger by remaining as Muslims. So they were relinquishing the new religion. When such words were spoken by those who were considered a degree above others because of their supposed religiosity, and people believed that these were not ordinary individuals, but pious scholars who had become averse to the new religion after accepting it, the result was that people stopped making a move towards the new religion and their hearts were full of doubts and

apprehensions. They began to wonder whether they might have made a wrong decision, to have accepted a new faith without careful scrutiny. Jewish scholars gave the erroneous message to their nation that those lacking in knowledge were destroying their faith by being attracted to Islam. They, on the other hand, should not make this mistake. It was not acceptable for them to ignore their own scholars and accept something that others were saying.

The Claim of Hearts being sealed off to Falsehood

When ordinary people asked the Jewish scholars about why they did not accept the new reforming faith despite the fact that it was gaining popularity fast and that they had always been upholders of religion, they would answer that they were steeped in faith and were God's specially beloved group: thus they were protected against all unimportant innovations. Their hearts were full of faith and thus had been encapsulated. The new invitation could not affect them. Because the hearts of other people were not protected, they were swayed easily and lost their way. This answer would satisfy people. The Qur'an clarified this simile by explaining that one way of sealing off a heart was, when someone is guilty of continued disobedience to God, there comes a time when God seals off his heart and prevents it from having any capacity to accept the truth. In this situation, the person becomes deprived of any mercy from God and it is, indeed, a most unfortunate person who faces such a situation. Since the Jewish scholars had ridiculed the signs of God even after recognizing them, God had closed off the doors of His mercy to them and they were under the impression that this punishment was their protection!

Insult of the Prophet (sws)

After migration and support from the Aws and the Khazraj tribes, the political strength of the Prophet (sws) was no longer weak. Insulting him openly would have been an open declaration of war against the Muslims. The Jews therefore expressed their hostility by attending the Prophet (sws)'s meetings and tried to attract his attention repeatedly to impress upon the others that they were keen to seek understanding. To do this, they would use the traditional words used publicly by the Arabs. But they would distort the words by pressing or twisting their tongues so that their meanings would imply ridicule of the Prophet (sws). By doing so, they would give vent to their frustrations against the Prophet (sws). If anyone objected, they explained innocently that they had used the right word, perhaps the listener had misheard. Sometimes they would use words with dual meanings, which the Arabs used in their polite version, but they would imply insult. It was obvious from the manner in which the words were spoken that the purpose was to humiliate the Prophet (sws). Publicly spoken words are present in every language and usually they include an element of respect for the addressee. It was the evil in the Jews that they gave low meanings to polite words and used them to vent their frustrations.

One such word was *ra'ina*, which means "please take care of us." It is normally spoken when the addressee is requested to repeat something he has said because one could not understand it fully the first time. The Jews would stretch the word to pronounce it as *ra'ina*, which meant "O our shepherd."

God protected his Prophet (sws) from this prank by stopping the Muslims from using it and replaced it with its synonym *unzurna*.

Another word was *sami'na wa ata'na*, which literally means- we heard and obeyed. Ordinary people used it to show their compliance with the orders of their rulers or leaders, implying that they had heard their instructions, accepted them and would obey them fully. Since the Jews had no such intentions, they would pronounce the word *ata'na* as 'asayna, which meant that they had heard but would not obey.

The third word used by the Jews for this purpose was *isma' ghayra musma'in*. When an elder is speaking, one way to praise his speech is for the listeners to bring the attention of others to particular points, as if saying that they must listen carefully; this was a new point that had not be heard before so everyone should heed it and be grateful. These words were in usage in this meaning among the Arabs. The Jews, however, would use these words in a sarcastic manner, to indicate the farfetched nature of the speech; it had never been heard before. God stopped Muslims from using the dual meaning words *ghayra musma'in* in order to protect the Prophet (sws) from this adverse criticism by the Jews.

Ridiculing the Tenets of Islam

The Jews not only ridiculed the Prophet (sws) but also made fun of the tenets of Islam. When the time came to inform people of the timings of the collective prayer, God guided Muslims to call the *adhan* instead of the established form of ringing of bells, as was done by the People of the Book. When this instruction was implemented and the *adhan* sounded from mosques, the Jews would imitate the *mu'adhdhin* coarsely and would laugh at him, despite the fact that the words of the *adhan* manifest the Oneness of God, express His greatness and loftiness and are a call to humankind to worship his Lord. Making fun of the *adhan* was in itself ridiculing God, but the misfortune of the Jews did not prevent them from this.

The enmity of the Jews could not harm either the Prophet (sws) or the message of Islam. However, it was difficult for everyone to understand the reasons behind their attitude. Hence, God Himself removed this cover. The reason was that the Jews considered it to be a defeat for their religious leadership to accept the prophethood of any individual who was not from the Bani Isra'il. It was the envy within their hearts that forced them to act in strange ways and to present contradictory points of view. The Qur'an clarified that the Jews hated the Bani Isma'il to such an extent that they considered it legitimate to commit fraud with the money given to them for protection. Here, it was a matter of the protection of the leadership of an entire nation, which was being taken from them and given to the Bani Isma'il. Such a tragedy was not acceptable to them.

Refusal to Accept the Qur'an as coming from God

One stance of the Jews was that the Qur'an was not a divine revelation, as was being claimed, but the result of human effort, and thus was to be treated as such. Firstly, the similes used in the Qur'an drew comparisons with such lowly species such as the spider, fly and mosquito and this was not appropriate for a book the source of which is allegedly God. Secondly, the angel who brought the Qur'an to the Prophet (sws) was claimed to be Gabriel, who always had enmity towards the Jews. If this was true, Gabriel had shown his true colours again and had brought Muhammad (sws) as an opponent of the Jews, pretending that God had replaced the Torah with the Qur'an. Thirdly, if the Qur'an was really the word of God, why were instructions of the two different when the source was the same. Fourthly, on the one hand, this man claimed that his faith was based on the religion of Abraham (sws), and on the other, the camel had been considered *halal*, whereas it was *haram* before. Fifthly, if Muhammad (sws) was really God's messenger, he should have shown his book coming down from the heavens so that every person would see this happening with his own eyes.

These objections of the Jews were such that they could have influenced any simple person with average intelligence. The doubt of the new book's authenticity indicated to the ordinary Jews that they were not to weaken their faith in their own book- the Torah, the revelation of which had been observed by a whole group of Jewish elders. God sent answers to these objections to the Prophet (sws) who then clarified each point to the Jews.

Clarification of Qur'anic Similes

The purpose of giving a simile is to bring significant facts and important matters within the grasp of the average mind. Hence, anything that can be useful in portraying a fact clearly is made use of in a simile, whether it was a fly, mosquito or spider. If idols, that were taken to be partners of God, were compared with lacking substance similar to a spider's web, the situation becomes absolutely clear. The futility of idols is well understood by the common man if it is explained that they are unable to disentangle any part of the food that is offered to them at their shrines that has been snatched by a fly. Such similes that manifest the reality were objected to only by those people who did not appreciate this important aspect of its use in literature. To ridicule the Qur'an on this basis was in itself proof of the foolishness of such people.

Objection on Gabriel (asm)

It was clarified that Gabriel (asm) was an honourable angel of God. He never did anything without God's permission. He did only that which he was instructed to. If he was revealing the Qur'an into Muhammad (sws)'s heart, it had nothing to do with his own wishes. Thus, criticizing him or doubting his actions was as if God's Being was being doubted. If the Jews were enemies of Gabriel, they were gaining enmity of God and all his angels. This enmity included that of those angels whom they considered to be their supporters. If the Jews accepted this as their fate, they should insist upon their drivel or take the benefit

of the opportunity that God had provided them with and which had also been mentioned in previous holy books.

Cancellation of the Instructions of the Torah

The objections related to the changes in the instructions of the Torah were addressed by explaining that all such instructions were replaced by better ones. Similarly, the Jews had forgotten some instructions and these were replaced by similar ones. God was elevating his people towards better and better laws. Additionally, the injunctions were being taken out of the restrictive format of the thinking of the Jews and were widened so that they could fulfill the needs of all humankind which could obey these easily. Thus, God removed the unnatural restrictions of Judaism in this new religion. God is the Lord of the heavens and the earth: He has full authority to give any instruction and cancel any, if He wishes. He will not let go of His prerogative to change His *shari'ah* at the lamenting of Jews, nor can His prophet forsake his responsibilities.

Changes in the Doctrine of Abraham (sws)

In answer to the allegation of changes in the rules of *halal* and *haram*, the Qur'an informed them that they were ignorant of historical facts and that this objection was proof of their lack of knowledge. If the camel was *haram* for them it did not follow that it was *haram* also in the *shari'ah* of Abraham (sws). The fact was that the camel was *halal*. However, Abraham (sws)'s grandson, Jacob (sws) avoided eating its meat because of his health or other personal reasons. The Jews, imitating his example, restrained themselves from doing the same and then later, their scholars declared it *haram*. Since he teachings of Islam were exactly according to the *shari'ah* of Abraham (sws), there could be no question of making the flesh of the camel *haram*.

Bringing the Book down from Heaven

After clarification of all the above points, when the Jews still insisted that they would accept Islam only if they saw the Book descending from the heavens, the Prophet (sws) was very disheartened. He was reassured that aversion to the truth was innate to the nature of the Jews. While he was a stranger for them, that dishonourable nation had made an even greater demand upon their own prophet, Moses (sws), which was that he show God to them as a proof of his claim that God spoke with him. This demand became so intense that Moses (sws) was forced to take a group of the Bani Isra'il to the Mount of Tur. When God showed His Eminence, they all fell down in a stupor. Denying prophets had become second nature to these people. They would be seized by God: He closes any doors of guidance upon such people. The Prophet (sws) should not be sorrowful at their attitude.

This debate with the Jews clarified that the Bani Isra'il were a wayward nation, whose connection with faith was in name only. They were not loyal to anyone. Their claim to custodianship of the religion of God was mere vanity. They had been given several opportunities in the past but they failed to emerge from the shell of their ego. When the promised Prophet (sws), whom they had talked about among themselves, came at last, they began to envy him instead of believing in him. Their envy and arrogance did not leave them the dignity of being holders of the Book. Thus, this deviant group was to be given the minimum of importance and ways were to be sought to be safe from their evil.

(Translated by Nikhat Sattar)

CHAPTER 25

The purpose of the debates with the Jews of Madinah immediately after the Prophet (sws)'s arrival was to remind them of the forgotten status they had possessed in the system of divine guidance which could have enabled them to move forward and grasp the torch of guidance once again. They were capable enough to become the right hand of the Prophet (sws) and thus regain the position of God's preferred nation. But the biographies of the Prophet (sws) tell us that with the exception of a few Jewish scholars, the Israelites in general and a large majority of converted Jews did not accept Islam. Hence the Qur'an, after addressing all their objections through solid arguments, clearly stated that if they did not profess belief in the Prophet (sws), they would be considered damned and accursed for all time to come. This was their last chance to recover and take the right decision. If their minds were deluded by the belief that it was their familial right to gain prophethood in order to establish vice-regence for God, it was best that they removed this misunderstanding as quickly as possible.

Establishment of the Muslim *ummah*

Looking at the arguments with the Jews, it appears that the Qur'an had rejected the claim of the Jews that they were the upholders of the leadership of the world and that prophethood was their national right. This is why when the Qur'an reiterated the prophethood of the Prophet (sws), it also clarified that the time had come for divine acceptance of the supplication made by Abraham (sws) in favour of the children of Ishmael (sws) and that his progeny had taken the reins of the Muslim *ummah*.
This *ummah* had been struggling to survive in Makkah, but God provided them the wherewithal in Madinah. It found a place where it could breathe with safety and peace; establish God's religion; introduce and implement instructions of a collective nature and structure the society according to the norms of God given guidance. Thus, just within a few months of migration, it became clear that a new state that would have its own systems and power was emerging. It members were committed and had the ability to shape their conditions according to their needs and wishes. Their opinions would count in this new state and those opposing them would not be able to retain their hold.

Only a year had passed since migration when Muslims were given instructions related to fasting and *hajj* after being instructed on prayer. The Abrahamic concepts of what was halal (legitimate) and *haram* (not allowed) were highlighted. Values underlying good practices that were necessary for the new society were identified. People were informed of the qualities of character that were required for sustainability of the *ummah*, acquiring which Muslims could fulfill the requirements of the status of leadership of the world.

The Prophet (sws) did not just rely on reciting the revealed instructions. He outlined the paths through which these instructions could be implemented. He kept an eye on how the companions were following the instructions. Wherever he found an error or negligence, he would correct it and explain the right action. If the Qur'anic injunctions needed detailed interpretation, he explained these too, because the aspect of providing *shari'ah* instructions was also his responsibility. In this way, the new religion became the focus of all attention and believers were communicating it far and wide. Before this, the people on whom God had bestowed the status as guides had broken their covenant, lost sight of the right path and made changes in God's shari'ah according to their wishes. Now, it was the need for humanity that the teachings brought by the last Prophet (sws) were entrusted to those who would protect them at the cost of their lives. They would be witness to the new religion in every period of time, every country, every language and never lose sight of their responsibility in this respect. The companions were fulfilling this responsibility in a befitting manner.

And it is thus that We appointed you to be the community of the middle way so that you might be witnesses to all mankind and the Messenger might be a witness to you. (143:2)

This work was extremely difficult and, given the dangers surrounding the Muslims, each and every individual was an important contributor. All believers who lived amongst various tribes and were scattered across the country were thus instructed to migrate to Madinah immediately so that the numbers of believers would be enhanced and they could receive training directly from the Prophet (sws) in order to understand the requirements of their faith. This order remained in effect for several years. People who did not migrate despite having the resources to do so were accused of being hypocrites. The journeys made to Madinah by believers were termed *hijrah* (migration) until the victory at Makkah. After this, people who expressed a desire to shift to Madinah were stopped from doing so.

In order to highlight the special status of the Muslim *ummah* and establish its relationship with the *ummah* of Abraham (sws), it was necessary to declare the House of God constructed by him as the Qiblah in the prayers of Muslims and instruct the Prophet (sws) to give up praying towards the Bayt al-Muqaddas.

Instruction to acquire the Custody of the Qiblah

When the Prophet (sws) was in Makkah, he would, as stated above, stand for prayer such that he would be facing both the Ka'bah and the Bayt al-Muqaddas in its north. He chose Dar al-Arqam for collective prayers by the believers for the same reason, as it was possible to keep both these buildings in front. He did this because instructions to determine the Qiblah had not yet been revealed from God. In that situation, he adopted the practice of the People of the Book. Because their Qiblah was the Bayt al-Muqaddas, he would ensure that they faced both the mosques. When he went to Madinah after migration, Makkah was in the south and Bayt al-Muqaddas in the north. Thus it was no longer possible to combine the two while performing the prayer. Then as Surah Baqarah was revealed, the history of Abraham (sws) was related and the information was given that Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws)'s supplication at the time of construction of the Ka'bah had been fulfilled then. The Prophet (sws) was

following the way of Abraham (sws) and he would be given divine guidance according to those beliefs. Additionally, the Prophet (sws)'s nation was the same Muslim nation as the one for which those two sincere servants of God had prayed. After the revelation of these verses, the Prophet (sws) started to wait eagerly for the time when instructions to face the real Qiblah would be issued. But it was a requirement of God's wisdom that he should continue to face the Bayt al-Muqaddas while praying for a while longer.

In Makkah, the Prophet (sws) lived in an environment where people around him were deeply attached to the Ka'bah. All these people were from the Ishmaelites. When Islam spread in Madinah, it influenced the Aws and Khazraj tribes the earliest. They also belonged to the Ishmaelites. They were also associated with the Ka'bah, which was their centre of veneration. The Bayt al-Muqaddas was the Qiblah of the Israelites. Therefore, the Ishmaelites found it difficult to accept the Bayt al-Muqaddas as the Qiblah. However, they were successful even in this difficult trial. The Jews in Madinah were large in numbers and influential. They were attached to the Bayt al-Muqaddas. What should have happened is that, seeing that their Qiblah was the same as that of the Muslims, they should have accepted the new faith, the features of which they recognized and that had the same Qiblah as them. This did not happen. They showed disdain and generally opposed Islam. When the instruction to change the Qiblah came, it became even more difficult for the Jews to accept it. Hence, the instruction on the direction of the Qiblah became a trial for everyone who had accepted Islam in the first 15 years, and for everyone who held sympathy for the People of the Book after this period.

When 17 months had passed after the Prophet's (sws) arrival in Madinah, he was ordered to face the Abrahamic Qiblah. According to narratives, the Prophet (sws) prayed the first prayer of 'Asr after the revelation of this instruction. A follower went to a mosque and found that believers were praying while facing the north. He spoke out loudly and declared on oath that the Qiblah had been changed and that he had just come after praying under the Prophet (sws)'s imamah. Hearing this, all those present turned and repeated their prayer facing the Ka'bah. The memorial to this incident is the Masjid-e Qiblatayn in Madinah. Before this instruction, the Jews were under the vain impression that Islam was a faith subservient to theirs, because its Qiblah was the same as theirs. If anyone accepted Islam, he still followed the same Qiblah. After the adoption of the Ka'bah as the Qiblah, the Jews began objecting openly, criticizing Islam for removing people from their original Qiblah when they accepted Islam; was Qiblah something to be changed frequently? In this manner, it became possible to distinguish between those who were true or false among the Jews who had accepted Islam with insincerity.

Qiblah is the spiritual centre of any nation. When we stand for prayer facing the Qiblah, we make a practical demonstration of the fact that we are turning away from the world and are connecting to our centre for spiritual purification so that we obtain some part of the blessings and favours of the next world. Those who do not pay attention to this fact wonder at the significance of the structure built of big and small stones in Makkah. They are surprised at why we circumambulate with so much devotion and are always seeking its direction, whether traveling or staying in some place. They do not see its sincerity and its connection with God, through which two of God's favourite servants built it under instructions from Him and then populated it with their prostrations to Him. They made sacrifices for Him there and kept it as their centre of attachment. Most significantly, God declared its relationship to Himself and

named it His House. What can be a more sacred and venerated place than God's House which a nation can consider as its centre? So many good people have been associated with it in every age and its traditions are so noble that its significance in the collective system of the Muslim nation is the same as that which the heart occupies in the human body. Just as the body has no existence without the heart, so too is the Muslim nation meaningless without its Qiblah.

The change in the Qiblah was ordered in Rajab, 2nd Hijri according to some narrators, and Sha'ban 2nd hijrah according to others. This order contained the message for the Quraysh that the House of God which they were occupying was the Qiblah of the Prophet of God and his companions and there was no reason for people who had proved themselves to be false to their promises and treacherous to remain in control. Therefore, Muslims would not refrain even from killing them to recover their Qiblah. In our view, custodianship of the Qiblah was one of the reasons for the Battle of Badr. Because preparations for the Battle of Badr had begun during the early days of Ramadan, it is likely that the instruction to take custody of the Qiblah came in Rajab.

The Underlying Principles of Instructions for Killing

When, after the custody of the Qiblah, the Muslim nation emerged as the inheritors of the legacy of Abraham (sws), with all its distinct characteristics, the enmity and jealousy of the People of the Book increased multifold. When the Quraysh came to know of this, they saw the expectations which they had entertained for the Prophet (sws)'s failure in a strange environment being destroyed. They saw that the plant of Islam had taken root in the soil of Madinah and was about to become a strong tree. They felt that it was necessary to take corrective action there and then. Thus, both the Jews and the Quraysh began to prepare a combined strategy for war.

The Prophet (sws) and his companions were informed that since the Muslim nation had become eminent after the custody of the Qiblah, their opponents would try to suppress and destroy it. Hence issues related to fear, danger of loss of life and property and scarcity of food would arise. They were to handle these trials with patience, determination and courage. To do this would require them to intensify their prayer and develop the quality of perseverance. The Qur'an gave a plan with reference to the enemy's attacks, so that as the situation emerged and became clear, necessary arrangements could be made according to the plan. The plan was as follows:

Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed. Allah does not like transgressors. And kill them wherever you overtake them and expel them from wherever they have expelled you, and *fitnah* is worse than killing. And do not fight them at al-Masjid al-Haram until they fight you there. But if they fight you, then kill them. Such is the recompense of the disbelievers. And if they cease, then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. Fight them until there is no [more] *fitnah* and [until] worship is [acknowledged to be] for Allah. But if they cease, then there is to be no aggression except against the oppressors. [Fighting in] the sacred month is for [aggression committed in] the sacred month, and for [all] violations is legal retribution. So whoever has assaulted you, then assault him in the

same way that he has assaulted you. And fear Allah and know that Allah is with those who fear Him. (2: 190-194).

The summary of the plan of implementation given to the Muslims in these verses is as follows:

1. If the disbelievers of the Quraysh started war, Muslims too were to go to the battlefield. Their battle would be in the way of God, because the purpose of the disbelievers was to destroy God's religion and its followers.

2. If war was declared during the holy months, the believers were to wage a counter attack, but were not to extend it for an unnecessary period. In that war, the faithful would not hold sacred the holiness of the months one sided.

3. Muslims were not to begin the attack within the boundaries of the Mosque. However, if the disbelievers did not refrain from it, they could be fought there as well.

4. Killing was deemed necessary at that time and it was to be continued until Islam became supreme in the country and the disbelievers stopped opposing it.

5. Once victory was achieved, the disbelievers were to be expelled from the country. They were to be killed wherever they were found and no asylum was to be given to them.

6. If the disbelievers accepted defeat and mended their ways, there would be overarching amnesty for them. Those who do not desist will be acted against.

All future actions were taken in the light of this strategic plan of implementation and the Prophet (sws) kept these guiding principles in mind when dealing with the Quraysh in war or peace related matters.

Removal of a Misunderstanding

Some of our well wishers spend their efforts at writing to prove that Islam is a religion of peace and reconciliation. Why then would it relate to war and shedding of blood? Hence, whenever the Prophet took up arms, it was in defense. All his battles were those that were imposed by the Quraysh upon the Muslims. If this had not been the case, the Prophet (sws) would not have picked up the sword. On the other hand, our enemies claim that Muslims adopted banditry after migration and that they would stand along well used highways on the lookout for caravans and would attack them to loot their wealth. The Quraysh were forced to attack Madinah to teach them a lesson. Had the Muslims lived in Madinah in peace, there was no reason for the enmity between them and the Quraysh. Both these views are neither proved from the Qur'an, nor from the incidents that have been narrated by ancient biographers.

As far as the Qur'an is concerned, it clarifies that if the teaching of Islam were that the oppressors be left free to oppress and torture people and good people be prevented from fighting them, the world would

be full of the chaos and evil of bad people. The places of worship to God would have been destroyed. The churches of Christians would not have existed, neither the synagogues of Jews nor the mosques of Muslims. It was necessary to give the faithful the right to fight and kill in order to save the world from this situation. They would thus counter those who create chaos. They would arm themselves with equipment of war so that they could create awe and fear among their enemies, who may thus be prevented from oppressing others. Particularly, in the case of the Prophet (sws), it has been clarified above that he was informed while he was in Makkah that the earlier form of divine punishment for the Makkans would be they would be defeated and would run away from the battlefield. The faithful were instructed to kill at the time of migration. They were told that when the time came, they were not to avoid war but were to take revenge from the Quraysh for their oppression.

(*Translated by Nikhat Sattar*)

CHAPTER 26

Measures to protect Madinah

It is generally believed, and also correct, that before migration, believers were not allowed to kill anyone. When Muslims, tired of constant persecution and torment from the idolaters, asked for permission to use arms, they were told to be patient, persevere, show restraint, remember God frequently and trust in Him. The instruction to kill came at the time of migration, and, as stated above, it was to remain in effect until Islam had gained supremacy over all religions in the entire country. After migration of the Prophet (sws) and the believers, the Quraysh were satisfied that they had rid themselves of the Muslims and began to plan ways and means whereby the power of Muslims could be completely destroyed. To counter these actions, the Prophet (sws) too, took steps which could address these schemes. We now consider these steps taken by the Prophet (sws), keeping in view the dangers posed by the Quraysh.

Preventive Measures

1. The Prophet (sws) regularly sent informers around Madinah. If news came from any quarter of a potential attack by the enemy, he would keep awake throughout the night and arrange for a close vigil to ensure that the enemy did not attack them while they were unaware. Despite this, one year after migration, Makkah's Kurz ibn Jabir Fihri attacked a pasture which was three miles from the city and which belonged to the people of Madinah and stole several animals. The Prophet (sws) followed him but could not find him.

2. The Prophet (sws) signed a covenant called the Covenant of Madinah with all citizens of Madinah, including the tribes of Aws and Khazrj and the Jews. This included the following conditions in particular:

a) No one shall give protection to the Quraysh or their allies

b) If Madinah was attacked, Muslims and Jews would defend it together

c) If Muslims made peace with any group, the Jews would be liable to follow this agreement and if the Jews made any such agreement, Muslims were bound to follow it. However, there would be no responsibility on any signatory to cooperate in a religious war of the other group.

d) If any group was required to leave Madinah for purposes of war, it would have rights of defense and peace and this would be also applicable to those who remained in Madinah. No one would be persecuted and no one was to break his promise.

Deliberation on these conditions shows that the Prophet (sws) was concerned about hostility from the Quraysh and the danger of an attack as a consequence. Hence, he had penned the Covenant of Madinah as a counter step.

3. The Prophet (sws) also signed agreements with the Jewish tribes of Banu Naḍir, Banu Qurayẓah and Banu Qaynuqa‘, who were settled around Madinah, that they would remain neutral and not cause any harm while living in the Muslim centre, by becoming a tool in the hands of the Quraysh. The tribes of Aws and Khazrj already had agreements of cooperation and support with those tribes, so the Prophet (sws) too, did not have any difficulty in making similar agreements.

4. The Prophet (sws) penned cooperation agreements with tribes who were settled along the route to Makkah. Those tribes included Juhaynah, Banu D~amrah and Banu Mudlaj. They were allies of Aws and Khazraj earlier. The advent of Islam in Madinah paved the way with those tribes for agreements that covered the following clauses:

a) The life and property of members of the tribes would be safe and sacrosanct.

b) If any one were to oppress or attack them, they would be helped in their defence.

c) If any oppression was internally related to their own people or their religion, it would not be necessary to provide support to them.

These agreements were signed with the above mentioned three tribes during the first year of migration, several months before the Battle of Badr. The Prophet (sws) had gone to visit them to finalize the agreements along with 150 companions. Some narrators say that the Ansar were not involved in any of the Prophet (sws)’s missions before the Battle of Badr, but the number of the missions and the nature of relations of Aws and Khazraj with those tribes indicate that the Ansar must have been with the Prophet (sws) in these missions. Biographers have named these missions Ghazwah (battle) and they are called Ghazwah Bawat, Ghazwah Abwa and Ghazwah Dhu al-‘Ashirah, although no preparations necessary for a battle were made, nor did the Prophet (sws) take any step that may have been considered a war like action. When he reached Bawat, a trade caravan of the Quraysh, led by Umayyah ibn Khalaf was passing through. Similarly, when he reached Dhu al-‘Ashirah, he was informed that a caravan of the Quraysh with Abu Sufyan in charge had just gone by. Orientalists claim that Muslims had taken up highway robbery after migration. Had this been the case, why did the Prophet (sws) not take advantage of these two opportunities, when a large number of supporters ready to lay down their lives were with him and could have easily attacked the caravans? Meeting the trade convoys and not harming them seems to prove that these events had taken place just to reject the accusations of the Orientalists. The fact is that all three journeys were political in nature and their purpose was to sign cooperation agreements with the tribes that had their settlements along the routes in case Madinah was attacked by the Quraysh. If one presupposes that the Prophet (sws) was informed of the movements of trade convoys of the

Quraysh, the maximum that could be said about the choice of timing is that the Prophet (sws) wished to make the Quraysh aware that he was watching and to create a sense of awe among them of the power exercised by the Muslims. Another reason for taking such large numbers of companions on these journeys could have been to familiarize them with the region and train them for future journeys which may need to be taken during battles. This is the same objective for which battle exercises are carried out in current times.

5. Before the Battle of Badr, the Prophet (sws) sent small battalions of the companions in various directions from time to time. These missions are called *sariyyah*.

In the seventh month of migration, the Prophet (sws) sent a group of 30, led by his uncle, Hamzah (rta) to the coastal region occupied by the tribe of Juhaynah. There, they came across 300 soldiers from the Quraysh. The two groups were close to coming to swords but a battle was prevented by the timely intervention of Majdi ibn ‘Amr, the leader of Jehjinah. When the Prophet (sws) was informed, he praised the efforts of Majdi ibn ‘Amr. At that event, the intentions of 300 soldiers of the Quraysh could only have been military or political, not trade. If the objective of the *sariyyah* was to tease the Quraysh, the Prophet (sws) would not have praised the peacemaking efforts made by Majdi.

In Shawwal of the first year of migration, the Prophet (sws) sent a group of 60 people led by his cousin, ‘Ubaydah ibn al-Harith (rta) to Juhfah, which is a place between Makkah and Badr. There they came across an army of 200 from the Quraysh, but matters did not reach the point of war. The large number of soldiers of the Quraysh indicates that they were not travelling for purposes of trade otherwise there would not have been such a large party. Trade convoys usually had more animals to carry goods and the men were normally 40-50 in number.

During Dhu al-Qa‘dah of the first year *hijrah*, 20 people led by Sa‘d ibn Abi Waqqas (rta) came to Kharar, close to Juhfah and then returned to Madinah.

If the objective of these missions was to rob trade convoys, as accused by historians, at least one such event should have taken place. What sort of highway robbers were the companions, that they undertook such long journeys and when faced with the Quraysh, did not harm them in any way? The fact was that none of these missions were carried out for the purpose of robbery. They were meant to assess what tricks the Quraysh were up to and to keep a watchful eye on their activities. Additionally, they were meant to warn the Quraysh that the Muslims were not unaware of the need for their own defense.

The *sariyyah* of ‘Abdullah ibn Jahash (rta)

The first *sariyyah* in which bloodshed took place was in Rajab, second hijrah. The Prophet (sws) had put his cousin, ‘Abdullah ibn Jahash (rta) in charge of this *sariyyah*, and it had eight Muhajirin. They were ordered to put up their camp at Nakhlah, a place in the north east outside the boundaries of Makkah, and gather information about the Quraysh. It so happened that a small trade convoy of the Quraysh set

up camp very close to them in the dark of the night. Fighting ensued and both sides used arms, as a result of which the leader of the Quraysh convoy, ‘Amr ibn al-Haḍrami, who was also the son of ‘Abdullah al-Hadrami, an ally of Harb ibn Umayyah, a leader of Makkah, was killed. Two young men, ‘Uthman ibn ‘Abdullah ibn al-Mughirah (the cousin of Khalid ibn Walid) and Al al-Hakam ibn Kaysan were taken prisoners. Usman’s brother Nawfal ran to Makkah and informed the Quraysh of this incident. ‘Abdullah ibn Jahash broke up his camp immediately for fear of being caught and returned to Madi#nah. The Prophet (sws) was saddened to know of this activity as it had exceeded the boundaries of the parameters of the assignment.

The incidents of this *sariyyah* provide an opportunity to Orientalists to loosen their tongues in sarcasm because they find in this the only argument to accuse the companions of robbery and prove that the greed to loot wealth became the reason for the Battle of Badr later. In our view, the Prophet (sws) himself had set the purpose of this *sariyyah*, which was to stay in concealment and unearth information about the Quraysh. No Muslim, as long as he lived, could have disobeyed the Prophet’s clear instructions. It is also worth considering that only a few Muslims, more than 12 destinations away from their centre and so close to that of their enemy could not have endangered themselves in order to rob the convoy. One should also keep in mind the fact that the people in the Muslim group were relatives of the Makkans. Their faces were not unknown to the idolaters, nor was there any misunderstanding about their religious beliefs and thoughts. It is more likely that the idolaters had started the fight in their arrogance of being more powerful and close to Makkah, and faced losses as a consequence. Or, the Muslims may have sensed the danger of Makkah being informed and may have attacked the convoy to prevent the information reaching the Quraysh. Whatever the reason for this skirmish, it became important due to its consequences.

This skirmish with the Makkans took place during the last day of Rajab. According to research by Ibn Kathir, the instruction to take custody of the Qiblah was also given during Rajab. The Muslims were warned in this instruction that their difficulties would increase after this announcement. Circumstances would demand major sacrifices from them and wars would be imminent in order to take control of the House of God from the idolaters. It is possible that the Prophet (sws) may have sent the members of the *sariyyah* of ‘Abdullah ibn Jahash (rta) to go so close to Makkah in order to find out the reactions of the Quraysh to the situation that arose after this announcement. They may have been making arrangements for this when the convoy of the Quraysh came upon them and the situation may have evolved into the incidents that have been stated above.

(*Translated by Nikhat Sattar*)

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CHAPTER 27

The purpose of the debates with the Jews of Madinah immediately after the Prophet (sws)'s arrival was to remind them of the forgotten status they had possessed in the system of divine guidance which could have enabled them to move forward and grasp the torch of guidance once again. They were capable enough to become the right hand of the Prophet (sws) and thus regain the position of God's preferred nation. But the biographies of the Prophet (sws) tell us that with the exception of a few Jewish scholars, the Israelites in general and a large majority of converted Jews did not accept Islam. Hence the Qur'an, after addressing all their objections through solid arguments, clearly stated that if they did not profess belief in the Prophet (sws), they would be considered damned and accursed for all time to come. This was their last chance to recover and take the right decision. If their minds were deluded by the belief that it was their familial right to gain prophet hood in order to establish viceregence of God, it was best that they removed this misunderstanding as quickly as possible.

Establishment of the Muslim *Ummah*

Looking at the arguments with the Jews, it appears that the Quran had rejected the claim of the Jews that they were the upholders of the leadership of the world and that prophet hood was their national right. This is why when the Qur'an reiterated the prophet hood of the Prophet (sws), it also clarified that the time had come for divine acceptance of the supplication made by Abraham (sws) in favour of the children of Ishmael (sws) and that his progeny had taken the reins of the Muslim *ummah*.
This *ummah* had been struggling to survive in Makkah, but God provided them the wherewithal in Madinah. It found a place where it could breathe with safety and peace; establish God's religion; introduce and implement instructions of a collective nature and structure the society according to the norms of God given guidance. Thus, within just a few months of migration, it became clear that a new state with its own systems and power was coming into existence. It members were committed and had the ability to shape their conditions according to their needs and wishes. Their opinions would count in this new state and those opposing them would not be able to retain their hold.

Only a year after migration Muslims were given instructions related to fasting and hajj, after being instructed on prayer. The Abrahamic concepts of what was *halal* (legitimate) and *haram* (not allowed) were highlighted. Moral values underlying social practices necessary for the new society were identified. People were informed of the qualities of character necessary for sustainability of the *ummah*, acquiring which, Muslims could fulfill the requirements of the status of leadership of the world.

The Prophet (sws) did not just rely on reciting the revealed instructions. He outlined the paths through which these instructions could be implemented. He kept an eye on how the companions were following the instructions. Wherever he found an error or negligence, he corrected it and explained the right actions. If the Qur'anic injunctions needed detailed interpretation, he explained these too, because the aspect of providing *shari'ah* instruction was also his responsibility. In this way, the new religion became the focus of all attention and believers were communicating it far and wide. Before this, the people on whom God had bestowed the status as guides had broken their covenant, lost sight of the right path and made changes in God's *shari'ah* according to their wishes. Now, it was the need for humanity that the teachings brought by the last Prophet (sws) be entrusted to people who would protect them at the cost of their lives. They would be witness to this new religion in every period of time, every country, every language and never lose sight of their responsibility in this respect. The companions were fulfilling this responsibility in a befitting manner.

And thus we have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you. (2:143)

This work was extremely difficult and, given the dangers surrounding Muslims, each and every individual was an important contributor. All believers who lived amongst various tribes and were scattered across the country were thus instructed to migrate to Madinah immediately so that the numbers of believers would be enhanced and they would receive training directly from the Prophet (sws) in order to understand the requirements of their faith. This order remained in effect for several years. People who did not migrate despite having the resources to do so were accused of being hypocrites. The journeys made to Madinah by believers were termed *hijrah* (migration) until the victory of Makkah. After this, people who expressed a desire to shift to Madinah were stopped from doing so.

In order to highlight the special status of the Muslim *ummah* and establish its relationship with the *ummah* of Abraham (sws), it was necessary to declare the House of God constructed by him as the *qiblah* in the prayers of Muslims and instruct the Prophet (sws) to give up praying towards the *Bayt ul Muqaddas*.

Instruction to acquire Custody of the *Qiblah*

When the Prophet (sws) was in Makkah, he would, as stated above, stand for prayer such that he would be facing both the Ka'bah and the Bayt ul Muqaddas in its north. He chose Dar al- Raqim for collective prayers by the believers for the same reason, as it was possible to keep both these buildings in front. He did this because instructions to determine the *qiblah* had not yet been revealed from God. In this situation, he adopted the practice of the People of the Book. Because their *qiblah* was the Bayt ul Muqaddas, he ensured that they faced both the mosques. When he went to Madinah after migration,

Makkah was in the south and Bayt ul Muqaddas in the north. Thus it was no longer possible to combine the two while performing the prayer. Then, as Surah al-Baqarah was revealed, the history of Abraham (sws) was related and the information that Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws)'s supplication at the time of construction of the Ka'bah had been fulfilled was provided. The Prophet (sws) was following the way of Abraham (sws) and would be given divine guidance according to those beliefs. Additionally, the Prophet (sws)'s nation was the same Muslim nation as the one for which those two sincere servants of God had prayed. After the revelation of the verses, the Prophet (sws) started to wait eagerly for the time when instructions to face the real *qiblah* would be issued. But it was the requirement of God's wisdom that he should continue to face the Bayt al-Muqaddas for a while longer while praying.

In Makkah, the Prophet (sws) lived in an environment where people around him were deeply attached to the Ka'bah. All those people were from the Ishmaelites. When Islam spread in Madinah, it influenced the Aws and the Khazraj tribes the earliest. They also belonged to the Ishmaelites. They were also associated with the Ka'bah, which was their centre of veneration. The Bayt al-Muqaddas was the *qiblah* of the Israelites. Therefore, the Ishmaelites found it difficult to accept the Bayt al-Muqaddas as the *qiblah*. However, they were successful even in this difficult trial. The Jews in Madinah were large in numbers and influential. They were attached emotionally to the Bayt al-Muqaddas. What should have happened is that, seeing that their *qiblah* was the same as that of the Muslims, they should have accepted the new faith, the features of which they recognized and that had the same *qiblah* as them. This did not happen. They showed disdain and generally opposed Islam. When the instruction to change the *qiblah* came, it became even more difficult for the Jews to accept it. Hence, the instruction on the direction of the *qiblah* became a trial for everyone who had accepted Islam in the first 15 years, and for everyone who held sympathies with the People of the Book after this period.

17 months after the Prophet (sws) came to Madinah, he was ordered to face the Abrahamic *qiblah*. According to narratives, the Prophet (sws) prayed the first salah of 'Asr after the revelation of this instruction. A follower went to a mosque and found that believers were praying while facing the north. He spoke out loudly and declared on oath that the *qiblah* had been changed and that he had just come after praying under the Prophet (sws)'s imamah. Hearing this, all those present turned and repeated their prayer facing the ka'bah. The memorial to this incident is the Masjid-i Qiblatayn in Madinah. Before this instruction, the Jews were under the vain impression that Islam was a faith subservient to theirs, because its *qiblah* was the same as theirs. If anyone accepted Islam, he still followed the same *qiblah*. After the adoption of the ka'bah as the *qiblah*, the Jews began objecting openly, criticizing Islam for removing people from their original *qiblah* when they accepted Islam: was *qiblah* something to be changed frequently? In this manner, it became possible to distinguish between those who were true or false among the Jews and those who had accepted Islam with insincerity.

Qiblah is the spiritual centre of any nation. When we stand for prayer facing the *qiblah*, we make a practical demonstration of the fact that we are turning away from the world and are connecting to our centre for spiritual purification so that we obtain some part of the blessings and favours of the next world. People who do not appreciate this fact wonder at the significance of the structure built of big and small stones in Makkah. They are surprised at why we circumambulate with so much devotion and are always seeking its direction, whether travelling or staying in a place. These people do not see the

sincerity and connection with God, with which two of God's favourite servants built it under instructions from Him and then populated it with their prostrations to Him. They made sacrifices for Him there and kept it as their centre of attachment. Most significantly, God declared its relationship to Himself and named it His House. What can be a more sacred and venerated place than God's House which a nation can consider its centre? So many good people have been associated with it in every age and its traditions are so noble that its significance in the collective ethos of the Muslim nation is the same as that which the heart occupies in the human body. Just as the body has no existence without the heart, so too is the Muslim nation meaningless without its *qiblah*.

The change in the *qiblah* was ordered in Rajab, 2nd *hijrah* according to some narrators, and sha'ban 2nd *hijrah* according to others. This order contained the message for the Quraysh that the House of God which they were occupying was the *qiblah* of the Prophet of God and his companions and there was no reason for people who had proved themselves to be false in their promises and treacherous to remain in control. Therefore, Muslims would not refrain even from killing them to recover their *qiblah*. In our view, custodianship of the *qiblah* was one of the reasons for the Battle of Badr. Because preparations for the Battle of Badr had begun during the early days of Ramadan, it is likely that the instruction to take custody of the *qiblah* came in Rajab.

The Underlying Principles of Instructions for Killing

When, after the custody of the *qiblah*, the Muslim nation emerged as the inheritors of the legacy of Abraham (sws), with all its distinct characteristics, the enmity and jealousy of the People of the Book increased multifold. When the Quraysh came to know of this, they saw the expectations which they had entertained for the Prophet (sws)'s failure in a strange environment being destroyed. They saw that the plant of Islam had gained roots in the soil of Madinah and was about to become a strong tree. They felt that it was necessary to take corrective action there and then. Thus, both the Jews and the Quraysh began to prepare a combined strategy for war.

The Prophet (sws) and his companions were informed that since the Muslim nation had become eminent after the custody of the *qiblah*, their opponents would try to suppress and destroy it. Hence issues related to fear, danger of loss of life and property and scarcity of food would arise. They were to handle these trials with patience, determination and courage. To do this would require them to intensify their prayer and develop the quality of perseverance. The Quran gave a plan with reference to the enemy's attacks, so that as the situation emerged and became clear, necessary arrangements could be made according to the plan. This plan was as follows:

Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed. Allah does not like transgressors. And kill them wherever you overtake them and expel them from wherever they have expelled you, and fitnah is worse than killing. And do not fight them at al-Masjid al-Haram until they fight you there. But if they fight you, then kill them. Such is the recompense of the disbelievers. And if

they cease, then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. Fight them until there is no [more] fitnah and [until] worship is [acknowledged to be] for Allah . But if they cease, then there is to be no aggression except against the oppressors. [Fighting in] the sacred month is for [aggression committed in] the sacred month, and for [all] violations is legal retribution. So whoever has assaulted you, then assault him in the same way that he has assaulted you. And fear Allah and know that Allah is with those who fear Him. (2: 190-194).

The summary of the plan of implementation given to the Muslims in these verses is as follows:

1. If the disbelievers of the Quraysh started war, Muslims too were to come to the battlefield. Their battle would be fighting in the way of God, because the purpose of the disbelievers was to destroy God's religion and its followers.

2. Even if war was declared in holy months, it was to be fought through a counter attack, but it was not to be extended for an unnecessary period. In that war, the faithful would not hold the holiness of the months sacred on a one sided basis.

3. Muslims were not to begin the attack within the boundaries of the Mosque. However, if the disbelievers did not refrain from that, they could be fought there as well.

4. Killing was then necessary and was to be continued until Islam became supreme in the country and the disbelievers stopped opposing it.

5. Once victory was achieved, the disbelievers were to be expelled from the country. They were to be killed wherever they were found and no asylum was to be given to them.

6. If the disbelievers accepted defeat and mended their ways, there was to be overarching amnesty for them. Those who did not desist would be acted against.

All future actions were taken in the light of this plan of implementation and the Prophet (sws) kept these guiding principles in mind when dealing with the Quraysh in war or peace related matters.

Removal of a Misunderstanding

Some of our well wishers spend their writing efforts to prove that Islam is a religion of peace and reconciliation. Why would it relate with war and shedding of blood? Hence, whenever the Prophet took up arms, it was in defense. All his battles were those that were imposed by the Quraysh upon the Muslims. If this had not been the case, the Prophet (sws) would not have picked up the sword. On the other hand, our enemies claim that Muslims adopted banditry after migration and that they would

stand along well used highways on the lookout for caravans and would attack them to loot their wealth. The Quraysh were forced to attack Madinah to teach them a lesson. Had the Muslims lived in Madinah in peace, there was no reason for the enmity between them and the Quraysh. Both these views are neither proved from the Qur'an, nor from the incidents that have been narrated by ancient biographers.

As far as the Qur'an is concerned, it has clarified that if the teaching of Islam were that oppressors be left free to oppress and torture people and good people be prevented from fighting them, the world would be full of the chaos and evil of bad people. The worship places for God would have been destroyed. The churches of Christians would not have existed, neither the synagogues of Jews nor the mosques of Muslims. It was necessary to give the faithful the right to fight and kill in order to save the world from this situation. They would thus face those who create chaos. They would arm themselves with equipment of war so that they could create awe and fear among their enemies, who may thus be prevented from oppressing others. Particularly, in the case of the Prophet (sws), it has been clarified above that he had been informed while he was in Makkah that the earlier form of divine punishment for the Makkans would be they would be defeated and would run away from the battlefield. The faithful were instructed to kill at the time of migration. They were told that when the time came, they were not to avoid war but were to take revenge from the Quraysh for their oppression.

(*Translated by Nikhat Sattar*)

CHAPTER 28

Measures to protect Madinah

It is generally believed, and also correct, that before migration, believers were not allowed to kill anyone. When Muslims, tired of constant persecution and torment from the idolaters, would ask for permission to use arms, they were told to be patient, persevere, show restraint, remember God frequently and trust in Him. The instruction to kill came at the time of migration, and, as stated before, was to remain in effect until Islam had gained supremacy over all religions in the entire country. After the migration of the Prophet (sws) and believers, the Quraysh were satisfied that they had rid themselves of the Muslims and had begun to plan ways and means whereby the power of Muslims could be completely destroyed. To counter these actions, the Prophet (sws) too, took steps which could address these schemes. We now consider these steps taken by the Prophet (sws), keeping in view the dangers posed by the Quraysh.

Preventive Measures

1. The Prophet (sws) regularly sent persons to collect information around Madinah. If news came from any quarter of a potential attack by the enemy, he would keep awake throughout the night and arrange for a close vigil to ensure that the enemy did not attack them unaware. Despite this, one year after migration, Makkah's Kurz ibn Jabir Fihri attacked a pasture which was three miles from the city and which belonged to the people of Madinah and stole several animals. The Prophet (sws) followed him but could not find him.

2. The Prophet had signed a covenant called the Covenant of Madinah with all citizens of Madinah, including the tribes of Aws and Khazraj and the Jews. This included the following conditions in particular:

a) No one was to give protection to the Quraysh or their allies

b) If Madinah was attacked, Muslims and Jews were to defend it together

c) If Muslims made peace with any group, the Jews were to be liable to follow the agreement and if the Jews made any such agreement, Muslims were bound to follow it. However, there was to be no responsibility on any signatory to cooperate in a religious war of the other group.

d) If any group was required to leave Madinah for purposes of war, it would have rights of defense and peace and this would be also applicable to those who remained in Madinah. No one would be persecuted and no one was to break his/her promises.

Deliberation upon these conditions shows that the Prophet (sws) was concerned about hostility from the Quraysh and the danger of an attack as a consequence. Hence, he had penned the Covenant of Madinah as a counter step.

3. The Prophet (sws) also signed agreements with the Jewish tribes of Banu Nadir, Banu Qurayzah and Banu Qaynuqa', who were settled around Madinah, so that they would remain neutral and not cause any harm while living in the Muslim centre, by becoming a tool in the hands of the Quraysh. The tribes of Aws and Khazraj already had agreements of cooperation and support with these tribes, so the Prophet (sws) too, did not face any difficulty in making similar agreements.

4. The Prophet (sws) penned cooperation agreements with tribes who were settled along the route to Makkah. These tribes included Juhaynah, Banu Damrah and Banu Mudlij. They were allies of the Aws and the Khazraj earlier. The advent of Islam in Madinah paved the way with these tribes for agreements, that covered the following clauses:

a) The life and property of members of the tribes were to be safe and sacrosanct

b) If any one were to oppress or attack them, they were to be helped in their defense

c) If any oppression was related to their own people or their religion, it was not necessary to provide support to them.

These agreements were signed with the above mentioned three tribes during the first year of migration, several months before the Battle of Badr. The Prophet (sws) had gone to visit them to finalize these agreements along with 150 companions. Some narrators say that the Ansar were not involved in any of the Prophet (sws)'s missions before the Battle of Badr, but the number of these missions and the nature of relations of the Aws and the Khazraj with these tribes indicate that the Ansar must have accompanied the Prophet (sws) in these missions. Biographers have named these battles ghazwat and they are called battles of Buwat, Abwa and Dhu al-'Ashirah respectively, although no preparations necessary for a battle were made, nor did the Prophet (sws) take any step that may be considered a war like action. When he reached Bawat, a trade caravan of the Quraysh, led by Umayyah ibn Khalaf was passing through. Similarly, when he reached Dhu al-'Ashirah, he was informed that a caravan of the Quraysh with Abu Sufyan in charge had just gone by. Orientalists claim that Muslims had taken up highway robbery after migration. Had this been the case, why did the Prophet (sws) not take advantage of those two opportunities, when a large number of supporters ready to lay down their lives were with him and could have easily attacked the caravans? Meeting the trade convoys and not harming them seems to prove that these events had taken place just to reject the accusations of the Orientalists. The fact is that all three journeys were political in nature and their purpose was to sign cooperation agreements with the tribes that had settlements along the routes in case Madinah was attacked by the Quraysh. If one presupposes that the Prophet (sws) was informed of the movements of trade convoys of the Quraysh,

the maximum that could be said about choice of timings is that the Prophet (sws) wished to make the Quraysh aware that he was watching out and to create a sense of awe among them of the power exercised by the Muslims. Another reason for taking such large numbers of companions on these journeys could have been to familiarize them with the terrain and train them for future journeys which may have been necessary to be taken during battles. This is the same objective for which battle exercises are carried out in current times.

5. Before the Battle of Badr, the Prophet (sws) sent small parties of companions in various directions from time to time. These missions are called sariyyah.

6. In the seventh month of migration, the Prophet (sws) sent a group of 30, led by his uncle, Hamzah (rta) to the coastal region occupied by the tribe of Juhaynah. There, they came across 300 soldiers from the Quraysh. The two groups were close to coming to swords but a battle was prevented by the timely intervention of Majadi ibn ‘Amr, the leader of Juhaynah. When the Prophet (sws) was informed, he praised the efforts of Majadi ibn ‘Amr. At that event, the purpose behind 300 soldiers of the Quraysh could only have been either military or political, but not trade. If the objective of the sariyyah was skirmish with the Quraysh, the Prophet (sws) would not have praised the peacemaking efforts made by Majdi.

In Shawwal of the first year of migration, the Prophet (sws) sent a group of 60 people led by his cousin, ‘Ubaydah ibn al-Harith (rta) to Juhfah, which is a place between Makkah and Badr. There they came across an army of 200 from the Quraysh, but matters did not reach the point of war. The large number of soldiers of the Quraysh indicates that they were not traveling for purposes of trade, otherwise there would not have been such a large party. Trade convoys usually had more animals to carry goods and the men would be 40-50 in number only.

During Dhu al-Qa‘dah of the first year hijrah, 20 people led by Sa‘d ibn Abi Waqqas (rta) came to Kharrar, close to Juhfah and then returned to Madinah.

If the objective of these missions was to rob trade convoys, as claimed by Western historians, at least one such event should have taken place. What sort of highway robbers were the companions that they would undertake such long journeys and when faced with the Quraysh, not harm them in any way? The fact was that none of these missions were carried out for the purpose of robbery. They were meant to assess what mischief the Quraysh were up to and to keep a watchful eye on their activities. Additionally, they were meant to warn the Quraysh that the Muslims were not unaware of the need for their own defence.

The *Sariyyah* of ‘Abdullah ibn Jahash (rta)

The first *sariyyah* in which bloodshed took place was in Rajab, second hijrah. The Prophet (sws) had put his cousin, ‘Abdullah ibn Jahash (rta) in charge of this *sariyyah*, and it had eight Muhajirun. They were ordered to put up their camp at Nakhlah, a place in the north east outside the boundaries of Makkah, and gather information about the Quraysh. It so happened that a small trade convoy of the Quraysh set up camp very close to them in the dark of the night. Fighting ensued and both sides used arms, as a result of which the leader of the Quraysh convoy, ‘Amr ibn al-Hadri, who was also the son of ‘Abdullah al-Hadri, an ally of Harb ibn Umayyah, a leader of Makkah, was killed. Two young men, ‘Uthman ibn ‘Abdullah ibn al-Mughirah (a cousin of Khalid ibn Walid) and al-Hakam ibn Kaysan were taken prisoners. ‘Uthman’s brother Nawfal ran to Makkah and informed the Quraysh of this incident. ‘Adullah ibn Jahash broke up his camp immediately for fear of being caught and returned to Madinah. The Prophet (sws) was saddened to know of this activity as it had exceeded the boundaries of the parameters of the assignment.

The incidents of this sariyyah provide an opportunity to Orientalists to loosen their tongues in sarcasm because they find in this the only argument to accuse the companions of robbery and prove that the greed to loot wealth became the reason for the Battle of Badr later. In our view, the Prophet (sws) himself had set the purpose of this sariyyah, which was to stay in concealment and unearth information about the Quraysh. No Muslim, as long as he lived, could have disobeyed the Prophet’s clear instructions. It is also worth considering that only a few Muslims, more than 12 destinations away from their centre and so close to that of their enemy could not have endangered themselves in order to rob the convoy. The fact should also be kept in mind that the people in the Muslim group were relatives of the Makkans. Their faces were not unknown to the idolaters, nor was there any misunderstanding about their religious beliefs and thoughts. It is more likely that the idolaters had started the fight in their arrogance of being more powerful and close to Makkah, and faced losses as a consequence. Or, the Muslims may have sensed the danger of Makkah being informed and may have attacked the convoy to prevent this information reaching the Quraysh. Whatever the reason for this skirmish, it became important due to its consequences.

This skirmish with the Makkans took place on the last day of Rajab. According to research by Ibn Kathir, the instruction to take custody of the qiblah was also given during Rajab. The Muslims had been warned in that instruction that their difficulties would increase after the announcement. Circumstances would demand major sacrifices from them and wars would be imminent in order to take control of the House of God from the idolaters. It is possible that the Prophet (sws) may have sent the members of the sariyyah of ‘Abdullah ibn Jahash (ra) to go so close to Makkah in order to find out the reaction of the Quraysh to the situation that arose after that announcement. They may have been making arrangements for this when the convoy of the Quraysh came upon them and the situation may have evolved into the incidents that have been stated above.

(*Translated by Nikhat Sattar*)

CHAPTER 29

The Prophet's first full battle with the Quraysh was the Battle of Badr. This fight, in which 70 idolaters were killed and around the same number taken captive, took place on the 17th of Ramadan, 2nd *hijrah*, at the location of Badr. This battle damaged the strength and status of the Quraysh irreparably and the major leaders of the Quraysh were killed. The Quran called it the "Battle of Furqan," i.e. the fight to discern between truth and falsehood. It is astonishing that such a great event has been hidden behind history in such a way that it has become difficult to gain access to facts and several questions to which answers are unavailable are raised about the same.

The Causes of the Battle

Historians describe the following as being the reasons for the battle:

1. The Quraysh were enraged by the killing of 'Amr ibn al-Hadrami during the *sariyyah* of 'Abdullah ibn Jahash (rta) and the capture of 'Uthman and al-Hakam. They could not tolerate this humiliation. Taking revenge for killing was, in any case, a tradition of the Arabs. Thus, they began to make preparations for war, as a result of which the Battle of Badr took place.

2. Madinah is located along the route which runs from Makkah to Syria. The trade convoys of the Quraysh travelled through this route to Syria. By making cooperation agreements with the tribes living around Madinah, Muslims had made it impossible for the Quraysh to get permission to use this route. This was akin to cutting off the main artery of their economy, hence war became incumbent.

3. The spoils of war obtained from Nakhlah had created greed for more among Muslims. Hence, they waylaid a large trade caravan which was returning after bringing products from Syria towards Makkah. The Quraysh became suspicious and came out to defend their caravans.

If these are the reasons for the Battle of Badr, what are the characteristics that distinguish it from ordinary wars, on the basis of which the Quran named it "The Day of al-Furqan?" The premise behind all worldly wars is either political or economic. Wars have been started because of killing of people. When a nation has sensed danger to its economy, it has picked up weapons of war. Do the prophets of God too fight on the basis of such factors? These are the questions to which no satisfactory answers are available with biographers and it is necessary that we determine these.

In our view, the above are not the real causes for the battle, because of the following reasons:

1. 'Amr ibn al-Hadrami's killing and 'Uthman and al-hakam's captivity was certainly humiliating for the Quraysh, and it was also used to incite the emotions of people, but the preparation of a 1,000 soldier

strength army and attack on Madinah was completely unnecessary. According to the Arab tradition, qisas (retaliation for murder) could have been demanded. If the Prophet (sws) did not cooperate, revenge could have been asked for from the Banu Hashim tribe members who had been left in Makkah, because the Prophet (sws) was one of them and according to Arab custom, a tribe was held responsible for an individual's actions. According to some narratives, the Prophet (sws) had offered payment of blood money, but the offer was rejected by the Quraysh. Before the battle, the Qurayshi leader, Hakim ibn Hizam had offered to the mayor of Makkah, 'Utbah ibn Rabi'ah that he would pay blood money so that the matter could rest. This idea was accepted by Rabi'ah, but other leaders opposed it. It seems, therefore, that waging a war was not the only way to avenge a killing and that the leaders of the Quraysh not only did not consider such retaliation significant but also did not find it suitable to think of the options available.

2. The stated cause of the Syrian route becoming a danger is also unrealistic and the outcome of a perception only. There is a span of one whole year between the agreements with Juhaynah, Banu Damrah and Banu Mudlaj, and the Battle of Badr. Firstly, the wording of these agreements has been preserved and does not include stopping the trade caravans of the Quraysh. Secondly, during that one year, no trade convoy of the Quraysh was asked to obtain permission, nor was any stopped. Their convoys continued to ply on this route. If the purpose had been to stop the trade caravans, one or two incidents would surely have taken place. Thirdly, if it is supposed that Muslims were not so strong during that phase to have served such a notice, they became strong and emboldened after the battle and could have done so. But the truth is that even in later years, there were no signs of putting curbs on such trade. Hence, this cause is merely based on speculation.

3. Muslims would have become greedy after obtaining the war booty of Nakhlah, if the Prophet (sws) had praised them and patted them on their backs. Contrary to this, biographers narrate that he was unhappy with this incident and kept the booty aside. It was only distributed after the Battle of Badr. Was this behavior of the Prophet (sws) a deterrent to war or an incitement?

According to narratives, when Abu Sufyan was informed about the *sariyyah* of 'Abdullah ibn Jahash (rta), he was in Syria. He felt that Muslims could attack his convoy while he was en route to Makkah passing by Madinah. He sent a man named Damdam ibn 'Amr to Makkah to alert them of the potential danger so that they could send a group of soldiers. When this man arrived in Makkah, panic erupted. As a result, they formed a full army and marched towards Madinah. These narratives are not correct because it was impossible in those times for the news to have reached Syria from Makkah, for someone to travel from Syria to Makkah again, for the Quraysh to have made full preparations for war and then to reach Madinah which was a week's distance away, all within six weeks. Such an activity would have required at least 10-12 weeks, provided the travel time of the man from Syria to Makkah was excluded. According to another narrative, Damdam was not sent from Syria, but from when the convoy was a little distance away from Madinah. The same objections can be applied to this because of the travel time in those days. Had this been the case, the caravan would have been very close to Badr, whereas the messenger was quite far away. [The time taken for travel can be assessed by considering the fact that it took 10 days to travel between Makkah and Madinah. The Prophet (sws) had arrived at northern side of Arabia for the Battle of Tabuk after travelling for 24 days].

What is more likely, therefore, is that the Quraysh may have made plans for war and prepared all the war equipment, and wanted to make the safety of the trade route an excuse. The scheme could have been that a man would come as a representative from Abu Sufyan, and the Quraysh army would move just when the trade convoy would be close by. The man reached Makkah, tore his clothes, toppled the saddle of the camel and starting lamenting, calling upon the people to beware of their convoy as Muhammad (sws) and his companions had waylaid them. This made the people of Makkah angry and they participated in the battle, according to the scheme of their leaders. Even if such a description is accepted, questions on the attack of the trade convoys remain.

Firstly, no incident of robbing any convoy before the sariyyah of 'Abdullah ibn Jahash had taken place. The trade convoys of the Quraysh used to travel without any barriers to and from Syria. Without any previous bitter experience, Abu Sufiyan could not have been concerned about the safety of his convoy. News about the incident that occurred in Nakhlah could not have reached Abu Sufyan in time for him to send a messenger to obtain timely help from the Quraysh. It has to be admitted that sending Damdam ibn 'Amr was part of another plan which had no connection with the news of the *sariyyah* of 'Abdullah ibn Jahash.

Secondly, if protection of the convoy has been the purpose of the Quraysh, it would have sufficed to send a few hundred individuals. Instead, the Quraysh had prepared for a battle on a large scale and ensured that every person participated. This arrangement was far in excess of any need for protection of the convoy and greatly imbalanced.

Thirdly, if the Muslims had wanted to rob Abu Sufyan's convoy, they would have started from the north-west of Madinah, where they would have achieved their objective before the Quraysh army arrived. Before proceeding towards Badr, the Prophet (sws) had sent two spies in that direction. All biographers agree that when the Prophet (sws) prepared his army, he moved it towards Badr, which is 80 miles away from Madinah towards Makkah. Proceeding towards Makkah to rob the convoy would have been a dangerous tactic. It is impossible to imagine such a huge technical error on the part of Muslims.

Fourthly, According to historians, the idolaters knew before they reached Badr that Abu Sufyan had taken the convoy safely out towards Makkah through the coast and he no longer needed any protection. If the Quraysh had come only to protect the convoy, there was no reason for them to go on to Badr despite this news. This proves that their purpose was different.

In the light of these points, it can be deduced that the trade convoy coming from Syria was not the factor behind the Battle of Badr, although biographers have given it more importance.

The Cause of the Battle of Badr

The battle of Badr, was, in reality, a clash between the forces of truth and falsehood. Its purpose was to punish a nation that had humiliated the Prophet of God and to strike at the roots of those who denied him by killing its leaders. A total annihilation of the Quraysh as punishment for denying the Prophet

(sws) was not part of God's scheme, as explained above. But their frontline leadership was destroyed in this battle. In their arrogance, the leaders of the Quraysh had set out to stamp out the voice of truth forever, but instead, God's strategy worked and truth prevailed. Evidence of the fact that the Quraysh had left Makkah, armed with religious fervor, with aims to defeat Islam and break the strength of the Muslims is found in books of history. Let us look at the situation among the Quraysh.

1. The Quraysh involved every individual tribe in the preparation for war by formal instruction and obtained their cooperation through arms, wealth and in kind contribution. Thus, the entire nation participated in the war.

2. It was arranged that no important person was left behind. Such a psychological ambiance had been created that anyone who stayed behind was worried about being stigmatized. The leader of the Quraysh, 'Utbah ibn Rabi'ah had no intention of participating, but he was so criticized that his son Shaybah said: "if we remain apart from our nation today, this fact will become a reason for our disrepute always". Abu Lahab was hesitant to join in, but Abu Jahal went to him and said: "Get up, Abu 'Utbah, By God, we are only going to war for the glory of your and your forefather's religion." At this, Abu Lahab put al-'As ibn Hisham al-Maghirah in his place, forgiving him the debt the latter owed to the former in lieu of this service. Umayyah ibn Khalaf was a heavy set man. He expressed his inability to go to the front, but Abu Jahal incited him by calling out to his honour: "O Abu Ṣafwan, you are the leader of the inhabitants of this valley. If you stay at home, others too will not come out." Abu Jahal kept after him until he agreed and said: "If you are blaming me, by God, I shall buy the most pure bred camel and come with you, riding it."

3. The Quraysh leaders took on the responsibility to feed the entire army for one day each. For this, the names of Abu Jahal, Umayyah ibn Khalaf, Suhayl ibn 'Amr, Shaybah, 'Utbah, 'Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib, Abu al-Bukhtari, Nabih ibn al-Hajjaj and Manbah ibn al-Hajjaj have been given. This shows that this battle was accorded the status of a national war. Accompanying the army were women who played the tambourine, sang songs ridiculing Muslims and keeping the idolators happy.

4. The Quraysh were at odds with the tribe of the Banu Bakr. They were worried that on their way to Badr, the tribe may attack them from behind. Using diplomatic sources, it was ensured that they would not carry out any such attacks. Obviously, if they had been going merely to protect their convoy, they would not have needed to worry of such a happening.

5. When departing from Makkah, the idolaters prayed while holding on to the drapes of the Ka'bah: "O Allah! whichever army is better, which group is more honourable, whichever tribe is better, help it." They prayed thus in the belief that they were superior to the Muslims and because they were leaving for a formal battle with them.

6. Abu Jahal prayed the night before the battle: "O Allah! that man (the Prophet) has cut our relationships. He gives us a message with which we are unfamiliar. O Allah! Destroy that man

tomorrow." This prayer of Abu Jahal reflects the same fervor and feelings with which the Quraysh had entered war.

7. When the Quraysh reached Juhfah, before Badr, they knew that the trade convoy had left the route to Badr and was moving towards Makkah through the coastal route and was safe from any attack by the Muslims. Hearing this news, Banu Zahrah and Banu 'Adi said that their interest was limited to the protection of their people and property. They would, therefore, return to Makkah. Abu Jahal was adamant that they would not go back and would put up camp at Badr. The army moved on without taking these two tribes into consideration and they did not take part in the battle.

8. After reaching Badr, when the faithful too reached it, some peace loving individuals, including Hakim ibn Hizam who was at the forefront, advised 'Utbah to avoid any fighting. But the Quraysh elite insisted that they would not leave without destroying the Muslims.

There is no mention of the protection of the trade convoy or any other reason for the war in any of the above incidents. These incidents are completely irrelevant with regard to the convoy. In reality, the Quraysh, infused by emotions for the religion of their forefathers, had left their homes, aiming to destroy the Muslims and praying for the same. If some people suggested that the convoy was safe and there was no need for fighting, the Quraysh leaders gave no weight to these views and insisted that they would not go back without wiping out the Muslims.

As far as the camp of the Muslims is concerned, our early biographers have stated their purpose of leaving Madinah as attacking the trade convoy. The same story has been repeated by historians so often that it has been taken as a fact. However, there are several incidents that prove that the purpose in front of the Prophet (sws) in leaving Madinah was to fight the Quraysh. Please deliberate upon the following facts:

1. According to narratives, although the Prophet (sws) had sent two companions, Talhah ibn 'Ubaydullah (rta) and Sa'id ibn Zayd (rta), 10 days before departing for Badr, to the trade route in the west of Madinah, but without waiting for their return or arranging for an alternate to bring information about the convoy, he had ordered the army to proceed towards Badr. When Talhah (rta) and Sa'id (rta) returned to Madinah, the Prophet (sws) had left for Badr.

2. Historians say that the Ansars were not included in any of the earlier skirmishes, but in this, both Muhajirs and Anṣars were present in full. There were 86 Muhajirs, 61 Ansars belonging to the tribe of Aws and 170 from the tribe of Khazraj. Even adolescent boys signed up for the army, but they were not allowed to go. It seems that just as the Quraysh made preparations to take its entire people along, so did the Prophet (sws) prepare to take all able bodied Muslims.

Biographers say that no nationwide call for war had been made and no blame was attached to those who stayed behind. But they do not state who had stayed behind. The eight men who did and whose names appear were the ones who had been instructed by the Prophet (sws) to take on different

responsibilities and who had been awarded the war bounty. Hence, the above statement of historians is not acceptable.

3. The desire for *jihad* and martyrdom among the Muslims shows that they had confrontation with the Quraysh in mind. Even children tried to take part. For example, 'Umayr ibn Abi Waqqas (rta) participated despite his youth and was martyred. Similarly, it was necessary for either Khaythamah (rta) or his son, Sa'd ibn Khaythamah (rta) to stay at home. When the father attempted to stop his son, the latter said: "if it had not been a matter of Paradise, I would have given you priority over myself. I am going in hope of martyrdom. Please give me permission."

4. The Prophet (sws) stopped at the well of Abi Anba' outside Madinah to inspect his forces, and sent back some children, 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, Uthamah ibn Zayd, Rafay' ibn Khudayj, Bara'a ibn 'Azib, Zayd ibn Thabit, Usayd ibn Hudayr and Zayd ibn Arqam due to their tender age. It is obvious that he was looking at the certainty of a war with the Quraysh and wanted to take only people who would be most suitable for it.

5. During the mission of Dhu al-'Ashirah, he had come to know that Abu Sufyan's contingent comprised of only 30-40 horse riders. Only horse riders could be appropriate against them and only two companions possessed horses in the Muslim army. Secondly, there were 300 foot soldiers in the Battle of Badr, which were too many to attack the trade convoy. In other words, just as the army of the Quraysh was very imbalanced compared to the need for protection of the trade convoy, so too was the army of the Prophet (sws) too numerous for the purpose of attacking the trade convoy.

6. It was a custom among the Arabs that some people would participate in wars among other parties, greedy for war bounty. When two idolatrous warriors, Khubayb ibn Sayyaf and Qays ibn Muhrith expressed their wish to do so, the Prophet (sws) replied: "No one who is not on our faith will go with us." The reason for this refusal could be that he was not considering that battle between Islam and its enemies to be an ordinary one.

7. All historians have stated this prayer of the Prophet (sws) before the battle: "O Allah! If you destroy this small group of the people of Islam, there would be no one left to worship You on this earth." The words of this prayer indicate that the Prophet (sws) had submitted his entire possessions; otherwise such a prayer would not have been suitable. At that time, he was not thinking of the trade convoy but of the equipped army of the Quraysh.

8. To establish the purpose of war, it is said in the Qur'an: "But Allah intended to establish the truth by His words and to eliminate the disbelievers." (8:7) It is not possible to destroy a strong group of disbelievers by robbing one of its trade convoys. The only way to do this is to humiliate an equipped army and destroy its leadership.

However, it is a fact that the period of the return of the Quraysh convoy from Syria created serious psychological and emotional feelings within both Muslims and the Quraysh and played an active role in pitting the two groups against each other. It also created several misunderstandings that caused people to make huge errors in recognizing the true nature of this battle between truth and falsehood.

A Possible Trajectory of Events and Causes

Keeping all evidence and the time required for travel between the various convoys in mind, a more plausible explanation is that when Abu Sufyan heard that a large group of Muslims had arrived at Dhu al-'Ashirah when he had left it on his way from Makkah to Syria, he assumed that they were planning to rob his convoy, and that although he had been safe until then, they might be waiting for him and the convoy could be in danger. To pre-empt this, he sent a man, Damdam ibn 'Amr to the Quraysh with the message that they should make special preparations to protect the convoy on its way back. After sending the message, he proceeded to Syria. When Damdam reached Makkah, the incident of the *sariyyah* of 'Abdullah ibn Jahash had just happened and the Quraysh began to see this dim assumption as a reality. Some idolaters also said that the Muslims had the wrong perception that they could repeat the incident of Nakhlah. The Quraysh leaders used this danger to incite the feeling of honour among their people, but the plan they made was to use the protection of the convoy as a ploy to eliminate the Muslims forever. Hence they made elaborate arrangements which suited their real purpose of waging war. They had plenty of time for this, as the convoy would take time to come from Syria. As the time of the convoy's arrival came near, God showed a dream to His Prophet (sws) that a trade convoy was coming from one side, and the Quraysh army from the other. He instructed the Prophet (sws) to call the Muslims out, and promised him that Muslims would be granted victory over one of these two groups. The Prophet (sws) gathered his people together, told them about his dream and about both possibilities and gave orders to prepare for war. Because the fight would be tough, he gave instructions to prepare accordingly. The Muslims were oppressed, poor and without many possessions. Some expressed the wish that they should not have to fight in such conditions of poverty and that they be allowed to attack the trade convoy. Other companions saw in this a confrontation between Islam and disbelief and they understood that the time had come for the promise for the defeat of falsehood to be fulfilled. Biographers, referring to this situation, write: "When the Prophet (sws) motivated his people for war, some took it as an ordinary happening, but others felt its weight. This happened because people did not believe that the Prophet (sws) would face war".[1]

We believe that this is a description of the psychological condition of two groups of Muslims. One understood the seriousness of the issue and prepared accordingly. The other remained under the presumption of meeting the trade convoy, and thought that the idea of a war was too farfetched. Coincidentally, the narratives that have been collected by the oldest biographers represent those related to the second group; this is why historians have not given importance to the first view, although events show that the majority held these views.

Possibility of War with an Equipped Army

The Prophet (sws) placed both possibilities he had seen in his dream before his people, but he showed by his actions that he was considering only the battle with the Quraysh army. This was also more in line with his status, that he would keep the more difficult situation in mind. Thus, he gave orders for war. At this, the people who wanted to confront the convoy became worried and started to argue with the

Prophet that it was not the right time for a big showdown with the Quraysh. The Quran said about such people:

[It is] just as when your Lord brought you out of your home [for the battle of Badr] in truth, while indeed, a party among the believers was unwilling; arguing with you concerning the truth after it had become clear, as if they were being driven toward death while they were looking on. (8:5-6)

What is being said here is at the time of departure from Madinah. If the Prophet (sws) had wished to attack the convoy, the Muslims would not have opposed this. However, his purpose was very clear to him: that of facing the Quraysh army. Some people left their homes unwillingly. According to some narratives, the Prophet (sws) stopped after leaving Madinah, at a place called the Well of Abi Anba' to inspect his forces. He saw some children who had joined, motivated by the desire to fight the idolaters. He did not allow them to go on but after seeing proof of war skills by some boys, let them travel.

After this inspection, he ordered the army to march towards Badr, because that was the place where the route to Syria and Makkah joined and they could meet one of the two groups of the Quraysh. He traversed this route fast and whoever he found on his way, he would ask about the movements of both the convoy and the army. Since the situation was not clear yet, some Muslims were hoping to meet the convoy and others were expecting to confront the Quraysh army.

Test of the Desire for *Jihad* amongst the People of Faith

The Prophet (sws) sent two companions; Busbus ibn 'Amr Juhni (rta) and 'Adi ibn Abi al-Zaghba (rta) to bring information about the movements of the enemy. When he camped at the valley of Dhafran en route, he received the first information about the Quraysh's movements and it became necessary to take his companions into confidence. He informed his army about the situation and asked for advice. First, Abu Bakr (rta) and 'Umar (rta) spoke and expressed their commitment to fighting the enemy. The Prophet (sws) praised their desire for jihad and expressed his happiness. After this, he again addressed the people and asked for advice. At this, Miqdad ibn al-Aswad said: "O Prophet of Allah! Do what Allah has instructed you to. We are with you in every situation. By Allah! We will not give the answer that was given by the Israelites to Moses (sws); you and your Lord go and fight, we sitting here." The Prophet (sws) praised him also. Then he repeated: "O People! Advise me." At this, Sa'd ibn Mu'adh go up from amongst the Ansars and said: "O Prophet (sws)! Perhaps you are referring to us. We have believed in your prophethood and confirmed everything that you have said. We are witness that the faith you have brought is true. We have promised that we shall obey all that you say. O Prophet! Bring to fruition what your purpose is. We are with you. You take action. We swear by He who has made you His Prophet that if you were to enter the sea with us, we would jump into it and not one amongst us would remain behind. We are people who will remain steadfast in war and strong and true in confrontation. Allah may well show you that which would make you happy. Please accord us the honour of being with you by the grace of God." Hearing this speech, the Prophet (sws) expressed his satisfaction and said: "O People! Hear this interpretation because Allah has promised me to overcome one of the two groups. By Allah! I see the enemy being annihilated." Thus, getting all of his companions focused and fired with the desire for *jihad*, the Prophet (sws) moved on from the valley of Dhafran.

When he reached Badr, two pieces of news came. One was that the trade convoy had gone on towards Makkah, by using the coastal route and the other, that the army of the Quraysh had reached the mountains behind the other side of Badr. This was a God sent situation that three groups, without mutual links or information, had reached places close to the valley of Badr. A decisive situation was reached in which the possibility of confrontation with the trade convoy had ended and that with the army of the Quraysh had become a certainty. The Quran described this as follows:

[Remember] when you were on the near side of the valley, and they were on the farther side, and the caravan was lower [in position] than you. If you had made an appointment [to meet], you would have missed the appointment. But [it was] so that Allah might accomplish a matter already destined - that those who perished [through disbelief] would perish upon evidence and those who lived [in faith] would live upon evidence; and indeed, Allah is Hearing and Knowing. (8:42)

This was the stage when the Quraysh would not have accepted any advice to return without fighting. The aims of the leaders of the Quraysh were obvious: they wanted to wipe out the Muslims. So when Hakim ibn Hizam and some others suggested that they go back and refrain from war, the idea was resisted. For the Muslims too, there was no way other than to fight the Quraysh. If they had followed the trade convoy, they would have been caught between the two groups and it was uncertain whether they would have been able to capture their possessions. If they had shown weakness in front of the Quraysh army, they would have been cut and sliced and the Quraysh would have destroyed Madinah completely. Those among them who had wished to rob the convoy had had their misunderstandings removed by then, and the demand of their faith that they should defend it with their full strength and defeat falsehood was before them. Thus, God made the convoy a means of bringing the Muslims and the Quraysh face each other at the front and when they came, He picked up the convoy so that the two forces could fight each other to defend their respective aims.

(*Translated by Nikhat Sattar*)

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1. Ibn Hisham, Al-Sirah al-nabawiyyah, vol. 1, 607.

CHAPTER 30

The First Battle between Truth and Falsehood

On reaching Badr, the Prophet (sws) sent Sa‘d ibn Abi Waqqas (rta), Zubayr ibn al-‘Awam (rta) and ‘Ali (rta) forward to gather information about the movements of the enemy. They found the water carriers of the Quraysh and brought them back to the Prophet (sws). He asked them about the leaders present among the army and was informed that ‘Utbah, Shaybah, Walid, Abu al-Bukhtari, Abu Jahal, Naḍr ibn Harith, Umayyah ibn Khalaf, Suhayl ibn ‘Amr, ‘Amr ibn ‘Abdud, Zam‘ah ibn Aswad, Hakim ibn Hizam, Nabiyah ibn al-Hajjaj and Mambah ibn al-Hajjaj were present. The Prophet (sws) said to his people: “Makkah has placed its dearest sons in front of you.”

The Prophet (sws) inquired about the location of the Quraysh. The water carriers informed him that they had camped behind the hill on the other side of the valley. When the Prophet (sws) asked about their number, they expressed ignorance. The Prophet (sws) asked about the number of camels being slaughtered every day, to which they replied that these were ten. The Prophet (sws) said that the army must be around 900-1,000 in number.

After collecting this information, he entered the valley and ordered his soldiers to step down at one place. One of the Companions, Hubab ibn al-Mundhir asked if this was on the instruction of God or part of a strategy based on personal opinion, to which the Prophet (sws) replied that it was his strategy. At this, the Companion said that he was familiar with the place and suggested that they proceed ahead, and camp near a well close to where the enemy had settled. Where they were currently, the lack of water could create problems for them. The Prophet (sws) accepted this advice and going forward, settled along the well. They then dug a pit for storage of water which would enable it to be used for ablutions and other needs.

The battle was fought between truth and falsehood. When believers come out on the battlefield, fully prepared to die, Allah, too, shows the power of His help and everything in the earth and under the sky comes forward in support of the believers. This is exactly what happened on the field. There was shortage of water and the Muslims decided to store water in the pit they had dug. The ground was sandy due to which the Muslims found it difficult to keep their feet firm. Allah sent down rain, thus addressing both problems. The pit was filled with water and the sand settled so that it became easier to walk. When night fell, the Companions slept so well that, instead of being worried, they were fully rested. They woke up refreshed and participated in the battle with full concentration. Referring to these signs of God’s help, the Qur’an says:

Remember He covered you with a sort of drowsiness, to give you calm as from Himself, and he caused rain to descend on you from heaven, to clean you therewith, to remove from you the stain of Satan, to strengthen your hearts, and to plant your feet firmly therewith. (8:11)

The Companions built a shelter for the Prophet (sws), who was accompanied by Abu Bakr (rta). Sa'd ibn Mu'adh (rta) stood guard along with some members from the Ansars. The Prophet (sws) spent his night in this shelter, praying to God. He prayed: "O Allah! If you let this small group of Muslims be killed today, there will be no one left to worship you on this earth. O my Lord! Keep the promise You have made to me." The Prophet (sws) continued to pray for so long that the shawl on his shoulders fell down. At this, Abu Bakr (rta) came forward and said: "O Prophet! Let this be sufficient. Allah will certainly keep His promise to you."

God sent a revelation to the Prophet (sws) not to fear the large number of disbelievers. God would send one thousand angels to fight them, in groups, one after the other. So, he was to develop strength and inner peace from this and stand firm against the enemy.

The Beginning of the Battle

At the end of the morning prayer, the Prophet (sws) shed light on the importance of the upcoming battle. He praised God for all His blessings and predicted the high status of the fighters. Then he gave instructions to the Companions for the layout of the army. He paid great attention to proper alignment of his troops, keeping the swordsmen and spear shooters in the middle and the archers to each side and continued to give guidance about the battle. In the meanwhile, the Quraysh sent one of their men, Umayr ibn Wahb to gather information about the Muslim army. He returned, saying that they were around 300, with no reserves and no one behind the lines. All their strength was on the field and there was complete silence among the troops. But their attitudes showed that they were determined to first kill their adversary and then die. If they killed a large number of the enemy, there would be nothing left to live for. Hearing this, Hakim ibn Hizam advised his leader, 'Utbah ibn Rabi'ah, to return together with their troops. 'Utbah, addressing his people, opined that each person fighting would be killing one of his relatives. They should go back and let Muhammad (sws) and the people of Arabia fight amongst themselves. If the latter succeeded, their purpose would be achieved. When Abu Jahal came to know of this, he was angry with 'Utbah and called him a coward. The Prophet (sws), who was observing the actions of 'Utbah, said that if the Quraysh were to take the advice of the owner of the red camel, they would benefit. But Abu Jahal created such barriers that 'Utbah decided to fight.[1]

Umayr ibn Wahb reassured the Quraysh that he had made a thorough inspection and found that the Muslims did not have any weapons or means to save themselves other than their swords or spears. This report gave the Quraysh an impression of meagre resources and perceived lowly status of the Muslims, and, demonstrating their arrogance, they came out to fight. When the Prophet (sws) saw them, he said: "O Allah! These Quraysh have come here, fully equipped with arms and ammunition and charged with adversarial designs against You and Your Prophet. O' Allah! Grant us the help that You have promised. O' Allah! Destroy them." God accepted His Prophet's prayer in such a way that the Muslims saw the number of their enemy as being very small. The feelings of awe on the strength of the Quraysh vanished

and they were ready to fight the enemy with renewed courage. The Quraysh, who looked at the Muslims with great contempt, came on against them. Explaining the feelings running among the two armies, the Qur'an said:

And remember when ye met, He showed them to you as few in your eyes, and He made you appear as contemptible in their eyes: that Allah might accomplish a matter already enacted. For to Allah do all questions go back [for decision]. (8:44)

At the start of the battle, when three of the Quraysh leaders: 'Utbah ibn Rabi'ah, Shaybah ibn Rabi'ah and Walid ibn 'Utbah sought single combat, three young men from the Ansars came forward. The Quraysh challengers did not find them suitable according to their status and demanded men of equivalent status to be sent. At this, the Prophet (sws) ordered three dignitaries of the Banu Hashim: 'Ubaydah ibn al-Harith ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib (rta), Hamzah ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib (rta) and 'Ali ibn Abi Ṭalib, who were his uncle and cousin respectively to go forward. They killed all three Quraysh leaders and caused the first blow to the enemy. 'Ubaydah (rta) was wounded when 'Utbah's sword struck him at his ankle and he lost blood. On the way back after the battle towards Madinah, he died. After this, the formal battle began. The Prophet (sws) kept up the spirits of the Muslims by saying: "By He in whose power is the life of Muhammad, whoever fights the enemy with determination and sincerity today, goes forward and does not turn his back, Allah will give him entry to Paradise." This prediction gave strength to a wagtail to fight against an eagle. When the servants of God commit their lives to fight in His name, he sends His angels to help them. The reinforcement of the angels came at this stage too. They had been ordered by the Almighty to strike at the necks of leaders of the disbelievers one by one and break every bone in their bodies. The angels carried this out through the sleeves of the Mujahidun. The latter, showing total faith and trust in Allah, turned the troops of the Quraysh upside down. Their courage was so intense that 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf (rta) said that when he found himself between two young men from the Ansars, he wished that he had been accompanied by experienced warriors. As the battle continued, the young men asked him if he recognized 'Abu Jahal, to which he replied in the affirmative and was requested to tell them if he spotted him. They wished to kill and send him to Hell. When he saw Abu Jahal after a while, he told the young men and they moved forward and struck him down with their swords. He fell down. Then 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (rta) saw that he still had some life left and killed him with a last swing of his sword. There is some confusion regarding the names of the boys who had killed Abu Jahal. Some say that their names were Mu'adh and Mu'awwadh and some say that they were both called Mu'adh: one was Mu'adh ibn 'Amr and the other Mu'adh ibn 'Afra'. As time passed, the Quraysh became disheartened and the fear of Muslims overwhelmed them.

The fighting was in full swing when the Prophet (sws) picked up a handful of sand and, throwing it towards the enemy, cursed them: "May their faces be destroyed," and then asked his companions to carry out a full assault. The enemy was routed and began running away from the field. The Muslims followed them, killing some and capturing others.

Umayyah bin Khalaf and his sons were running away when they saw 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf (rta) holding some shields which he had removed from those killed among the disbelievers. Umayyah said that he was more precious than the shields. 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf (rta) threw down the shields and

captured the father and son. Bilal (rta) saw them and shouted. ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn ‘Awf (rta) explained that they had been captured. Some Ansars gathered and Bilal (rta) kept on saying that Umayyah was the leader of disbelievers and he should not live. Despite all efforts made by ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn ‘Awf (rta), the Ansars killed both father and son. ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn ‘Awf (rta) used to say that Bilal (rta) had lost him both the shields and his captives. It must be remembered that Bilal (rta) who was kept as a slave by the same Umayyah was severely tortured by him.[2]

According to reputed narratives, 70 Quraysh men were killed and around the same number were taken captive. From among the Muslims, only 14 companions were martyred, including eight Ansars and six Muhajirs. The Prophet (sws), referring to some favours of Abu al-Bukhtari, said that if he were to be found alive, he should not be killed. A companion, Majzar (rta) found him and he let him go, respecting the Prophet’s instructions, but he was with his companion and was killed while trying to save him.

The Qur’an gave the information that whatever events took place during the battle were according to the decision of Allah and their impact, too, was from Allah.

It is not ye who slew them; it was Allah. when thou threwest [a handful of dust], it was not thy act, but Allah’s: in order that He might test the Believers by a gracious trial from Himself: for Allah is He Who heareth and knoweth [all things]. (8:17)

When the battle ended and the Prophet (sws) was given the news of all the front line leaders of the Quraysh having been killed, he prayed two raka‘at for thanksgiving and said: “Thanks be to Allah, who has shown his promise to be true, made his servant victorious and humiliated the enemy forces.” Thus, the fact to which the Qur’an alluded of God demonstrating His special signs by giving the truth the upper hand and overcoming falsehood, thereby making the Battle of Badr a punishment for the Quraysh, was admitted by the Prophet (sws) who did not take any credit for it himself. After this, he had the corpses of the Quraysh buried in a pit in the battleground and addressing them, said:

“O those who inhabit the pit! You proved to be the worst of families for your Prophet. You denied me, whereas others believed in me. You banished me from your city, whereas others gave me refuge. You fought me whereas others helped me. O ‘Utbah, O Shaybah, O Umayyah, O Abu Jahal! Is this not a fact that what your Lord had promised, you found it to be true? What my Lord promised me, I have found it to be true.”[3]

In this address of the Prophet (sws), he highlighted the crime that the Quraysh had committed in denying the message of truth thus making themselves liable to punishment from God. But, because God gives victory to His messenger, he and his companions emerged successful despite the lack of equipment and resources, thus making God’s promise true.

The Battle of Badr was the first organized war fought by the Muslims. They obtained a large amount of booty from it. Because the number of captives was large, many Muslims were busy in making arrangements for them while others kept a watch to protect the Prophet (sws). The rest of the companions gathered the booty. Then differences appeared on who had the right over the booty. The ones who had collected it were of the opinion that they had rights over it, while those who captured the

Quraysh claimed it as their right. Had they not faced the enemy, where would this booty have come from? The protectors of the Prophet (sws) asked for their share. As the debate developed, it became apparent that the piety, mutual trust and submission to the will of God and His Prophet (sws), which were the basic ingredients of true faith had not yet developed within the group. At this stage, the Qur'an gave the concept of war booty being possessed collectively: one-fifth of which would be used by the state for the collective good while the rest would be distributed among the participants of the battle. The Prophet (sws), therefore, ordered for the booty to be collected at one place, separated the share of the state and then distributed the remaining among the Mujahidun. He also gave a share to the eight Companions who had remained behind in Madinah for specifically assigned responsibilities.

In order to train the believers in the light of the weakness shown by some people in the matter of distribution of the war booty, the Qur'an clarified the characteristics of true believers. It said that true believers were those who were conscious of God's greatness and glory which would prevent them from being oblivious of the right path. When they were given an instruction or order according to the shari'ah, they accepted it open heartedly and, this, in turn, caused their faith to be strengthened. They placed trust in their Lord and they believed that whatever had been ordered by their Lord was good for them; whatever circumstances they faced were better for them. True believers remained faithful to their Lord. They sorted out their mutual differences in a conciliatory and peaceful manner and were regular in prayers and giving of alms. They did not show any hesitation in fulfilling these instructions.

Return from Badr

Taking the captives and the booty, the Prophet (sws) proceeded towards Madinah. The captives were held by the Companions who had arrested them and the booty was given in the custody of 'Abdullah bin Ka'b (rta), who belonged to the Banu Najjar. On the way, while they rested in a pass, the Prophet (sws) distributed the booty among those who had participated, keeping the share of those who had remained in Madinah aside. When he reached a place called Al-Rawha', many Muslims and Companions came from Madinah to congratulate him. Salamah ibn Salamah Ansari (rta), addressing the people, said: "What are you congratulating us for? We faced old women who had come out of their homes. They were like camels which we slaughtered." Hearing this, the Prophet (sws) smiled and said: "Nephew, do not say that. After all, they were the leaders of the Quraysh."

When the captives reached Madinah, the Mother of the faithful, Sawdah (rta) saw Suhayl ibn 'Amr, who was sitting in a corner with his hands tied to his neck. She said: "Abu Yazid, why did you not die with dignity?" The Prophet (sws) heard this and said: "O Sawdah! Are you inciting him against Allah and His messenger?" She replied:" O Messenger of Allah! By Him who blessed you with prophet hood with truth, it just came out casually from my mouth when I saw him with his hands tied around his neck."

The Prophet (sws) instructed the Companions who had the captives to treat them well. As a consequence, the families would eat dates and gave bread to their captives. Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr (rta)'s brother 'Abu 'Aziz said that in such a situation, when he tried to return the bread to a member of the house, he would not take it and gave it back to him.

News of the Defeat in Makkah

The first person who arrived in Makkah with the news of defeat was Haythaman ibn ‘Abdullah al-Khuza‘i. He was surrounded by people. When he gave the news of several leaders having been killed, people did not believe him. Ṣafwan ibn Umayyah was sitting inside the hatim of the Ka‘bah. When he heard this, he said: “This person has become deranged. To assess his sanity, ask him about me.” People asked him as to what was Ṣafwan doing at that time. He replied that he was sitting inside the hatim and, swearing by God, he said that he had seen with his own eyes his father and brother being killed.

Abu Lahab was informed that his nephew Mughirah ibn Harith had returned from the front and he asked for him to be brought to him. When he came, other people too gathered around him. Abu Lahab asked: “Nephew, what transpired?” He answered: “In short, we came face to face and we bent our heads. They struck at our necks as they wished and made us their captives as they wished”.[4]

Abu Lahab had sent another man in his place to save himself but he could not keep himself safe from God’s punishment. Just a few days after the battle, he contracted small pox and his entire body became full of pustules. To avoid contagion, none of his relatives would go near him. He died after suffering great pain. His children were afraid to bury his corpse which lay for 2-3 days and started to smell. Some black men pulled the corpse to one side against a wall and struck blows upon the latter so that it fell down upon the corpse. This mound became his grave.

Makkah went into a state of mourning due to the large number of dead. Women pulled at their hair and wailed. Men, in a state of frustration, wounded several animals. The leaders of the Quraysh realized that such behavior would create humiliation for them in the entire country and Muslims would get a chance to ridicule them. Hence they announced that no one should mourn. There were to be no hasty efforts to bring back the captives, otherwise Muhammad (sws) and his companions would demand a high ransom.

The Day of Furqan

The Qur’an has called the Battle of Badr the Day of Furqan: the battle that distinguishes truth from falsehood. This battle determined who was on the side of truth and who on falsehood? Who had God on their side and who did not? Which group was fated for what and why? Additionally, this battle also tested the faith of the believers. There are several reasons as evidence for this battle being the Furqan.

1. It is known that the Muslim army was smaller, weaker and less equipped than the enemy in every way. This is why one of the groups showed their weakness and kept advising that they should fight the trade convoy. But God created such circumstances that each and every Muslim had to fight the enemy with full focus and concentration and Muslims succeeded in this.

2. Very close relatives came face to face in this battle and Muslims proved beyond doubt that the bond of faith was dearer to them than that of blood. Abu Bakr Siddiq’s (rta) son had not yet become a Muslim and came to fight. After he accepted Islam, he told his father that at one stage, he had come within his range but he did not raise his sword because of their relationship. Abu Bakr (rta) replied that if he had come within his range, he would not have let him go. Al-‘As ibn Hisham was ‘Umar (rta)’s maternal uncle

and was killed at his hands. Abu Hudhayfah (rta) was ‘Utbah’s son. When the latter’s corpse was being put into a pit, the Prophet (sws) happened to look at Abu Hudhayfah’s face which was pale and said: “Abu Hudhayfah, are you feeling something for your father?” He replied:” No, indeed, O Prophet of God! By God, my views have not changed because of my father or his death. The fact is that I had always known my father to hold a balanced opinion, and to be patient and gracious. I had expected that these qualities would attract him towards Islam. Now that I have seen his fate and when I remember the state of denial in which he died, this is what makes me sorrowful.” When the Prophet (sws) heard this, he prayed for Abu Hudhayfah (rta). Mus‘ab ibn ‘Umayr (rta) went by an Ansari who was taking his brother prisoner. He said to him: “Bind him tight; his mother is very wealthy; she will pay a high ransom for him.” His brother said: “Brother, you are advising him against me.” Mus‘ab ibn ‘Umayr (rta) said: “You are not my brother: this Ansari is.” Among the captives of this battle were the Prophet (sws)’s uncle ‘Abbas, two cousins, Aqil ibn Abi Ṭalib and Nawfal ibn Harith and one son in law, ‘Abu al-‘As ibn Rabi‘ah, who had to gain freedom after payment of ransom and were not treated differently from other prisoners. The Battle of Badr taught the lesson that the criteria for attachment to the faithful was faith and not blood or nationality.

3. The Quraysh believed themselves to be on the right path in the battle and they thought that the Prophet (sws) had committed a great sin by breaking blood relationships in their tribes. Hence, they entered the battlefield with this prayer: “O God! Kill him who breaks off relationships and brings new ideas within our religion.” In their arrogance of being right, they gave great significance to the result of the battle and announced that whichever group was successful would be on the right path. When this decisive battle ended, the Qur’an demanded that they accept the decision of the battle in the light of their announcement. It said: “(O Unbelievers!) if ye prayed for victory and judgment, now hath the judgment come to you: if ye desist (from wrong), it will be best for you: if ye return (to the attack), so shall We. Not the least good will your forces be to you even if they were multiplied: for verily Allah is with those who believe! (8:19)”

4. The glories of God’s help, as explained above, were observed during every stage of the battle. Believers felt the support of angels and obtained reassurance from this. The idolaters also saw that they were facing some supernatural forces. This is why their nerves were shattered and their illusion of power evaporated. Muslims killed whoever they wanted and took prisoner whoever they wanted. Biographers have written that, of all the leaders who had conspired to kill the Prophet (sws) in Dar al-Nadwah, only three were left alive: all others were killed in the Battle of Badr. These three had the honour to accept Islam in later stages.

5. The Qur’an told the Quraysh that they had demanded God’s punishment from the Prophet (sws) and it was not met. They would pray: “O God! If this is the Truth from you and we are denying it, then send upon us a rain of stones or any other punishment.” But, in answer to this, there were no stones that rained, nor was there any other punishment. The reason for this was that the Prophet (sws) of God and his companions were amongst them at that time. They prayed constantly for forgiveness. God was considerate of their prayers and behests; therefore, the Quraysh, too, remained safe from God’s punishment. Once that barrier was no more why would God keep them safe from punishment, when they prevented people from coming to the Ka’aba and were not worthy of being its custodians? This sin

of theirs was so great that in future, they would only smash their heads against the believers. They would put all their wealth and possessions into this effort but the frustration of the loss would be a thorn in their hearts. Despite this, they could not gain victory. Defeat would be their destiny.

Prisoners of War

Seventy men of the Quraysh were taken prisoner during the Battle of Badr. Obtaining their freedom was a matter of great humiliation for the Quraysh. Relatives of the prisoners came to the Prophet (sws) to request their release. In Surah Muhammad, he had been instructed to take the enemy prisoner in case of a war; then, if he let them go as a favour, or took ransom and then released them, both ways would be acceptable. In the light of this instruction, he took a maximum of 4,000 and a minimum of 1,000 dirhams per person according to his economic status. Those who did not have any wealth were asked to teach Muslim children how to read and write. Some were even released on promise of remaining neutral. The prisoners included the Prophet (sws)'s uncle 'Abbas and son in law Abu al-'As. 'Abbas was a wealthy man. The Prophet (sws) obtained ransom for two of his nephews, 'Aqil ibn Abi Talib and Nawfal ibn Harith as well as an ally 'Utbah ibn 'Amr. As ransom, to have Abu al-'As released, the Prophet (sws)'s daughter, Zaynab (rta) sent her gold necklace, which her mother Khadijah had given to her at her wedding, from Makkah. Seeing this, the Prophet (sws) became tearful. After approval from the Muslims, he returned the necklace and released Abu al-'As on the condition that as soon as he reached Makkah, he would bring Zaynab (rta) to Madinah.

The Quraysh were downhearted because they suffered such a defeat in the very first battle with the Prophet (sws) that would cause them much humiliation in the entire Arab world. They then decided to run yet another propaganda campaign. It seems that Jewish minds must have been behind this plan. They started to say that prophets of God in reality were those who guided people towards the right path, preached truth to them, adopted the way of piety themselves and also called others to the same. They were not attracted to the ways of the world and fighting wars was not a matter that suited their status. Why would they be happy in killing people and taking them prisoner? The prophets of the People of the Book preached piety to people, focused on worship and taught them monastic ways of living. They neither took their enemies captive nor killed them.

This propaganda was so poisonous that it could have influenced the common people negatively, especially in situations where they knew about monasteries of Christians and were familiar with their prayer rituals. The Qur'an, therefore, countered this itself and said:

When they advanced to meet Goliath and his forces, they prayed: "Our Lord! Pour out constancy on us and make our steps firm: Help us against those that reject faith." By Allah's will they routed them; and David slew Goliath; and Allah gave him power and wisdom and taught him whatever [else] He willed. And did not Allah check one set of people by means of another, the earth would indeed be full of mischief: But Allah is full of bounty to all the worlds. (2:250-251)

Referring to Badr in particular, in which 70 kafirs were killed and the same number were taken prisoner, and much war booty was taken, the Qur'an said that messengers tried to prevent situations that could result in war, in which people would be killed and captured. But the responsibility for the war at Badr

could not be put upon the Prophet (sws): the Quraysh themselves were responsible for this. Desire for the world was not the way of prophets: this was the habit of those who consider the world to be all in all. The attitude which they had adopted towards the Prophet (sws) of God demanded that a great punishment descend upon them, but God had decided to give them more time. Then the Qur'an reassured the faithful that taking the war spoils and using them was a legitimate and pure act. They should not be worried about the propaganda of the kafirs and use the war booty legitimately. It said:

It is not fitting for an apostle that he should have prisoners of war until he hath thoroughly subdued the land. Ye look for the temporal goods of this world; but Allah looketh to the Hereafter: And Allah is Exalted in might, Wise. Had it not been for a previous ordainment from Allah, a severe penalty would have reached you for the [ransom] that ye took. But (now) enjoy what ye took in war, lawful and good: but fear Allah. for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. O Messenger. say to those who are captives in your hands: "If Allah findeth any good in your hearts, He will give you something better than what has been taken from you, and He will forgive you: for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful." But if they have treacherous designs against thee, [O Messenger], they have already been in treason against Allah, and so hath He given (thee) power over them. And Allah so He Who hath [full] knowledge and wisdom. (8:67-71)

The prediction in these verses indicated, as mentioned above, that the Quraysh would be allowed more time to reform and correct themselves. But if they failed to refrain from their treachery, they would face humiliation again.

These verses of Surah Anfal indicate that the activity regarding spoils of war was neither against Islamic teaching nor wisdom. It was carried out with God's will and it had expectations associated with it. Therefore, some narratives that consider this activity to be a case of anger against the Prophet (sws) are not authentic. According to these narratives, the decision of the Prophet (sws) about prisoners was wrong and that he had accepted ransom for them in a desire for worldly goods. At this, he was threatened, God forbid, with great punishment. When saying this, people forget that prophets are innocent beings and every action of theirs is performed under God's guidance. If there is any possibility of a wrong act, he is stopped from it. In the Battle of Badr, the handful of dust thrown in the eyes of the enemy was attributed to God Himself, but it is strange that if, as a result of the decision about 70 prisoners, he was threatened with dire consequences, the decision was not overturned. The reality is that instructions had been revealed already in Surah Mohammed (sws) that prisoners of war could be either released after ransom or without, as a mark of favour.

Therefore, when ye meet the Unbelievers [in fight], smite at their necks; At length, when ye have thoroughly subdued them, bind a bond firmly [on them]: thereafter [is the time for] either generosity or ransom: Until the war lays down its burdens. Thus [are ye commanded]): but if it had been Allah's Will, He could certainly have exacted retribution from them [Himself]; but [He lets you fight] in order to test you, some with others. But those who are slain in the Way of Allah,- He will never let their deeds be lost. (47:4)

The words “when ye meet the Unbelievers [in fight]” in these verses are sufficient to prove that these instructions were revealed before the Battle of Badr and they were acted upon exactly in that battle. No other battle had shed as much blood of the enemy as that one. Apart from this, several were taken prisoner and ransomed. Services were taken from those who possessed nothing and then they were released.

The prisoners of war had the opportunity to observe the culture of Madinah, the behaviour of the Muslims, their desire to make sacrifices for Islam and the revolutionary situation created by Islam, and this impressed them considerably. When they were released, they were informed that Muslims had no interest in ransom: the real interest was for them to accept Islam’s guidance. They were being released in the expectation that they would be convinced soon of the truth of Islam and become part of its circle, and would not fight Islam along with the idolators in future. If they did not value their life being given back to them, God would place them again within the control of Muslims.

Strategy for Muslims after the Battle of Badr

The Battle of Badr was a lash of punishment which struck the Quraysh as a result of their denial of the Prophet (sws). It was, however, not of such a nature that all idolaters perished, but it was a way to open their eyes so that those who were more far sighted among them could come to Islam. The Qur’an said:

Say to the Unbelievers, if (now) they desist (from Unbelief), their past would be forgiven them; but if they persist, the punishment of those before them is already (a matter of warning for them). (8:38)

This meant that if the Quraysh did not refrain from their heinous activities, they were to remember that they would face the same Sunnah of God which had been demonstrated in the case of previous nations: ‘Ad, Thamud, Madyan, nation of Lot etc in the form of severe punishment. A prophet is the last measure to bring a wayward nation to conclusion of the arguments which would bring them back to the right path. This is the reason why the nation that denies its prophet is not allowed to exist on the earth.

The plan of action that was given to the Muslims after the Battle of Badr was that they were to continue fighting the Quraysh and their allies until the mischief of stopping Muslims from the religion of truth through force was eliminated and no possibility of oppressing or becoming a barrier towards anyone who accepted Islam remained. The purpose of this effort was that no religion except Islam, which was the religion of Abraham (sws) would remain in the land of the Ka‘bah and those custodians who had destroyed the aims of the Ka‘bah would be ousted from it. The Qur’an said:

And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in Allah altogether and everywhere; but if they cease, verily Allah doth see all that they do. (8:39)

This verse shows very clearly that if the idolaters corrected their attitude, God would not consider the mistakes of their past but the actions of their future. But, if they remained fixated upon their obduracy and stubbornness, their large numbers and excess wealth would not be of any benefit to them. God would show His power in subsequent wars, just as He had done in that battle.

To implement this plan of action it became necessary to give specific guidance to the Muslims. Thus, the following instructions were revealed after the Battle of Badr.

1. Muslims fit for fighting were to be organized and horses trained so that effective battles could be fought. The military strength of the Muslims was to be such that the enemy could not consider them easy prey.

2. Muslims were not to worry about their small numbers. If they developed the qualities of perseverance and patience, they would be victorious if they faced armies ten times larger than theirs.

3. If facing the enemy involved organized fighting, deserting the battle field was considered as serious a crime as denial or apostasy. Those who backed out from the battle were worthy of God's anger and their place was in Hell.

4. Muslims had stood up to establish submission and obedience to God. Hence, submission and service to God was to remain predominant in their actions. Even when coming out for a battle, they were not to be arrogant and pompous and show off their strength. They were never to be proud of their numbers and resources. Real strength was not in equipment and numbers, but in the support and closeness of God.

5. Steadfastness was a necessary condition to gain God's support while facing the enemy on the battle field. It is only when His servants put all their skills into the war that God provides His help. If they do not fulfill their obligations, they are deprived of God's support.

6. It is essential to remember God during battle. This is an effective way to achieve steadfastness. The source of all courage and determination within a believer's heart is the remembrance of God. It creates faith which strengthens the heart.

7. Difference of opinion while implementing orders is extremely dangerous. It causes anarchy within the group, causing lowering of morale amongst troops and their defeat.

8. The believer relies on God, not upon his own strength. God's power is indefatigable. No one's strategy can work against God's strategy. Believers keep their faith in God and He becomes a friend to those who trust in Him.

9. At any stage, if the Quraysh desired truce, their request was not to be rejected. If they tried to do this through deception or mischievousness, Muslims were to remember that God was with them and He was sufficient to counter their mischief.

All of these instructions were given in Surah Anfal. They include all necessary clauses for Islamic rules for wars. If anything remained, it was covered by commenting upon the performance of Muslims in later wars.

(*Translated by Nikhat Sattar*)

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1. Ibn Kathir, Al-Sirah al-nabawiyyah, vol. 1, 556.

2. Al-Bukhari, Al-Jam‘ al-sahih, vol. 3, 129.

3. Ibn Kathir, Al-Sirah al-nabawiyyah, vol. 1, 584.

4. Ibn Kathir, Al-Sirah al-nabawiyyah, vol. 1, 602-603.

CHAPTER 31

Onslaughts by the Enemies of Islam

In consideration of the increasing strength of Muslims, people living in and around Madinah thought it expedient to accept Islam so that when the former gained power in the country, they would not be deprived of the benefits. This is the reason why, although there was only a year's difference between the battles of Badr and Uhud, the number of Muslims going to war in Uhud was thrice as large as those going to Badr. Some people among the Jews adopted a policy of conciliation towards the Muslims: even though they might have harboured hostility within their hearts, but they did not dare break their covenants with the Muslims. Many of them even accepted Islam. Expediencies were considered when Islam was accepted due to perceptions of its power. Thus, there was a majority of Muslims who were not sincere to Islam in that period. They were called hypocrites and they attempted to hurt the Muslims at every stage later on.

The results of Badr created worries among the Quraysh and other enemies of Muslims, such as the Jews. They did not see humiliation only in their defeat but considered Islam as a serious threat. When the Muslims migrated, the Quraysh had heaved a sigh of relief. They had thought that Muslims would lose their sense of collectivity once they were cut off from their centre and a strange environment would not be conducive to them. However, the results of Badr showed that this opinion was far from reality and that Islam needed more power and force than before to be uprooted. In view of these concerns, they tried to take their fight to several fronts.

Plot to kill the Prophet (sws)

The young men of the Quraysh were extremely frustrated by the large number of their leaders being killed in the Battle of Badr and they tried various ways and means to harm the Muslims. Umayyah ibn Khalaf's son Safwan convinced 'Umayr ibn Wahb to go to Madinah and kill the Prophet (sws). In lieu of this, he would pay all his debts and take care of his children in the same manner as he would of his own children. 'Umayr accepted this condition, dipped his sword in poison and proceeded towards Madinah. When he reached the door of the Mosque of the Prophet, 'Umar (rta) stopped him. When the Prophet (sws) saw him, he welcomed him and asked him why he had come. He said that he had come to pay ransom for one of the prisoners. The Prophet (sws) asked why the sword was necessary for this task. He answered: "Curse be upon these swords! They have hardly been of any benefit to us before." The Prophet (sws) asked what the value of the promises made between him and Safwan ibn Umayyah was. 'Umayr said that the matter was not known to a third person besides Safwan and himself. If the Prophet

(sws) was referring to this, he had to be the prophet of God and he would accept Islam. Safwan waited for the big news in Makkah and the Prophet (sws) won 'Umayr's loyalty.

Battle of Sawiq

When the leadership of the Quraysh came to Abu Sufyan after all the main leaders had been killed in Badr, he vowed that he would not bathe until he had taken revenge. Two months after the Battle of Badr, he gathered 200 men and left, taking up post a few miles from Madinah. In the darkness of night he went to the suburbs of Madinah where mostly Jews lived. He knocked upon the door of his Jewish friend, Huyy ibn Akhtab who was the leader of Banu Nadir. The latter did not open his door for fear of going back on his promise to the Muslims. Disappointed, Abu Sufyan then went to another leader, Salam bin Mushkam. He welcomed Abu Sufyan and was hospitable towards him but refrained from making any open promises of help. When Abu Sufyan did not get cooperation from the Jews, he did not find the courage to undertake any big operation. He found a couple of Muslim farmers working in their fields outside of Madinah. He destroyed the farms, torched the houses and killed the farmers. Thus he completed his oath and returned to Makkah. When the Prophet (sws) found out, he followed him. Fearing his capture, Abu Sufyan lightened the burden on his camels by dropping the wheat flour which he had brought for use during the travels, and ran to Makkah. This mission of the Prophet (sws) is known as the Battle of Sawiq.

Treachery of Banu Qaynuqa'

The Prophet (sws) had signed agreements with the Jews to ensure their neutrality but since they had previous relations with the Quraysh and were also sympathetic towards them, they would advise them secretly not to let Muslims obtain a firm foothold. They also had a hand in inciting the Quraysh in the Battle of Badr. Their efforts were focused on causing harm to the Muslims and at the same time, remaining free from any blame. This is why they did not make themselves obvious during the Battle of Badr. The Qur'an gave news of this satanic role of theirs and gave instructions to cancel the agreements if they were unwilling to stand by their promises.

They are those with whom thou didst make a covenant, but they break their covenant every time, and they have not the fear [of Allah]. If ye gain the mastery over them in war, disperse with them, those who follow them, that they may remember. If thou fearest treachery from any group, throw back [their covenant] to them, [so as to be] on equal terms: for Allah loveth not the treacherous. (8:56-58)

It seems that the Prophet (sws) suspected the Banu Qaynuqa' of being involved in the matter of the Battle of Badr. Ibn Ishaq narrates that the Banu Qaynuqa' were the first Jews who broke the covenant between them and the Prophet (sws). The Prophet (sws) went to their settlement to remind them of their promise and warned them to protect themselves from the fate of the Quraysh. He explained that the prophet who was referred to in their holy texts was himself. It was their agreement with God that

they would support and accept him. Obviously it was reasonable to warn the Jews regarding the fate of the Quraysh if they (the jews) were found to commit an act that was contrary to the agreement made with the Prophet (sws) and had broken their covenant with him. However, in answer to the Prophet (sws)'s speech, the Jews showed arrogance towards him and said: "O Muhammad! You consider us your subordinates. Do not remain in any doubt. You were fighting a nation that did not know how to wage a war. You caused harm to them, but if we ever fight you, you will find out what real fighters are like." Their reference to the Battle of Badr indicated that they had some expectations from the Quraysh which had not been met and they saw their own humiliation in the defeat of the Quraysh. The Prophet (sws) noted their changed stance but ignored it. Despite this, their hostile attitude did not change. In fact, when a Muslim woman went to one of the Jewish goldsmiths, the Jews present there tried to lift her veil. When they were unsuccessful, they tied one corner of her shawl behind her. As she tried to get up, her shawl opened. The Jews started to make fun of her. At this she screamed. A Muslim man, hearing her, attacked the goldsmith and killed him. The other Jews went haywire and killed the Muslim. His tribe called other Muslims. As the Banu Qaynuqa' had already committed acts of treachery against the Muslims, this became an opportunity for Muslims to act against them. The Prophet (sws) laid siege to their settlements. After 15 days, they admitted defeat. 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy, the head of the hypocrites, was eager to save them. He said: "These are 700 brave men who have kept me safe from the enmity of every white or black man. I am concerned about the dangers I face in these times. How can you have them killed?" At his insistence, the Prophet (sws) spared their lives but ordered them to leave Madinah. They went to Syria. After their departure, the Prophet (sws) had the covenant of neutrality renewed by the remaining two tribes.

Treachery of Ka'b ibn Ashraf

Ka'b ibn Ashraf's father was from the Banu Tay but his mother was from the Banu Nadir. Jewish lineage is linked to the mother, so he was a native Jew and included among the influential people of the Banu Nadir. When Muslims returned to Madinah after the end of Badr and he heard that most of the leaders of the Quraysh had been killed, he could not believe it. He commented that if indeed, Muhammad (sws) had killed all those people whose names were constantly mentioned by 'Abdullah ibn Rawahah and Zayd ibn Harithah, then it would be better to go underneath the ground than remain upon it, because these people were the kings of commoners and the elite of the country. When he found that the news was true, he went to Makkah, tried to pep up the Quraysh and kept inciting them to take revenge. He read poems in memory of those killed and assured their families of his support. Upon his return from Makkah, he declared enmity to the Prophet (sws) openly. He recited poetry to ridicule the Prophet (sws) and incited people against him. According to the history of Ya'qubi, he also conspired to kill the Prophet (sws) but his scheme failed.[1] He began to recite sordid verses with names of Muslim women. When sufficient proof had been found of him being an enemy of Islam, the Prophet (sws) asked his Companions about who could get rid of the pest. A few persons of the Banu 'Abd al-Shahal offered their services. They went to him and brought him out of his home on some excuse and attacked him thereby killing him. This took place during the night. When the Jews found out about this, they were afraid.

When the Banu Nadir came to complain, the Prophet (sws) related to them all his wrongdoings which they had been unable to deter him from.

Obviously Ka'b was not under the Prophet's jurisdiction that he could have punished him himself. He was a member of a tribe that had taken an oath of non-alliance. Practically, Ka'b had broken this oath in his personal capacity, opposed the Muslims openly and created difficulties for them. His attitude was known to everyone and the leaders of the Banu Nadir were also aware of this, but it seems that they had ignored it. Thus, the Prophet (sws) had this enemy of Islam removed.

Role of the Hypocrites

Just as the idolaters and Jews are obvious as a group in the life of the Prophet (sws), the involvement of the hypocrites is also so entangled with the incidents in his life that no biography is complete without mentioning their destructive activities. These hypocrites were apparently supporters of the truth brought by the Prophet (sws) but practically they disregarded it, kept themselves away from its requirements and created problems for the Prophet (sws). They would be counted amongst the Muslims but they could not be depended upon for support or companionship due to their specific character.

The seed of discord had been sown as soon as the Prophet (sws) reached Madinah. After a long period of bloodletting between the tribes of Aws and Khazraj, they realized that both were suffering losses due to their inter-fighting, so it would be in their interest to create an environment of peace and harmony. This necessitated that both tribes select a person as their leader and then lead their lives in unity under his guidance. The person both tribes agreed upon was 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy al-Salul who belonged to Banu al-Habla. As preparations were underway to make him the leader, the two tribes invited the Prophet (sws) to Madinah as their leader. As a result of the efforts of Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr, several families accepted Islam and this change happened so quickly that the matter of the leadership of 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy was forgotten. 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy was deeply aggrieved by this. He continued to observe the situation in Madinah closely and when he saw that there were no chances for him, he converted to Islam reluctantly. The regret in his heart caused him to nurse a grudge against the Prophet (sws) and he continued to try to harm him whenever he could. Due to his influential personality, a large number of people believed in his opinions and he kept creating discord within them.

'Abdullah ibn Ubayy and his companions considered their own interests in every matter. They never gave any importance to the collective interests of Muslims. For them, personal prudence was an outcome of their own efforts and strategies. They considered belief in God's promises and spending their lives with support from these to be highly dangerous. Thus, they took interest in the collective matters of Muslims only up to the extent that it was necessary to keep up appearances for their legitimacy. It was part of their nature to avoid collective responsibilities.

Just as a personal grudge of 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy had become a cause for developing a group of hypocrites, similarly, the Jews of Madinah had vowed to remove Islam from its roots and seeds. To achieve this, while they carried out other conspiratorial actions, they infiltrated Muslims through some

of their own people who had apparently converted to Islam. They were helped in this by the presence of some individuals within the Aws and Khazraj who had accepted Judaism. These people had no difficulty in gaining access to the Prophet (sws) and other Muslims because, according to the Covenant of Madinah, they had the same rights as the Muslims. When some of them donned the cloak of Islam, they could be accepted within the special meetings of the Prophet (sws). They found the opportunity to demonstrate their evil nature in such a situation. They acted upon the guidelines they obtained from Jewish scholars and leaders and not only created doubts about the future of Islam among people, but also raised objections about the Qur'an and the prophet hood of the Prophet (sws). This was, in reality, the enemy group of Muslims which had hidden itself under the guise of Islam.

These hypocrites came from within the Jews and even after converting to Islam, remained loyal to them and acted as their agents. They fulfilled their wishes and followed their guidance. However, as Muslims, they had to agree with the latter and participate in their worship. They attended prayers per force, more for the sake of showing off than really remembering God. When, in some collective matters, they supported Muslims they then ran to their masters and offered excuses and gave reassurances of their loyalty. They could not imagine cutting off their friendship with enemies of Islam for the sake of Islam. They would constantly assure them that they had not forsaken them and would soon return to them when the situation was more conducive. When Muslims questioned them about some issue, they would say that they wanted peace and harmony among various groups and wished to bridge the divide between the two parties. The Qur'an clarified that this was an effort to retain the ancient customs of the *jahiliyyah* period which their society had been involved in. Islam wanted to end the scourges of anarchy on earth, breaking of blood relationships and killing of brothers, but these people wanted to hold on to them.

When a problem occurred among these people, they would not approach the Prophet (sws) as other Muslims did so that he could resolve the issue justly, but would go to the Jewish scholars and jurists. They were convinced in their hearts that the Prophet (sws) would be unfair to them while the Jews would be just. This was despite the fact that Islam had declared denial of Satan as second only to faith.

Some people, upon instruction from Jewish leaders, began to play the game of changing religions. They would first convert to Islam for a few days and then change back to Judaism, saying that they had not found in it the truth which other prophets had brought. By doing so, they wanted to create uncertainty among weaker Muslims and turn away the Jews who were inclined towards Islam. The Qur'an warned hypocrites having this approach that this was akin to apostasy. If all the hypocrites turned away from Islam in this manner, it would be of no concern to God. He would select the people who loved Him and this love would not be based on any expedience. They would not be like the hypocrites who were very clever in deceiving Muslims but were acting as puppets in the hands of the idolaters.

The idolaters would gain satisfaction by adopting the ways in which the Jews attacked Muslims. For this, they would meet surreptitiously, weave conspiracies and decide on strategies to implement them. The Qur'an said about these meetings that they were held to oppress, rebel and disobey God and His Messenger. These people could hide from human beings but God could see all deeds of the traitors and

disloyal people. Today, some people spoke in their defence but tomorrow who would advocate for them in the court of the all Knowing God?

Instructions to handle the Hypocrites

The psychological or social problems of all those who demonstrated weakness in their faith were different. It was essential to protect the larger community of Muslims from these. Therefore, instructions were given in the Qur'an accordingly and this continued until the end of the Madinan phase of the Prophet (sws).

Long sections were revealed in the Qur'an for the purpose of training the people whose weak faith became evident in various ways. Each and every misunderstanding of theirs was removed through these revelations. They were informed that they had not lost anything by accepting Islam: rather, they had made themselves worthy of the everlasting blessings of God. Whatever sacrifices they would make would raise their status. As far as trials were concerned, every Muslim must undergo these. It was against the wisdom of God that the group which was meant to guide the world towards truth and redemption should remain a mixture of good and evil forces. It had to differentiate between its faithful and false individuals so that those who were loyal became visible and also those who were not worthy of trust became prominent. The weak Muslims were advised that they were to stay steadfast on the path shown by God and His Messenger. They were to hold dear the verses of God and be wary of those who made every effort to harm them through their propaganda and conspiracies.

The hypocrites who were dissatisfied about the future of Islam and wished to keep intact their relations with the Jews were informed that it was the policy of God that He gave power to His prophets ultimately. Defeating the prophets was impossible. Therefore, befriending the enemies of the Messenger of God was like guarding a ravaged house. If they became tools in their hands, they were to remember that it was a sign that Satan had overpowered them and that they had joined his party, having forgotten their God. Humiliation would be their destiny. True faith belonged to those who did not make people who fight God and His Messenger their confidantes and friends. Even if fathers, sons, brothers and relatives fought faith, they were not to give them a place in their hearts. It was only in this manner that they could claim to be a part of God's party.

The hypocrites were informed that their current attitude was exactly according to polytheism. A polytheist was never loyal to One God. He was unfaithful to Him and included others in the rights that belong to Him only. The hypocrites verbally claimed faith in God and His Messenger, but their vested interests came into play when they did not meet the demands of faith and were loyal to others. This is why their fate in the Hereafter would be the same as that of the idolaters and they would be thrown into the lower levels of Hell. It was also clarified to them that they would try to walk side by side with the Faithful because of their false faith, but the Faithful would possess the Light because of which they would proceed towards their grand destination. The hypocrites, on the other hand, would be deprived of Light and a wall would be created between them and the loyal Muslims. They would cry out for light and would be told that their hearts were not with the Muslims; they had remained mired in the same

evils from which God had tried to pull them out. They had not sided with the Truth but instead, gave precedence to their vested interests; they longed for harm and troubles for the faithful. They retained their relations with both Islam and its enemies but when they were given some rope, they became active for falsehood. They assumed that their two faced policy was successful. Satan kept deluding them that they would be able to protect their interests through this policy. The result was that the same hardness which had lain upon the hearts of the Jews also covered their hearts.

The hypocrites were told that if they desired to correct themselves, they were to refrain from opposing God and His Messenger. They were to avoid gatherings where God and His Messenger were insulted and the tenets of Islam were ridiculed. They were to adopt the ways of the Companions and move away from conspiring to create chaos and anarchy. In gatherings, instead of sin, oppression and harming other's rights, they were to focus on positive works to do good, give in charity and reform the society. Instead of being puppets in the hands of Jews and idolaters, they were to fight in the way of God; take part in activities related to raising the word of God and make the people who were trying to give wrong advice and were raising objections unsuccessful. Their current role was absolutely Satanic.

Two opinions about the hypocrites were found within the Muslims. Some thought that relations should be maintained with them. They would slowly become better integrated. Others hated them because of their actions and believed that if a hard attitude was adopted towards them they would come to their senses. In the beginning, the Qur'an advised that too much harshness was not the solution. It would be better to adopt a moderate and soft approach. However, those who believed that maintaining relations with them would help to bring them to the right path were also not correct. If they remained connected with them, they were so manipulative that they would convert the innocent Muslims to their way of thinking. The Qur'an also did not give permission for much debate about the hypocrites. It asked that if God disliked their character, why was a group within the Faithful so eager to give them importance and develop relations with them? The Qur'an further clarified that no Muslim should remain under the misconception that the doubtful faith of the hypocrites was in some measure better than the complete denial of the idolaters. It said that this was not so at all. Their character was more harmful for Islam as compared with clear denial by the idolaters and this is why God had decided on their destination to be the lower levels of Hell.

The Prophet (sws) was an extremely kind hearted man who forgave easily. In the matter of the hypocrites, despite their weaknesses and tricks having come to light, he did not change his noble attitude towards them. The Qur'an praised this attitude and said that it was God's favour upon the people that such a kind and sympathetic prophet had been sent towards them. If his attitude had been hard and rigid, people would have been afraid of approaching him. The policy of forgiveness for the hypocrites was also good. He was told to take them into confidence and ask for their advice so that they would recognize their importance. In the light of these instructions and due to the demands of his nature, the Prophet (sws) would behave with these hypocrites very kindly. Even if he wanted to highlight a mistake anyone of them had made, he did it very gently so that the person would not feel humiliated. If he wanted to identify a mistake, he would not name anyone but would talk in general about people doing some wrong. Due to this softness, the hypocrites became more and more impertinent, thinking that their deceit was bearing fruit. Therefore, in later stages, instructions were given to change the

policy. The Prophet (sws) was asked to ignore the activities of the hypocrites but continue to explain the difference been good and evil and give them guidance so that they might adopt the approach that would be truly beneficial to them. If they did not correct themselves, then they would be punished as they would not have any excuse to save themselves.

Demand to Muslims living outside Madinah to Migrate

The message of Islam had reached several tribes living far from Madinah and people had accepted Islam in large numbers. The number of Muslims within Madinah was small, and danger for them was increasing. The Qur'an was giving clear instructions to Muslims to enhance their strength. The Prophet (sws) sent messages to the tribes inviting the faithful to migrate to Madinah and become a cause for this strength. The great sacrifice made thus would benefit them, both in the beginning and at the end.

Most people obeyed the Prophet (sws) and the Faithful began to migrate, leaving behind their families, relatives and property. But the same order became the cause of much worry for some people. The love of family, relations or property did not allow them to migrate without a reasonable excuse. They were not concerned with the dangers that Islam was facing. They wanted to remain outside of the collective problems of their religion and thus remain protected from trials. The Qur'an counted such people among the hypocrites and advised the really faithful to consider them to be friends of their enemies until they had migrated and joined them. If they came to Madinah, this would be proof of their loyalty and the differentiating tool between who was true and who was not.

There were some Muslims who were caught in their own tribes. They wished to migrate but their tribes prevented them from doing so. Those Muslims were warned that if they died in that state, the excuse that they had been prevented from migrating would not be enough for them. The Qur'an said that if those people asked for some assistance, it was to be provided. However, if such people were present within the tribes with whom covenants had been signed, they were not worthy of such help. Matters could be sorted out only within the confines of the treaties with them.

(*Translated by Nikhat Sattar*)

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1. Ya'qubi, Tarikh, 49. Details of killing of men of Banu Qaynuqa' and the killing of Ka'b ibn Ashraf are not found within the books of biographers. This affords an opportunity to people to criticize the Prophet (sws). It is necessary to understand both these incidents in the light of verses 56-58 of Surah al-Anfal. These verses give instructions to kill people who were inciting the Quraysh and providing them with all kinds of support from their hide-outs. If the Qur'an ordered Muslims to handle the hidden enemies while discussing the Battle of Badr, it was not without reason and if the Prophet (sws) carried out these

two activities immediately after the battle, he must have seen the hand of those people behind the attack of the Quraysh.

CHAPTER 32

The Battle of Uhud: A New Adventure of the Quraysh

Biography
Khalid Masud
(Tr. by:Nikhat Sattar)

Guarding the Highways of Najd

After the Battle of Badr, the movements of the Quraysh around Madinah decreased and they found an alternate route for trade which reached Syria through Najd. It became necessary for Muslims to keep an eye on these regions as well.

In the month of Rabi al-Awwal, 3rd Hijri, information that the Banu Tha'labah and the Banu Muharib intended to carry out an attack was received. The Prophet (sws) went to the area with a few hundred men. When they heard that the Muslims had arrived, the tribes went up to the hills and did not fight. It was at this time that an interesting incident occurred. It had started to rain and the Mujahidin's clothes, including those of the Prophet (sws) became wet. The Prophet (sws) hung his clothes on a tree and lay down to take rest. In the meanwhile, a disbeliever, Da'thawr came upon him and, drawing out his sword, asked: "Who would save you from me today?" The Prophet (sws) answered: "Allah!" The attacker froze in such terror that his sword fell from his hands. The Prophet (sws) picked up the sword and asked Da'thawr who would save him now from him? He answered that none could save him and apologized. After that, he recited the words of shahadah and became a Muslim. The greatness of the Prophet (sws)'s bravery, his confidence in God and his belief is demonstrated very clearly through this incident.

In the month of Jumadi al-Thani, a contingent of 100 soldiers under the leadership of Zayd ibn Harithah (rt), at al-Qirdah in the same region came across a convoy of the Quraysh, carrying gold and silver. Frightened by the Muslims, the latter left this wealth and ran away. The Muslims seized it and took it with them to Madinah.

A New Plan of the Quraysh

After their defeat in the Battle of Badr, the Quraysh decided that the profit earned by the returning trade convoy from Syria would not be divided among people but, instead be used for preparations for the next war.

Abu Sufyan attempted to politically convince both tribes of the Ansars of Madinah, the Aws and the Khazrj, to remain neutral and let the Quraysh deal with those of their relatives who had migrated from Makkah to Madinah. A large number of

members of these tribes had accepted Islam and promised to remain loyal to the Prophet (sws), so their non-Muslim members were not so influential that they could convince the others to forego their support to the Prophet (sws). Hence, Abu Sufyan's efforts remained unsuccessful.

Preparations to attack Madinah

The leadership of the Quraysh realized that their strength would be insufficient to defeat the Muslims and therefore they obtained services of some influential people. In the Battle of Badr, the Prophet (sws) had taken pity on a man called Abu 'Uzzah and released him on the condition that he would not take part in any more wars. He was a poet. Ṣafwan ibn Umayyah convinced him to go to the tribes settled in Tihamah and incite them so that they would be ready to cooperate with the Quraysh. In return for this, Ṣafwan would take all of his responsibilities upon his shoulders. Similarly, a man called Musafi' ibn 'Abd Munaf was sent to gain cooperation from the Banu Kananah. These people were successful in enlisting the support of the Banu Kananah, the Banu Malik, the people of Tihamah and Ahabish. Abu Sufyan obtained support from Abu 'Amir, the leader of Aws, who was living in Makkah and decided to use his influence in the next war.

Equipped fully, the army of the Quraysh and their allies numbered 3,000 individuals, including 700 armoured soldiers and 200 on horseback. Accompanying them were the daughters and other women of the Quraysh leaders killed during Badr, so that they could urge their men to bravery. Three Companions who were guarding the road to Makkah gave the information of the arrangements and arrival of the Quraysh to the Prophet (sws). As the Quraysh army descended upon Dhu al-Halifah, the Muslims stood guard in the city and three honourable Ansars stood at the doors of Masjid e Nabawi.

The Dream of the Prophet (sws) and Consultations with the Companions

Just as the Prophet (sws) had been shown the incidents of the Battle of Badr prior to their taking place in his dreams, given the glad tidings of one group overcoming the other and the numbers of the Quraysh being lesser, similarly he saw a dream related to the Battle of Uhud. Dreams require interpretation. In the Battle of Badr, the numbers of the Quraysh were thrice as many, but in reality, their strength was far less and Muslims had cut them like vegetables: this was the reality which the Prophet (sws) had seen in his dream.

Different narrations of the dream exist. According to Ibn Hisham, the Prophet (sws) spoke about having a good dream. He had seen that a cow was being slaughtered, a jag had occurred in his sword and he had pushed his arm inside an armour. According to Ibn Sa'd, he saw that he was wearing a strong armour, the edge of the sword had a jag and a cow was being slaughtered behind which was a sheep. He interpreted the armour to be Madinah and the sheep to be the army of the Quraysh. The cow was the army of the Muslims and the jag in the sword meant harm to the person of the Prophet (sws). In our opinion, the coming events were reflected in this dream. The Prophet (sws) was given signs that this time the fight would be tough, hence it was not to be taken lightly. The believers would be martyred in large numbers and much blood would flow. The defense of the Prophet (sws) would be inadequate and the enemy would be successful in damaging his person. The enemy would be saved from any great loss but would not be able to enter Madinah. The Prophet (sws) would himself enter Madinah with his Companions.

In the light of these indications from his dream, the Prophet (sws) consulted his Companions to develop a strategy to counter the enemy attack. This process had the benefit that the collective views of the army would be forthcoming; useful advice would be given which could be used to prepare a strategy. Additionally, the strength of people who were in a minority and expressed views different from others would also be known. At such occasions, the Prophet (sws) used to put the issue in front of the Companions but would not express his own opinion. When he put the matter in front of his Companions and sought their advice before the Battle of Badr, the people who did not want to face the Quraysh became obvious. But after listening to all arguments, he gave the order to march to Badr and made preparations accordingly.

Using the same approach, the Prophet (sws) informed the Companions of the arrival of the Quraysh and gave an opportunity to them to discuss the war strategy, but did not give his own opinion. If he had done so, which Muslim would have dared to present a different view and thus endanger his faith? In our view, the narratives that state that the Prophet (sws) wished to fight while remaining within Madinah but was forced by some Companions who suggested that they face the enemy out of the city are based on misunderstandings.

When the Prophet (sws) placed the matter before his Companions, ‘Abdullah ibn Ubayy, the leader of the hypocrites advised on fighting while remaining within Madinah. He said: “Do not venture out of the city. Whenever we have done so, we have faced losses, but when the enemy has tried to enter the city, it has faced loss because the men have fought from the front and women and children can pelt stones from the rooftops.” The opinion of the sincere Companions was different. Some Companions whose desire for martyrdom had not been fulfilled in the Battle of Badr said: “O Prophet of Allah! Take us toward the enemy. If we remain in the city, they will gain courage and believe that we are weak and demonstrating cowardice. We have been looking forward to this day and now Allah has brought them close to us and reduced our travel distance.” One Companion said: “No one dared to enter our city during the times of jahiliyyah: who would dare to do so in the times of Islam?” One Ansar said: “O Prophet (sws)! If we do not fight our enemy in the valleys of our city, where would we fight him?” Nu‘aym ibn Malik (rta) of Bani Salim said: “O Prophet of Allah! Do not deprive us of Paradise. By the Being who holds my soul in His captivity, I shall surely go to Paradise.” Someone asked: “How?” He answered: “Because I hold Allah and His Prophet dear to me and it is not my way to run away from the battlefield.” Hamzah (rta) said: “By the Being who revealed His Book upon you, we will fight with the enemy on the field.” Muslims talked about their desire for martyrdom in their speeches and declared that remaining in siege within the city and fighting from this situation would be a barrier to the fulfillment of this desire. By assessing the numbers of hypocrites and those sincere to their faith, the Prophet (sws) decided to confront the enemy outside the city.

Departure towards Uhud

It was Friday. During the sermon, the Prophet (sws) asked the people to make piety and fear of God their way of life; be patient and persevere during the war and obey orders. He asked them to be ready to march towards Uhud, where the enemy had already taken positions, after the prayer of Asr. He went inside his house, wore two armours according to the indications in his dream and took up his weapons. When he came out, some people, thinking that perhaps they had insisted too much and forced him to face the enemy outside the city, said that if he himself wished to confront the enemy from within the city, he should do so. The Prophet (sws) replied that when a messenger donned an armour, he did not take it off. It was not appropriate to his status.

The Prophet (sws) used a less well known path to Uhud with his 1,000 strong army of soldiers as they started after ‘Asr. They saw a group of men on their way and upon inquiry, the Prophet (sws) was informed that they were the Jewish allies of ‘Abdullah ibn Ubayy. The Prophet (sws) did not allow them to join the army. It must be remembered that the Covenant of Madinah included the clause that religious wars would be fought on the basis of the force of the signatories and that Jews would not be included without permission from the Prophet (sws). At night, the Prophet (sws) rested in a place called Al-Shawt and Muhammad ibn Maslamah (rta) and his party kept guard.

The next morning, when the Prophet (sws) gave marching orders, ‘Abdullah ibn Ubayy separated himself along with 300 soldiers and refused to join the Muslims. The influential people among the Muslims tried their best to retain him but he refused to change his decision. It was also suggested to him that if he did not wish to take part in the fight, he could just occupy the defense check post, but he refused, saying that when his opinion was not considered when developing the war strategy, why should he be part of implementing a wrong decision? ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr ibn Haram (rta) of the Banu Salamah advised these people not to leave their Prophet (sws) and their nation in the difficult times when they needed help and assistance, but they would not pay heed. At this, ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr (rta) said: “Enemies of Allah! May Allah destroy you! The Prophet does not need people like you.” According to some narratives, the Ansars asked for permission to convince the allied Jews but the Prophet (sws) refused.

This act of ‘Abdullah ibn Ubayy created a lowering of morale in the army and the Banu Harithah of the tribe Aws and the Banu Salamah of the tribe Khazraj were encouraged to avoid the war but they saw reason after receiving advice from others. At this stage, the Prophet (sws) gave a speech and explained to people that the faithful did not rely upon their numbers and resources but upon help and support from God. It was quite possible that Allah replace the 300 men who had left with a reinforcement of 3,000 angels. In fact, if they showed steadfastness and if required by a sudden attack from the enemy, God may even send 5,000 instead of 3,000 angels. The Prophet (sws) inspected the army and sent young men who were below the age of 15 and who had joined in their passion for martyrdom, back home. Seven hundred Muslims proceeded, armed with their belief on help from God. The Prophet (sws) kept the Mount of Uhud to the rear right and organized his army lines in a semi circle. There was a hill to the left at some distance where he installed 50 archers and instructed their leader, ‘Abdullah ibn Jubayr (rta) to defend the army against attacks from the left and the back and that, whatever situation arose, he was to fulfill his appointed duty and not leave the position until the war ended. He gave commandership of the cavalry to Zubayr ibn al-‘Awwam (rta) and that of the un-armoured soldiers to Hamzah ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib (rta). The flag of the tribe Aws was given to Usayd ibn Hudayr (rta) and that of Khazraj to Hubab ibn Mundhir (rta). The Quraysh lined up their forces on the open field keeping the Mount Uhud to their left. Their foot soldiers were in the centre and soldiers on horseback were to the right and left of the army, with Khalid ibn Walid and ‘Ikramah ibn Abi Jahal leading them.

Stages of the War

Four stages of this war were extremely significant.

The First Stage

When the battle began, Abu ‘Amir ‘Abd ‘Amr ibn Sayfi came forward with 50 of his men from the Quraysh. He had convinced the Quraysh that the tribe of Aws were his followers and that, upon seeing him, would come over to their side. With this hope, he stood between the two armies and addressing the Aws, said: “I am your mentor; come and join me.” They replied

that they welcomed him no more. “O Transgressor! May God never fulfill your desire.” Upon hearing this, he said: “My nation has adopted wrong ways after my departure.”

The Prophet (sws) raised his sword and asked who would pay the price of this. The Companions asked what would be this price at which the Prophet (sws) answered that it should become bent while fighting the enemy. Abu Dajanah Sammak ibn Kharshah (rta) came forward and said that he would pay this price. After obtaining the sword, he wound a red scarf around his head and began to walk in the field with pride. The Prophet (sws), noting this, said that God did not like such a stride, but that it was a good act at that time because the intent was to impress the enemy.[1]

The Prophet (sws) asked to whom the Quraysh had handed their flag. He was informed that Talhah ibn Abi Talhah of the Banu ‘Abd al-Dar had the flag. He said that they, too, would give their flag to the Banu ‘Abd al-Dar, called Masab bin Umair (rta) and gave their flag to him. Talhah ibn Abi Talhah gave out the challenge for a single combat and ‘Ali (rta) came forward. As they fought, ‘Ali (rta) struck such that Talhah’s skull was split open. Talhah’s brother Usman took up the flag and Hamzah (rta) sent him on his way to Hell. After this, the battle was on.

The Muslims demonstrated great feats of valour and defended every step of the enemy aggressively. God’s help was with them. Therefore, they attacked the enemy fiercely and no flag bearer of the Quraysh could put up resistance against them. Eight flag bearers were killed one after the other. Qurayshi women sang martial songs to try and keep up the spirits of their men and awaken their honour but the battle was so fierce that they were forced to retreat. Wherever Abu Dajanah (rta) went, he would wound men. Hamzah’s (rta) valour was worth watching. He destroyed lines and lines of the enemy as he advanced. The flag of the Quraysh was in the hands of Artah ibn ‘Abd Shurahbil of the Banu ‘Abd al-Dar when he was caught and writhed in blood. Turning from him, he called out to a man, Saba‘ ibn ‘Abd al-‘Uzza and killed him. After this, a spear thrown by a negro black slave of Jubayr ibn Mut‘am struck him in his stomach. He tried to attack the negro but fell down and gave up his life to God. Hamzah (rta) had killed Mut‘am’s uncle in the Battle of Badr and he had promised the negro that if he killed Hamzah (rta), he would be granted freedom. The negro had carried out this act under this agreement.

When the faithful fought with such passion and energy, the Quraysh retreated and ran from the battlefield. The Muslims began to gather the spoils of war. It seems that this action was premature and that it was conducted without completely destroying the force of the Quraysh as they still had some strength left in them. When the archers who were occupying their posts on the hill saw that the Muslims had started gathering the spoils, they thought that the war had ended and that their duty was over. Their commander, ‘Abdullah ibn Jubayr (rta) ordered them to stay at their positions, but they believed these orders to be unnecessary. Their argument was that the war was finished, the Quraysh had left the battlefield and Muslims were considering it an end to the war. Hence the time had come for them to leave their check posts. ‘Abdullah ibn Jubayr (rta) said that whatever the situation in the battlefield, whether the Muslims were facing victory or defeat, they were not permitted to leave their positions. Most of the archers did not agree with him and, except for 10-12 people, the others left their posts and joined those who were busy in collecting the booty.

The Second Stage

Khalid ibn Walid (rta) was in charge of the right side of the Quraysh army. He saw an opportunity in this new situation and led his battalion towards the hill. It was not difficult to kill the few archers who were left. The land was now clear for him. The ranks of the Muslims were already in tumult. Khalid ibn Walid (rta) attacked them from behind and surrounded them. This

unexpected calamity proved to be a great trial for the Muslims. In the effort to run away from the battlefield, some rushed towards the hill, others to the city. In this state of chaos, people were not even conscious of friend or foe. A Companion, Yaman (rta) appeared and the Muslims attacked him; his son Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman kept on saying that he was his father but they would not listen and martyred him. Every Muslim was courageous and fought the enemy but because of the destruction of the ranks, this courage was of no use. At this stage, the faithful took special precautions to safeguard the Prophet (sws). They surrounded him so that no ill fated person would be able to attack him. The Prophet (sws) made efforts to get the Muslims back into file and called out to them to listen to him and come towards him but no one was in his senses to look right or left. Very few Muslims came to the Prophet (sws) and fought against the enemy with great valour. The Quraysh tried their best to break the circle around the Prophet (sws) but his devoted Companions pushed them back. At one stage, when they faced him in a crowd and pressure built up on his guards, the Prophet (sws) called out: "Who would sacrifice his life for me?" Ziyad ibn Sakan Ansari (rta) arrived with five of his friends and each one of them sacrificed his life for him. When Ziyad, too fell, and was taking his last breath, the Prophet (sws) asked for him to be laid near him. He still had a few breaths left: he laid his head at the feet of the Prophet (sws) and breathed his last.

Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr (rta) stood in front of the Prophet (sws) as a shield and fought very valiantly until he was martyred by Ibn Qummah al-Laythi. At this, the Prophet (sws) called 'Ali (rta) and handed him the flag of the Muhajirin. The Quraysh were making efforts to cause harm to the Prophet (sws). On the attack of one of their groups, he was wounded by a stone thrown by 'Utbah ibn Abi Waqqas; his front teeth were broken, he received a wound on his forehead and he fell down. 'Ali (rta) held his hand, Talhah ibn 'Ubaydullah picked him up and Malik ibn Sanan (rta) sucked his blood. The Prophet (sws) predicted that whoever wished to see a living martyr, he should see Talhah ibn 'Ubaydullah and that whoever had his blood mixed with his own would not be touched by fire. Ibn Qummah shouted at this stage that he had killed the Prophet (sws).

The Qur'an has brought attention to these stages of the war in the following words:

Allah did indeed fulfill His promise to you when ye with His permission were about to annihilate your enemy, until you flinched and fell to disputing about the order, and disobeyed it after He brought you in sight [of the booty] which you covet. Among you are some that hanker after this world and some that desire the Hereafter. Then did He divert you from your foes in order to test you but He forgave you: For Allah is full of grace to those who believe. Behold! you were climbing up the high ground, without even casting a side glance at any one, and the Messenger in your rear was calling you back. There did Allah give you one distress after another by way of requital, to teach you not to grieve for [the booty] that had escaped you and for [the ill] that had befallen you. For Allah is well aware of all that ye do." (3:152-153)

The Muslims obtained what they had wished for, which was victory during the first stage; distress after distress means that their victory at first converted into defeat and then on top of this grief, they were grieved by the rumour of the demise of the Prophet (sws). They were already confronting extremely difficult circumstances and had suffered a heavy loss of life when they became surrounded by the enemy; this rumour struck them suddenly as a great calamity. It spread like wildfire among the Muslims and created despair amongst them. Many Muslims threw down their weapons, finding it useless to fight any more. Some started to think of ways and means to seek amnesty from Abu Sufyan and some saw wisdom in returning to their tribes. But there was a group within whom the desire to defeat the enemy gained renewed energy. They vowed that they would give their lives for the truth for which the Prophet (sws) had sacrificed his own life. Anas ibn Naḍr (rta) was one such Companion who brought back a group of Muslims to stay and fight. He gained martyrdom by fighting with such courage that

his body had about 80 wounds and his face was beyond recognition. His sister recognized him by a sign on one of his fingers. In the end, it was this group whose determination was the turning point and changed the fortunes of the war.

The Third Stage

The devotees of the Prophet (sws) who were surrounding him used their bodies as shields. According to narratives, a person from the Ansar, Ka'b ibn Malik (rta) was the first one to recognize the Prophet (sws) in his war attire. He shouted to the Muslims to inform them that the Prophet (sws) was alive and safe and that they should gather around him. This had the desired effect. Abu Talhah Ansari (rta) came and fired so many spears that 2-3 bows were broken in his hands. He covered the Prophet (sws) with his armour so that the spears would strike it. Abu Dajanah used his body as a shield and took the brunt of the spears on his back. When Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas (rta) came, the Prophet gave him his bow and arrow and told him: "My mother and father be sacrificed for you! Keep on firing arrows." 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf received wounds in his legs and became crippled for life. As a result of these actions, the numbers of Muslims fighting swelled, passions were revived with the news of the Prophet (sws) being alive and the pressure of the Quraysh began to ease. The Prophet (sws) moved towards the hill while continuing with his instructions to fire arrows, and reached the valley of Mount Uhud. There, he re-organized the Muslims again and set up his trenches along its slope. Since he was himself wounded, he was taken inside a cave at some height over Uhud, where his wounds were washed. His face had been pierced by the links of his helmet. When Abu 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah (rta) removed these from his teeth, two of the teeth also came out.

The Quraysh tried to climb the hill but each time, they were forced to retreat because of stone pelting from the Muslims. The latter had gained superiority by virtue of being at a height and the horseback cavalry of the Quraysh were also useless there. In this situation, the Quraysh gave up their attempts to overpower the Muslims.

At this stage, both sides raised slogans, as recorded in history. Abu Sufyan asked: "Is Ibn Abi Kabshah [the Prophet] amongst you?" At this, the Prophet (sws) instructed the Muslims to remain quiet. Then Abu Sufyan asked: "Is Ibn Abi Qahafah [Abu Bakr] among you? Is Ibn al-Khattab ['Umar] amongst you?" When he did not receive any response, he said: "It seems as if everyone is dead." 'Umar could not restrain himself and he said: "O Enemy of Allah! You are a liar. Allah has ensured that you will come to grief." Abu Sufyan shouted: "Glory be to Habal!" At instructions from the Prophet (sws), 'Umar (rta) raised his voice: "Allah's is the highest and most glorious status". Abu Sufyan again raised a slogan in the name of a goddess. "We have 'Uzzah goddess, which you do not have." 'Umar answered:" Allah is our Supporter and your supporter is none." Abu Sufyan said: Today was the day of revenge for Badr. Victory gives a chance to everyone. Today we are even." 'Umar (rta) said:" we are not even. Our martyrs have gone to Paradise and your killed are in Hell." After this, Abu Sufyan called 'Umar (rta) to his side and when he went, asked him: "Upon oath by God, did we kill Mohammed (sws)?" He answered:" By God, you were not able to do so. He is present and is listening to our conversation." At this, Abu Sufyan said: " 'Umar! I consider you more truthful and trustworthy than Ibn Qum'ah" (Ibn Qum'ah had, as explained above, spread the rumour that the Prophet had been killed). Alright then, we shall confront each other again next year the same time in Badr. You will see mutilation of the bodies of some of your killed. But know that I neither give orders for it, nor did I stop it. I was neither happy with it, nor was I unhappy". Saying this, Abu Sufyan gave orders to his army to return to Makkah.

While a fierce battle was being fought in Uhud, some extraordinary incidents took place which are worth mentioning:

1. In the Battle of Badr, a Quraysh leader, Ubayy ibn Khalaf Jumahi had said to the Prophet (sws) that he would kill him and he was training a horse specially for this purpose. The Prophet (sws) had answered: “No. Instead, I will kill you.” On the day of Uhud, he came running to the Prophet (sws) on the same horse. When the Muslims tried to stop him, the Prophet (sws) asked them to let him come. As he came near, the Prophet (sws) fired an arrow at him. He was wounded and turned back. Reaching his people, he showed them his wound and they reassured him saying that it was a slight wound. But he kept shouting that Muhammad (sws) had killed him. Later, he died of the same wound. [2]

2. Mukhayyariq, a Jew from the Banu Tha‘labah said to the Jews that they had a covenant with Muhammad (sws) and helping him was their duty. They should go to Uhud to fulfill their obligation. The Jews declined, saying that it was the day of Sabbath and hence they could not participate in any activity. Mukhayyariq said that Sabbath did not place any barrier in such activities. He said this, picked up his war equipment and left for Uhud, where he was killed, while fighting. When the Prophet (sws) came to know, he said that Mukhayyariq was the best among the Jews.

3. One of the men, called Qazman fought with great courage and killed many idolators. When he was mentioned to the Prophet (sws), he said that he was among the people of Hell. When Qazman was wounded, he was brought to a settlement. People praised him, saying that he had shown great feats. He should be receiving predictions of Paradise. Qazman said: “By Allah! I have fought for the glory of my nation. If it had not come to Uhud, I would not have come either.” Later, when the pain from his wounds became severe, he committed suicide with his own arrow.

4. After the war, the Banu ‘Abd al-Ashhal were searching for their killed when they found ‘Amr ibn Thabit Asiram lying among those killed. They were very surprised to see him there as he was an enemy of Islam. He was seriously wounded. He was asked if he came to give support to his nation or whether he was attracted by Islam. He said that he had belief in Allah and the Prophet (sws), accepted Islam and then taken up a sword to defend Islam, until he fell after being wounded. Saying this, he died in the arms of people around him. When the Prophet (sws) was informed, he said that he would enter Paradise. People would say that Asiram was a person who had never said a single prayer but would go to Paradise.

5. ‘Amr ibn al-Jamuh was old and crippled. He had four sons all of whom would join the Prophet (sws) in battles. The sons tried to keep their father within their home during Uhud. He came to complain to the Prophet (sws), expressing his desire to go to Paradise in his crippled state. The Prophet (sws) said that he was disabled and that qital was not obligatory for him. He said to his sons that they should not stop him; perhaps God had reserved martyrdom for him. Thus, ‘Amr ibn al-Jamuh went to Uhud and was martyred.

The Fourth Stage

When the Quraysh had left the battlefield, the Prophet (sws) descended from the hill, had the Muslim martyrs identified and made arrangements for their burial. He instructed that they should not be taken to the city but buried in the battlefield. Narratives give a figure for the martyred Muslims between 44 and 70 and those killed from the Quraysh as between 14-22.

At this point, addressing the Muslims, the Prophet (sws) said: “after today, the idolaters would not be able to gain victory over us again, to the time when we kiss the rukun (Hajr Aswad).”[3]The Prophet’s comment contained the prediction that the Muslims would not face a similar situation which they had in Uhud from the Quraysh until their entry as victors into Makkah.

The Prophet (sws) spent the night in the valley of Uhud. Thoroughly spent after a tiring day, the Muslims slept peacefully, but one of the groups was so fearful of the enemy that at every sound they would worry that the enemy might be attacking again. In the morning, a rumour spread that the Quraysh had realized that it had not been a wise step for them to return to Makkah and that the result of the war was vague. Hence, they were planning another attack. The hypocrites had played an important role is spreading this rumour. They thought that the Muslims would become disheartened and discouraged with this news. But it so happened that the loyals shouted: "Allah is enough for us and he is the greatest Ally" and were ready to fight the idolaters again with reinforced vigour and courage. The Prophet (sws) gave instructions for those who had remained steadfast to follow the enemy. The Muslims started on this new campaign with full energy and passion. The Prophet (sws) set up camp at a place called Hamra al-Asad, eight miles from Madinah and gathered information about the Quraysh. When he was satisfied that they had left for Makkah, he ordered his army to return.

Referring to this stage, the Qur'an says:

Of those who answered the call of Allah and the Messenger, even after being wounded, those who do right and refrain from wrong have a great reward; Men said to them: "A great army is gathering against you." And frightened them: But it [only] increased their Faith: They said: "For us Allah suffices, and He is the best disposer of affairs." And they returned with Grace and bounty from Allah. No harm ever touched them: For they followed the good pleasure of Allah. And Allah is the Lord of bounties unbounded. (3:172-174)

According to Ibn Ishaq, the battle of Uhud took place on a Sunday, 15th Shawwal.

The Battle of Badr was a war that was a deciding factor, distinguishing between truth and falsehood and giving a clear power to the Muslims over the idolaters, obvious to everyone. In contradiction to this, the Battle of Uhud was like the verses of mutashabihat (allegorical verses). In allegorical verses, the reality that is stated is hidden. It is visible to those who can see but it is not shown to others. This is why it is open to speculation, creating a basis for chaos. When an incident is of the nature of an allegory, its wisdom becomes unclear and an ordinary person may not be able to decipher its true meaning. Hence people tend to speculate and spread rumours. The battle of Uhud was a great trial for Muslims. Their losses were so high that they were visible to everyone even without bringing them to attention. Almost every family in Madinah was affected by the battle. It had become difficult to ascertain whether Muslims had been victorious or suffered a defeat. People were unable to identify any benefits or any wisdom gained. In such a situation, while the mature Muslims with strong faith learned the right lessons, a large group having evil in their hearts and desire to create problems found a good opportunity to use it for their propaganda. The wisdom of God required that the circumstances of this battle be used as a tool to teach and train Muslims. Therefore, a detailed and impartial commentary was given in Surah Al-i 'Imran.

Propaganda of the Enemies

The mischief makers made the person of the Prophet (sws) a special target. They also ridiculed the promise of God to help the faithful which had been referred to in Surah al-Anfal after the Battle of Badr. They presented the future of Islam in such an uncertain manner that many people actually became doubtful. Their efforts were focused on creating an environment of mistrust for Muslims.

Those objecting accused the Prophet (sws) of being an authoritarian and not taking advice from others. They said that he had personal ambitions for which he did not refrain from sacrificing the lives and property of his own companions. If he had been

a true well wisher of the Muslims, he would have accepted the advice of confronting the enemy while remaining within the confines of Madinah and thus, much blood of the Muslims would not have been lost.

They mocked the idea that Allah was with the faithful and provided help to them. They questioned why the glories of the help which were shown during Badr were not visible during Uhud? What was this help that came some time and disappeared at others? The fact was that fighting a war was a game of resources and strategy. If resources were available and the right strategy was used, victory was gained and if there were any mistakes made in these, defeat would be unavoidable. The faithful too, were governed by this rule. There was no special relationship between them and God. The promise to help Muslims in the Qur'an was merely a ruse to keep them happy.

As this diatribe increased, they started to say that the future of Islam was extremely doubtful. The claim that power was the destiny of Islam was merely a threat. When the Quraysh struggled with some discipline, the Muslims had to face defeat. If the former made additional efforts and gathered more resources, there was no reason why they would not be successful in cutting off Islam from its roots. If Islam was such a truthful religion, why did it face a situation wherein it caused every Muslim household to become a house of mourning?

These were the main objections raised by the mischief makers and they were addressed in detail by the Qur'an. It explained that the Prophet (sws) was not an authoritarian person by nature. In fact, among his qualities was that of treating everyone with compassion, encouragement and good wishes. This is why everyone was gathering around him like moths around a lamp. If he had possessed harshness, or talked against people or treated anyone badly, no one would have wanted to be close to him. How could he wish ill upon any one when he, himself was so fearful of God? He was very well aware of the fact that if he acted with ill will towards his nation, he would have to answer for this on the Day of Judgement. He took each step with the desire to please God. He worked directly under the supervision of God so there was no possibility that any of his actions could be wrong. However, just like other human beings, he was also governed by his destiny; so, if anything was written in his fate, it was not possible for him to escape from it.

As far as help from God was concerned, the Qur'an clarified that help did not mean that if the faithful entered any field, God would send an army of angels to help them out. Help from God was given under certain conditions. For example, that Muslims left for the field with full sincerity and without a desire for any personal gain to serve their faith; that they staked all that they possessed; they did not hesitate in fulfilling their duty; they did not disobey Allah and His instructions; they did not create difference of opinion in orders which were given to them and, desire of worldly possessions did not overtake them in the battlefield but that whatever they did there, they did keeping the Day of Judgement in mind. If they fulfilled these conditions, help from God would be with them. In the early stage of Uhud, they acted accordingly and hence they received divine help and this was why they were able to cause losses to the Quraysh. Later, they allowed their desire for worldly goods to overtake them. Because of this, when they disobeyed the Prophet (sws) and his appointed Commander, God's help was withdrawn from them and they were left to deal with multiple sorrows. Whatever happened had the weaknesses of the Muslims as its cause. In future endeavours, if they were able to overcome their weaknesses, they would find that God's help would be with them.

The promise of the power of Islam was again reiterated. It was explained that there was no change in this promise nor had God developed sympathy with the idolaters that He had begun to give preference to them over Muslims. The faithful were to reform themselves and get rid of the weaknesses which had harmed them. If they corrected their attitude, they would be

victorious. Whatever happened in Uhud contained a message for destruction of the idolaters, provided people would not only observe the situation superficially but understand the facts hidden underneath the surface.

Some mischief makers made the large number of the Muslims killed a matter of debate. Their claim was that this was the result of a competition in the open battlefield. It would have been possible to avoid such a loss of life provided their preventive suggestions had been accepted. The people who had separated themselves from the battle before it started were right in what they did. The error was made by the Prophet (sws). The Qur'an answered this by saying that those who were making these objections did not understand that life and death was in the hands of God and the best of strategies could not evade death. If Muslims had enclosed themselves within a fortress, the ones who had to die would have died in any case and the fort would not have been of any use to them. It was not appropriate for men of courage to live with cowardice but the most exalted state of loyalty was to give one's life while performing one's duty. There was no need to pity those who had lost their lives in the way of God, or to express grief. They had attained the glory which was better than all the wealth of the world. The martyrs were enjoying the blessings of their Creator in Paradise and were wishful that their descendants too would follow their footsteps and come to meet them. The critics were grieving for no rhyme or reason.

Commentary on the Weaknesses of the Faithful

The Qur'an unveiled the mistakes which had been committed by the faithful so that they could correct themselves and would not face similar situations in future endeavours.

The Qur'an said that, during the first stage, the lack of discipline and patience and desire for worldly benefits created the first signs of defeat. Therefore, guidance was given that whenever Muslims started out for a battle, they were to keep the orders of the Prophet (sws) and their commander in mind and were not to hesitate to obey them exactly. Leaving important check posts in order to gather war spoils was a completely unwarranted act. The attainment of worldly gain was not based on an individual effort or strategy but it was a favour from God. He gave whatever He wished to whomsoever He wished. It was necessary for the faithful to consider the Hereafter as their target. God did not deprive those who wanted the Hereafter from the benefits of the world. Such people received honour in this world and were also successful in the next.

The Muslims who had expressed doubts when observing signs of defeat and had started to think of ways to save their lives were told that this weakness of character was not becoming of those who possessed faith. It was not the way of people belonging to Allah to give up at the least sign of a trial, lose heart or surrender to the enemy. The history of the companions of messengers of God shows that firstly, they had never demonstrated such a weakness, and, that if ever they did suffer a defeat, they put it to their crossing of boundaries and asked God for forgiveness. When faced with difficult circumstances, despair was not to overwhelm the faithful that they lose their determination and courage and think about surrendering to falsehood.

Many people had been so grieved to hear of the rumour of the Prophet (sws)'s demise that they had become disinterested in their own lives. They were asked why they had developed the misconception that the Prophet (sws) would live forever? He would return to God one day, so was their loyalty to Islam only up to the time that he lived? They had believed in God, possessed His religion; they should therefore recognise their status. If they turned from their faith in frustration due to difficulties, it would be no loss to God but they would themselves be at a great loss.

Significance of the Battle of Uhud

If an analysis of the Battle of Uhud is made in the light of the detailed commentary of the Qur'an, it is clear that this battle was of great significance in God's scheme. It was used to strengthen the capabilities of the faithful and to encourage and use it as a means to elevate the status of the more sincere.

It has been observed that unless a nation faces turmoil, it's abilities remain dormant. The similarity of situations create collective weaknesses. The time to get rid of these weaknesses comes when God exposes the nation to a storm. In this, its capacities are used and this fortifies it. The Battle of Uhud was a trial for the faithful in which their strengths and weaknesses were exposed and it became possible for them to address them properly so that they could struggle with greater effort for future stages.

This war also purified the ranks of the Muslims. It exposed the mischief makers who had infiltrated their files after the Battle of Badr. After this, the faithful became careful that not only did they need to confront external forces in future, but also keep an eye on the subversive activities of ill wishers. If they had not been exposed at this stage, they could have caused great damage later.

The battle of Uhud provided every claimant to faith with a scale with which to make a judgement. The people who could not maintain their faith and level of determination were identified, as were those who demonstrated courageous feats and did not hesitate to lay down their lives for their religion. God had wanted to encourage some of His servants and award them an exalted status by giving them martyrdom. It is not known how many Muslims wished for such a status and prayed that God would bestow upon them martyrdom. How many others would have gained encouragement after seeing their honourable end? Today, it is difficult to ascertain this fact.

If some weak Muslims entertained the thought that the Quraysh could overpower Muslims by gathering more resources and better strategizing, the Qur'an dispelled this notion. It reassured Muslims that the idolaters would not be able to gain any benefit from the situation arising as a result of this battle. Their sense of victory was short lived and temporary. They would soon lose their courage and Muslims would gain success. Time proved the Qur'an's predictions to be true.

(*Translated by Nikhat Sattar*)

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1. Ibn Kathir, Al-Sirah al-nabawiyyah, vol. 2, 32.

2. Ibn Sa'd, Al-Sirah al-nabawiyyah, vol. 1, 378.

3. Ibid., vol. 1, 376.

CHAPTER 33

Efforts to malign People of Faith

The Banu Nadir went all out to destroy Islam and even attacked Madinah after gathering its enemies from all over the country. However, they were unable to achieve any success and, instead, suffered humiliation and despair. Then they turned their attention to maligning the character of Muslims and the Prophet (sws) and to destroy their reputation of morality and piety by using their agents ie. the hypocrites. They were of the opinion that if they overwhelmed Muslims with such attacks, the latter would be too preoccupied in saving their honour and would not be able to pay attention to other fronts. Ka'b ibn Ashraf had already initiated this policy when he had begun to compose sordid poetry using names of Muslim women. This policy was then taken to the next level. As far as the hypocrites were concerned, not only were they under the influence of the Jews, but they also did not hesitate to offer their services to their benefit whenever the opportunity arose. Such a strategy created many difficulties for the Prophet (sws) and the believers.

1. Allegations against Muslim Women

Initially, derogatory poems about Muslim women were circulated through hypocrites. This was followed by making immoral allegations against them and spreading scandalous gossip about them. Hypocritical men and women were mobilized to share such baseless stories within the society.

During the days of the *jahiliyyah*, there were no specific restrictions on entering homes or on women being seen by strangers. According to narratives, when the Prophet (sws) invited people inside his home, his family members would confine themselves to a corner of the same room. Similarly, when women ventured out, it was not necessary for them to observe *purdah* from strangers. The hypocrites adopted the policy of casting doubt on the character of Muslim women and at the same time, would try to deliberately come in the presence of the women members of the Prophet's household and speak with them. When they saw Muslim women outside, they would pass unseemly comments and when

they were reprimanded, they would give the excuse that they had not recognized them and had thought that they were slave-women of such and such a person. When this issue became intolerable and the hypocrites still continued to harass Muslim women, instructions to protect Muslim society from degradation were sent down in the Qur'an:

i. Entry of strange men and women into homes was discouraged. Only those people were allowed to enter with whom the household members were familiar on account of family ties or personal relationships. Even they were told to ask for specific permission from inhabitants before entering their houses. If they were not given permission, they were instructed not to force entry.

ii. If permission was granted, women within the house were to hide their embellishments from strange men and women, not flaunt their bodies and not look at them in the eye. The same attitude was to be adopted by men entering the house.

iii. People were to avoid entering homes during times of rest and repose.

iv. If the Prophet (sws) invited anyone inside his home, the guest was to limit himself to the issue at hand and avoid staying longer than necessary.

v. People were not to barge into the Prophet's house but were to explain their purpose from behind a curtain.

vi. When Muslim women went out, they were also to cover themselves with a big chadar, and bring one corner of it over their faces so that no excuse could be given to anyone bent on mischief.

vii. Hypocrites were warned that if they did not refrain from mischief, they would lose any right to remain within the city. The Qur'an said:

O Prophet! Tell thy wives and daughters, and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their persons [when abroad]: that is most convenient, that they should be known [as such] and not molested. And Allah is Oft- Forgiving, Most Merciful. Truly, if the Hypocrites, and those in whose hearts is a disease, and those who stir up sedition in the City, desist not, We shall certainly stir thee up against them: Then will they not be able to stay in it as thy neighbours for any length of time: They shall have a curse on them: whenever they are found, they shall be seized and slain without mercy. (33:59-61)

viii. If anyone alleged adultery by a woman, he was to be asked to produce four witnesses. If he failed to prove his allegation, he would be given 80 lashes in punishment for bringing the woman's name into disrepute. Thus, when on returning from the Battle of Banu Mustaliq, some people tried to allege adultery about the Prophet's wife without a proof, they were given this punishment. This incident also showed that the real objective of the Jews and hypocrites was to cause harm to the Prophet's personality and status.

2. The Incident of Ila and Takhyir

In those times, hypocrite women too became active along with men. In order to create dissatisfaction within the family members of the Prophet (sws), they increased their interaction with them. They said to them that they were daughters of elite houses and rich leaders would have been very willing to marry them and keep them with great honour and dignity. All the comforts and luxuries of the world would have been available to them. What had they gained by coming to this house? They faced a life of poverty, surrounded by dangers. It was such a pity that they were deprived of even the most basic facilities which were available to the common leaders. The Prophet (sws) should show some generosity in the expenditure of his household. It is no wonder that wives of the Prophet (sws) may have been influenced by constant reminders of such issues through frequent meetings. It seems that, thinking along these lines, they may have requested something from the Prophet (sws) at which he was distressed. In order to bring the point home to them, he told them that he would not see them for one month. He stopped going to his wives and obtained separate quarters for his residence. When 'Umar (rta) was informed of this, he blamed the wives of the Prophet (sws). He was of the opinion that the Ansar did not control their wives and the latter spoke with them as equals in a competitive spirit. The wives of the Prophet (sws) had also adopted the style of the Ansar women and caused pain to him. He went to his daughter Hafsah (rta) to probe the matter and chided her, saying that she had hurt the Prophet (sws). She should understand her status and speak accordingly. He then went to the Prophet (sws)'s residence where a black slave was not allowing anyone to meet him. After repeated requests from 'Umar (rta), he asked the Prophet (sws) who gave permission to him to enter. After discussing other matters, 'Umar (rta) asked him if he had divorced his wives. The Prophet (sws) replied in the negative. 'Umar (rta) told him that people were concerned and worried about this situation. While the Prophet (sws) was staying at his temporary residence, he was instructed in the Qur'an that he should give his wives the option to either stay with him, or leave him, in which case they would be given some money and/or possessions and divorced. They could thus adopt any way they wished to.

O Prophet! Say to thy Consorts: "If it be that ye desire the life of this World, and its glitter,- then come! I will provide for your enjoyment and set you free in a handsome manner. But if ye seek Allah and His Messenger, and the Home of the Hereafter, verily Allah has prepared for the well-doers amongst you a great reward." (33:28-29)

When one month had passed, the Prophet (sws) went first to his wife 'A'ishah (rta). She asked him about coming before the time was over as it had been 29 days, at which he said that a month could also be of 29 days. Then he asked her that, if she wished for the life of this world and its beauty and comforts, he could not provide these to her and he could give her something and let her go. But if she wanted God and His Prophet and the next world, she could stay in his house and that it was not necessary to answer immediately. She could consult her parents and then give him her answer. 'A'ishah (rta) replied that she did not need anyone's advice to answer this question and that she would opt for God, the Prophet and the afterlife. The Prophet (sws) asked her not to divulge her answer to the others. He then went to his other wives and gave each of them this option. Every one of them gave the same answer which 'A'ishah (rta) had given. In this manner, guided by God, the Prophet (sws) successfully addressed the seeds of doubt which the hypocrite women had sowed. It was proved that the Prophet's

wives were perfectly satisfied with their lives and were not willing to give any attention to the lifestyle of elitist women in the least.

The one month period during which the Prophet (sws) stayed away from his wives was called ila and giving them authority to decide upon separation was called takhyir.

The Qur'an developed awareness among the wives of the Prophet (sws) of their status, on account of being his wives, and thus holding distinct responsibilities which were different from those of ordinary women. They were to perceive themselves above the others and understand that whatever they said could create problems for the Prophet (sws). They were, therefore, to be very careful when talking with hypocrites. It could be dangerous to be kind hearted in their attempt to be generous.

Wives of the Prophet! Ye are not like any of the [other] women: if ye do fear [Allah], be not too complacent of speech, lest one in whose heart is a disease should be moved with desire: but speak ye a speech [that is] just. (33:32).

3. The Issue of Marriage to the Divorcee of the Adopted Son

Similarly, another situation in which the hypocrites accused the Prophet (sws) arose when he married Zaynab bint Jahash (rta). When the Prophet (sws) had married Khadijah (rta), she had presented her slave Zayd ibn Harithah (rta) to him. The Prophet (sws) found in him many abilities and adopted him as his son, after which the boy began to be called Zayd ibn Muhammad. Zayd (rta) was very close to the Prophet (sws) because of his loving attentions. When the Prophet (sws) gained prophethood, Zayd (rta) was one of the first ones to accept Islam and was always ready whenever called upon to provide services to Islam.

Due to his great love for Zayd (rta) and also because he wished to demonstrate equality between humans in Islam, the Prophet (sws) had him married to his paternal aunt's daughter, Zaynab bint Jahash (rta). Zaynab (rta) belonged to the family of leaders of the Quraysh. While she obeyed the Prophet (sws), she found this relationship below her status and could not get along with Zayd (rta). Zayd (rta) was very worried about this situation and discussed it with the Prophet (sws) who advised him to compromise and continue with the union. He opposed a divorce because he felt that since Zaynab (rta) was already unhappy with the marriage, she would not be able to accept the stigma of being a divorcee. Zayd (rta) postponed the divorce but a compromise was still not possible. Eventually he acted upon his decision and divorced Zaynab (rta).

God's will was to use this incident as a tool to bring reform to an important issue in society. The Prophet (sws) was instructed to marry Zaynab (rta) if Zayd (rta) divorced her. The Prophet (sws) was concerned that if he did so, the hypocrites would stir up a storm of propaganda against him. The reason for this was it was a tradition in Arab society that an adopted son was considered to be like a real son and his wife to be a daughter in law. If the father of the adopted son married the latter's wife, he would be guilty of

committing the sin of marrying a real daughter. This is an unnatural and irrational concept because the connections of blood and race that exist with real children do not exist in case of adopted ones. Islam, being based on nature, does not give importance to matters that are based merely on customs and traditions. God's prophet removes all unnatural customs from society. His status requires him to fight circumstances despite opposition from people. The Qur'an reminded the Prophet (sws) of this.

There can be no difficulty to the Prophet in what Allah has indicated to him as a duty. It was the practice [approved] of Allah amongst those of old that have passed away. And the command of Allah is a decree determined. [It is the practice of those] who preach the Messages of Allah, and fear Him, and fear none but Allah. And enough is Allah to call [men] to account. (33:38-39)

After Zayd (rta)'s final decision, the Prophet (sws) had no option but to obey the divine instructions. As soon as he married Zaynab (rta), the hypocrites began to spread the propaganda that he had married his daughter in law. Some made up false stories of which parts still exist in our books and those wishing to besmirch the Prophet's personality quote these in their writings. All of these stories are baseless. The reason is that Zaynab (rta) was the Prophet's cousin and was, therefore, not a stranger to him. It was the Prophet (sws) who had her married to Zayd (rta) and it was he who wished from his heart that Zayd (rta) would not divorce her. Zaynab (rta) was a Companion from before Islam and the Prophet (sws) knew her well. He was worried that Zaynab (rta) had found the union which he had helped to create below her status and it was unsuccessful. Zayd (rta) was not willing to retain the union and thus Zaynab (rta) had to go through the humiliation of a divorce. The only way to comfort Zaynab (rta) and to compensate for her loss was for the Prophet (sws) to marry her himself. This instruction was revealed to him in the Qur'an.

Allah has not made for any man two hearts in his [one] body: nor has He made your wives whom ye divorce by zihar your mothers: nor has He made your adopted sons your sons. Such is [only] your [manner of] speech by your mouths. But Allah tells [you] the Truth, and He shows the [right) Way. Call them by [the names of] their fathers: that is more just in the sight of Allah. But if ye know not their father's [names, call them] your Brothers in faith, or your mawlas. But there is no blame on you if ye make a mistake therein: [what counts is] the intention of your hearts: and Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful. (33:4-5)

The above means that just saying something does not change reality. Wives do not become mothers if they are called mothers and adopted sons do not become real sons by saying so. Thus, such sons should be called by the names of their real fathers. Zayd ibn Muhammad, therefore began to be called Zayd ibn Harithah (rta).

About Zaynab (rta), the Qur'an stated:

Behold! Thou didst say to one who had received the grace of Allah and thy favour: "Retain thou [in wedlock] thy wife, and fear Allah." But thou didst hide in thy heart that which Allah was about to make manifest: thou didst fear the people, but it is more fitting that thou shouldst fear Allah. Then when Zayd

had dissolved [his marriage] with her, with the necessary [formality], We joined her in marriage to thee: in order that [in future] there may be no difficulty to the Believers in [the matter of] marriage with the wives of their adopted sons, when the latter have dissolved with the necessary [formality] [their marriage] with them. And Allah's command must be fulfilled. (33:37)

4. The Instruction related to Removal of a Hurdle for the Prophet (sws)

There was another problem which the Prophet (sws) faced when marrying Zaynab (rta). As a result of the martyrdom of Muslims in large numbers in the Battle of Uhud, many women became widows and supporting their orphaned children became an issue. The instruction for people of faith to offer their services and provide this support was revealed through the Qur'an. It was also said that if they found this responsibility too difficult, they were to marry the mothers of the orphaned children so that they could assist in the latter's upbringing. Men who had resources and were able to maintain justice between their wives could marry two, three or four women by using the tradition of multiple marriages in Arabia, but now the tradition would be limited to four wives, contrary to an indefinite number in the past.

Two wives of the Prophet (sws), Sawdah (rta) and 'A'ishah (rta) had migrated with him from Makkah. Two were widows of martyrs, Hafsah (rta) and Umm Salamah (rta). Hafsa (rta) was the daughter of 'Umar (rta) and her previous husband was Khunays ibn Hudhafah (rta) who had passed away after being wounded in the Battle of Uhud. Umm Salamah (rta) was from the tribe of the Banu Makhdhum and her husband was Abu Salamah (rta) who was the Prophet's paternal cousin. When the Prophet (sws) was given the order to marry Zaynab (rta), he had four wives already, Therefore, the hypocrites found another point for their propaganda against him. They said that Mohammed was a strange leader who established a shari'ah for his people but did not implement it upon himself. He had restricted other men to four wives but did not tolerate the restriction for himself. The following guidance was given in the Qur'an to exempt the Prophet (sws) in this case.

O Prophet! We have made lawful to thee thy wives to whom thou hast paid their dowers; and those whom thy right hand possesses out of the prisoners of war whom Allah has assigned to thee; and daughters of thy paternal uncles and aunts, and daughters of thy maternal uncles and aunts, who migrated [from Makkah] with thee; and any believing woman who dedicates her soul to the Prophet if the Prophet wishes to wed her;- this only for thee, and not for the Believers [at large]; We know what We have appointed for them as to their wives and the captives whom their right hands possess;- in order that there should be no difficulty for thee. And Allah is Oft- Forgiving, Most Merciful. (33:50)

With the revelation of this verse, not only was the hurdle for the Prophet (sws) to marry for the fifth time removed but certain conditions were established for him within which he could marry again. Firstly, he was barred from divorcing any of his wives who were given the status of mothers of the Muslim ummah. They were thus prevented from marrying again after the Prophet (sws). Secondly, the Prophet (sws) was not to marry a woman who did not fulfil the conditions laid down in Surah al-Ahzab. His wives were informed that the Prophet (sws) would give priority to meeting the responsibilities of prophet hood and they were not to complain of his variable attention to them.

5. Efforts to create Disharmony between the Muhajirun and the Ansar

The Jews were aware of the fact that the strength of Muslims depended upon their unity and sense of mutual belonging. The Prophet (sws) had not only transformed the ancient enmity of the Aws and the Khazraj into strong friendship but had also established a relationship of amity and love between the Ansar and Muhajirun. Troubles only strengthened this bond further. The Jews and their hypocrite agents were continuously engaged in efforts to revive old enmities and create disharmony between the Ansar and the Muhajirun. News reached the Prophet (sws) after the battle of Ahzab that some tribes were angry over their defeat and were planning to strike again. The Prophet (sws) decided to defeat them and attacked Banu Lahyan who were settled along the route to Makkah. These people disappeared in the mountains. After this, some people from the tribe of Ghatfan stole some camels during an attack on the rangelands of the Prophet (sws). The Muslims followed them and the Prophet (sws) too joined them with a group of soldiers and retrieved the animals. Similarly, the Banu Mustalaq inhabited one of the routes to Makkah. When the Prophet (sws) found out about their preparations for battle, he attacked them with some men. The people whom the Banu Mustalaq had gathered from various tribes ran away upon hearing of this attack and the Banu Mustalaq were left alone. A battle ensued in which the enemy was defeated, their people were captured and war booty was won. The winning troops set up camp around the spring of Marisi', where an altercation occurred between an Ansar and a Muhajir over the issue of taking water. The Muhajir slapped an Ansar as a result of which a fight started between the two groups. 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy made an all out effort to incite the feelings of the Ansar. He said: "These people have turned upon us after taking shelter with us. It is true that if you feed a dog, it will turn and bite you. By God! If we return to Madinah, those among us who are honourable shall banish these wretched people." Addressing the Ansar, he also said: "This is the consequence of your own error that you are now forced to bear. You brought them within your homes and made them partners in your wealth. By God! Had you refrained from helping them, they would have run away from here long ago."

'Abdullah ibn Ubayy was referring to the Ansar when he spoke of the honourable people and of the Muhajirun when talking of the wretched ones. This appealed to the mentality of the Arabs who were living during the times of jahiliyyah according to which they were residing in that region with honour and status for ages and this was their right. How could they tolerate men who came to seek refuge from them to stand up to them? This incident was referred to in Surah al-Munafiqun thus:

They are the ones who say: "Spend nothing on those who are with Allah's Messenger, to the end that they may disperse [and quit Madinah]." But to Allah belong the treasures of the heavens and the earth; but the Hypocrites understand not. (63:7-8)

Among the people who were taken prisoners in this battle was Jawayriyyah, the daughter of the leader of the tribe, Harith ibn Abi Darar. She was given to one of the Companions, Thabit ibn Qays (rta), whom she asked if he would take ransom for her and free her. Jawayriyyah then came to the Prophet (sws), introduced herself and told him that she was the daughter of the leader and that she had won her freedom from the service of a person after agreeing upon an amount for ransom. She wished him to

assist her in attaining this freedom. The Prophet (sws) asked her if she would accept a treatment that would be better than this. Upon her query about this, he said to her that he would pay her ransom, get her freed and marry her. Jawayriyyah agreed to this proposal. When this news reached the Companions, they released all other prisoners since the tribe of Mustalaq had now become the in laws of the Prophet (sws).

Crimes of the Jews

The conspiracies of the Jews against the Prophet (sws) were not temporary. They were, in fact, an example of the habits which they had been demonstrating since ancient times and due to which the prophets who had come to the Israelites had deemed them worthy of their curses. The Qur'an has referred particularly to the curses of David (sws) and Jesus (sws). Despite seeing the miracles of Moses (sws) with their own eyes and watched the Pharaoh perish, they carved out a calf and began to worship it. With the Mount of Tur towering above them, God took a promise from them and instructed them to follow the path of humility and submission but they gave no importance to their covenants. They broke every promise, neglected every instruction from God, killed prophets and reformers without any reason and closed off their hearts to their calls towards truth. They accused a pure woman, Maryam (sws) from a tribe of the Israelites of adultery and, in spite of being aware of the prophet hood of Jesus (sws), not only planned to kill him but also claimed to have done so. They brought troubles upon themselves and thus had even the things which were halal in the shari'ah made haram. In every age and time, they tried to stop people from accepting the truth and their efforts to do so are not hidden from any one. Interest had been clearly prohibited for them but they paid no attention to this and created the worst forms of interest in their worldly greed. They became so fond of gathering wealth that no distinction remained between halal and haram for them. They saw no problems in usurping what belonged to others through illegal means. How could it be expected from people whose previous history was so gross, that they would come forward, accept Islam and believe in the Qur'an?

However, the Qur'an instructed the Prophet (sws) to communicate the message to both Christians and Jews that unless they allowed the teachings of the Torah and Injil to enter into the matters of their daily lives, and led their individual and collective lives according to their instructions, in particular, obey the requirements of the predictions about the last prophet, they would possess no religious status. Relationship with God is not based on links with a group, but on fulfilling the needs of faith and doing good deeds, of which both groups had become deprived.

Because the Jews of Madinah had not fulfilled their responsibilities according to their religious books and would not deter from creating anarchy in the land, the Prophet (sws) exiled them from Madinah, considering them to be among warring factions: those who fought God and His Prophet and created anarchy. Later, the Qur'an gave a policy for the People of the Book according to which they could stay in the Islamic state as Dhimmis by paying taxes.

Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, [even if they are] of the

People of the Book, until they pay the jizyah with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued. (9:29)

(*Translated by Nikhat Sattar*)

CHAPTER 34

A Clear Victory

(The Treaty of Hudaybiyyah)

The futility of the Battle of Ahzab which had been the result of joint planning between the Jews and Quraysh was a cause of great frustration for the two groups. The Quraysh felt that there were slim chances of defeating the Muslims. It would not be an easy task to recoup the resources which they had already gathered and used by mobilising the entire Arab world and had then been humiliated after attacking Madinah. Even if this were possible, how could anyone have garnered the courage and will for another action exactly the same as the previous one, especially because there was no certainty that they would be successful this time. This was the reason why the Quraysh were quiet for a while after the Battle of Ahzab.

Contrary to the Quraysh, Muslims learned their lessons from this battle and it proved to be a blessing for them. Because of it, they were freed from the only Jewish tribe, the Banu Qurayẓah, which lived in the surroundings of Madinah. The hypocrisy of the hypocrite group that had acted as the fifth column during the battle with an aim to harm the Muslims became evident to all. The circumstances and outcome of this battle profoundly increased loyalty to Islam and belief in help from God among sincere followers of the faith.

The Jews of Khyber had not yet lost hope. They continued to hatch conspiracies although they did not have much success.

Plan of the Prophet (sws) for ‘Umrah

A year after the Battle of Ahzab, the situation changed extraordinarily, to the surprise of Muslims, Jews and Quraysh alike. The Prophet (sws) dreamt that he had entered the Ka‘bah along with his Companions who had shaved their heads. This act of shaving the head related to the Ka‘bah pilgrimage is part of undertaking the ‘umrah. The Prophet (sws), therefore, interpreted this to mean that he would offer the ‘umrah and carry out its requirements with his Companions. Although the Quraysh had closed the doors of the Ka‘bah to Muslims and the nature of their political relationships with Muslims was also not such that the latter could think of making a journey to Makkah, yet the Prophet (sws), considering his dream

to be a sign from God, announced to all Muslims in and around Madinah that he planned to offer ‘umrah in the month of Dhu al-Qa‘dah and that they should be ready to accompany him.

This decision of the Prophet (sws) was neither emotional nor made in a hurry, in the light of the dream. It was aimed towards obeying an instruction from God. A prophet’s dreams are a form of revelation, although details are somewhat vague and their purpose becomes clear later. However, the prophet is assigned to understand this hidden meaning and to implement it accordingly. For example, Abraham (sws) dreamt that he was slaughtering his son and he decided to act upon this, thinking of it as a sign and instruction from God. But just as he was about to do so, he was stopped. It was revealed to him that the dream was a test for him and not an instruction for the slaughter of his son. The real interpretation of the dream was to devote his son to the service of the House of God. Abraham (sws) therefore, dedicated Ishmael (sws) to the custodianship of the Ka‘bah. In exactly the same manner, the Prophet (sws)’s preparations to proceed to Makkah were in obedience to God’s instructions and there was no political reason for the same.

When Orientalists pick up their pens to write a biography of the Prophet (sws), they will go to any length. The famous Orientalist Montgomery Watt states on the subject of Hudaybiyyah in his book “Muhammad at Medina” that the purpose of this journey for ‘umrah was to show to the Arabs that Islam was not a foreign religion which was not rooted within Arabia. It had its roots in Arabia and Muslims were as interested in the worships of Hajj and ‘umrah as were other Arabs. Hence, if Islam were to gain prominence, the centrality of Makkah would not be affected. This speculation from Watt could have been accepted had the worships of hajj and ‘umrah or the centrality of Makkah as a policy of Islam were derived through this journey of the Prophet (sws). The reality is that many years before, the Quran had already accused the Quraysh of turning the centre of tawhiid, built by their father, Abraham (sws), into a fort of polytheism and had mutilated the worship of God into mere rituals. The status of the Quraysh was therefore, that of a traitor that had usurped the resources of the House of God. After this, during the first year of migration, the Ka‘bah had been declared the qiblah for Muslims and thus made the centre of the Muslim nation. Appropriate changes were also made in the worship acts. Instructions were given to free it from the usurpers by using armed attacks. All of these matters were discussed in Surah Baqarah which was revealed immediately after migration. The battles of Badr, Uhud and Ditch took place after this. Whether this was clear or not to Watt, the Arabs were very clear that the centre of Muslims was the Ka‘bah and they wanted to revive the nation of Abraham (sws).

Some biographers, such as Hussain Hekal of Egypt have suggested that the purpose of the Prophet (sws)’s journey was to offer hajj. This speculation too is wrong due to many reasons. Firstly, it is known that the Prophet proceeded to Makkah as soon as the month of Dhu al-Qa‘d began. If he had wished to perform Hajj, the journey would have been undertaken towards the end of Dhu al-Qa‘dah so that return was possible after two to three weeks. For the final journey, the Prophet (sws) had used just such a schedule. If he had wished to offer hajj and left at the beginning of Dhu al-Qa‘dah, it would have meant an absence of 50-55 days from his centre. This would not have been judicious during those tumultuous times. Secondly, the Prophet himself declared his purpose being that of performing ‘umrah during negotiations on the treaty of Hudaybiyyah. Thirdly, in the event of not being able to perform ‘umrah, he paid its qada in the form of the ‘umrah the next year. Had the hajj remained unoffered, the qada would

have been that of hajj. It is therefore correct to say that the Prophet (sws) set out to offer ‘umrah and not hajj.

The Prophet (sws)’s announcement and intent to proceed for ‘umrah in the light of his dream overjoyed the Muslims who began to make preparations on the one hand and created doubts and fears in the hearts of hypocrites and weak Muslims on the other. They began to think of excuses to avoid the discomforts of the journey. Hypocrites living around Madinah declared the journey to be suicide. According to tradition a pilgrim in the state of ahram could keep one sword in its sheath for self defence. The enmity of the Quraysh was evident to the hypocrites. They knew well that the Quraysh were lusting for the Prophet (sws)’s blood and that they would consider unarmed Muslims arriving in Makkah as easy prey. They could not believe, therefore, that Muslims would be able to protect themselves from the warring Quraysh. They were of the firm opinion that those going to Makkah would not return alive. Referring to these fearful doubts of the hypocrites, the Qur’an said:

Nay, ye thought that the Messenger and the Believers would never return to their families; this seemed pleasing in your hearts, and ye conceived an evil thought, for ye are a people lost [in wickedness]. (48:12)

Some Muslims thought of this pilgrimage in terms of monetary benefits. They believed that those participating in wars hoped for booty in case of victory whereas this journey was not only dangerous but also devoid of any possibility of financial advantages. It was, therefore, of no use to participate in such a mission. Thus, hypocrites and those Muslims avoided the journey and stayed at home.

Departure for Makkah

As soon as the month of Dhu al-Qa‘dah in 6th Hijri began, the Prophet (sws) gave orders to proceed on the journey, in which 1400-1500 faithful Muslims accompanied him. They had 70 camels for sacrifice. Collars were hung around the necks of these camels to demarcate their sacrificial nature. At the predetermined place of Dhu al-Halifah, the entire group put on their ahram for ‘umrah and proceeded to Makkah. Bisr bin Sufyan Ka‘bi (rta) was sent forward to do a reconnaissance so that he could inform of any unexpected move on the part of the enemy. According to established norm, every pilgrim had one sword in his sheath and no other war equipment.

Two stops before Makkah, Sufyan Ka‘bi (rta) informed the Prophet (sws) that the Quraysh were under a misunderstanding. They believed that the Muslims wanted to overpower them under the guise of offering ‘umrah. Since both the Quraysh and Muslims were in a state of war with each other, the former had vowed that they would not allow the latter to enter Makkah. They were ready to fight and had also called upon their allied tribes: their armies called Ahabish.[1] As an initial tactic, 200 soldiers under the command of Khalid ibn Walid had been posted at Dhu Tuwa. According to narratives, after hearing this, the Prophet (sws) said with great sorrow: “regrets upon Quraysh. They have been destroyed by their desire to wage war. Even then, they have not learned any lesson. It could have been that they may not have come between the Arabs and myself. They would not have suffered at all. Had the Arabs killed me, their desire would have been fulfilled. If Almighty Allah had given me power over the Arabs, the Quraysh would have accepted Islam in vast numbers. And if they had not, then they would have chosen the way

of war, of which power they possess. They harbour great misgivings about me. By God, I shall continue to struggle with them, armed with the message that Allah has given to me until it dominates them or I die."

These words of the Prophet (sws) carry great significance. They contain the expression of love of kinship and generosity that he held for his people, as well as severe pain at the foolishness and non compromising nature of the Quraysh. In spite of this, he has clearly expressed his firm desire to meet the obligations of his status because there was no possibility to make any compromise on this.

Entry in the Bounds of Haram

The Prophet (sws) consulted his Companions in the light of the information received from his informant. The consensus was to take a route other than the main road. The Prophet (sws) turned to the right of the main route with guidance from a Companion who knew the way and, after passing through difficult pathways and rocky places, reached the plains of Hudaybiyyah during the night. This is only nine miles from Makkah and marks the beginning of the Haram. (Today, this place is called Shamisiyyah. Documents of pilgrims are checked here). This was a foresighted action. Obviously, if the caravan had not left the main route, they would have been barred from progress just two stops from Makkah. It could have been possible that a fight ensued and the desire to pay respects to the Haram would have remained just a desire. By changing the direction of the caravan, God postponed the danger of meeting the Quraysh and enabled the group to reach a place which was within the boundaries of the Haram. Here, the members of the group were relieved, in that even if they had not entered the Haram, they were at least inside its boundaries. The danger of any battle was also reduced because fighting within the Haram boundaries was not allowed according to Arab tradition. If the Quraysh violated this, they would have been criticised in all of Arabia. Muslims, therefore, possessed a dual protection here. One was due to the sacred month and the other because of their location around the Haram. They were safe from the Quraysh.

According to narratives, the she camel, al-Qaswa, of the Prophet (sws), stopped at a place in Hudaybiyyah and despite many efforts, did not move. People considered this to be the whim of an animal but the Prophet (sws) said that "being whimsical is not in the nature of al-Qaswa. It seems as if the God who had stopped the feet of elephants in their track has also stopped the feet of this camel. Hence, everyone should stop here. Today, whatever anyone asks of me which is meant to pay tribute to anything declared by God as sacred, I shall not desist in acting upon it."[2] The Prophet (sws) was referring to the incident of the People of the Elephant that had occurred about eight years earlier. At that time, the ruler of Yemen, Abrahah, had attacked Makkah. When his army marched into Mina, the elephants that were a part of the army stopped at the Valley of Muhassar and refused to get up. God had put brakes on their feet to ensure that the sanctity of His House would not be destroyed. The Prophet (sws) deduced from the stopping of al-Qaswa that if the Muslims were to move away from Hudaybiyyah, the Quraysh would be ready to fight and would not stop at destroying the sanctity of the House of God.

Therefore, for the sake of protecting the Haram's sanctity, the Prophet (sws) gave orders for camping at Hudaybiyyah. That his fears were absolutely correct came to be known later as circumstances unfolded.

When the Quraysh troops marching towards 'Asfan came to know that the Muslim caravan had turned away to the left, they returned to the city to carry out its defence. When they found that the Muslims had reached Hudaybiyyah, they proceeded to Hudaybiyyah. One of their groups surrounded the camp of the Muslims to keep a watch over them. Observing the stopping of al-Qaswa as a sign from the unseen and assessing a real possibility of an attack from the Quraysh, the Prophet (sws), in answer to the hostile and hard approach of the Quraysh, decided to soften his own stance. The reason was not any weakness, but the desire to obey and respect God's instructions which has been termed as reverence and piety by God Himself.

Such [is his state]: and whoever holds in honour the symbols of Allah, [in the sacrifice of animals], such [honour] should come truly from piety of heart. (22:32)

This verse, related to the obligations of hajj and 'umrah had been revealed earlier.

(Translated by Nikhat Sattar)

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1. Ibn Kathir, Al-Sirah al-nabawiyyah, vol. 4, 225.

2. Ibn Sa'd, Al-Sirah al-nabawiyyah, vol. 1, 413.

CHAPTER 35

Communications with the Quraysh

Some well wishers of the Muslims met the Prophet (sws) in the leadership of Badil ibn Warqa', the leader of the Banu Khuza'ah in Hudaybiyyah in order to inform him of the intentions of the Quraysh and obtain his views. The Prophet (sws) said that they wished only to perform the 'umrah and would return to Madinah as soon as they completed all the necessary rituals. Badil told him that the Quraysh were determined not to let Muslims enter the Haram. For this, they were willing to kill and be killed. The Prophet (sws) answered that he was not planning to go to war; the Quraysh had suffered greatly because of their desire for confrontation. If they could settle upon a date by which they would agree not to intervene between himself and Arabia, he would be willing to compromise with them, for the sake of the bond of love between them and himself. But if they forced battle upon the Muslims, the latter would have no option but to take out their swords and for this too, they would find them to be ready.

Badil went to Makkah to inform the leaders of the Quraysh about the situation. He had just begun to relate his discussion when the former's emotional leaders, 'Ikramah ibn Abi Jahal and Hakam ibn al-'As became angry and said that they had no need to listen to the news which he had brought; rather, he should just take their message back to the Muslims that they could not enter Makkah for as long as even one person among the Quraysh was alive. At this, a leader of the Thaqif, 'Urwah ibn Mas'ud reprimanded them, saying that a nation that makes such decisions based on emotions could never succeed. They should listen to Badil first; if they liked it, they could accept it; otherwise, they were free to reject it. The other leaders then listened to what Badil had to say. 'Urwah's advice was that Muhammad (sws) had given a sound suggestion and they should accept it. The leaders of the Quraysh assumed that the offer for a compromise was based on the weakness of the Muslims and decided to adopt a policy to frighten them and put pressure upon them to take advantage of this presumed weakness, as will become obvious from subsequent events.

To assess the situation clearly, Hali ibn 'Alqamah, the leader of the most skilled tribe in swordsmanship, Ahabish, decided to go to Hudaybiyyah. He found all Muslims to be in a state of ahram. Sacrificial animals, wearing collars around their necks to enable recognition stood in rows upon rows. There was not even any minor evidence of preparation for battle. Halis was convinced of the intention of the Muslims to go to Makkah only for 'umrah. His religiosity did not allow him to stop 1,500 individuals from the rituals and a large number of animals from being sacrificed in the name of the House of God. When, upon returning to Makkah, he informed the Quraysh leaders of his perception, they thought he was being merely simple minded and ridiculed him. At this, he was furious and told them that he had not made an agreement with them to become a constraint to those who wished to honour the House of

God. They should allow Muhammad (sws) to offer ‘umrah, otherwise he would leave them along with everyone of his soldiers. The Quraysh became worried at seeing such differences develop within their ranks, calmed down Halis and promised him that they would try to find a way to dialogue with Muhammad (sws) and make a comprise with him on conditions which would be mutually acceptable.

‘Urwah ibn Mas‘ud Thaqafi was selected to begin discussions with the Prophet (sws). He started off with an attempt to intimidate and ridicule them as per the agreed policy of the Quraysh. He mentioned the battle preparations and the united front of all tribes of the Quraysh. He mocked the Companions by saying that people from such a medley of backgrounds would be likely to desert the Prophet (sws) under difficult circumstances. ‘Urwah also made reference of the national and filial relationship of the Prophet (sws) with the Quraysh and suggested that he send his representative to the Quraysh in order to convince them of the peaceful nature of his proposed visit to Makkah.[1]

The Companions were irate at ‘Urwah’s attitude and responded with scorn. The Prophet (sws) gave the same explanation to him as he had given to Badil. ‘Urwah was highly impressed at the extraordinary esteem and loyalty shown by the Companions to the Prophet (sws). He advised the Prophet (sws) to send a representative to Makkah to present his points of view to the Quraysh. Upon return, he gave a detailed briefing to the Quraysh and asked them not to take the matter lightly but to consider all pros and cons before they decided to confront the Muslims. The offer for truce from Muhammad (sws) was worth thinking about and it would not be prudent to reject it.

Following advice from ‘Urwah, the Prophet (sws) sent Khirash ibn Umayyah al-Khuza‘i as his representative to the Quraysh. When he reached Makkah, young men driven by their emotions cut off the legs of his camel and also attacked him. The tribe of Ahabish intervened to save him and he returned to his camp. The Prophet (sws) decided that to calm the enraged Quraysh, it might be better to give responsibility for ambassadorship to one of their own people. According to the old and traditional distribution of responsibilities, the Banu ‘Adi were usually selected for roles of ambassadorship. Following this tradition, the Prophet (sws) instructed ‘Umar (rta), who belonged to the Banu ‘Adi to go to Makkah. He suggested that the Quraysh had many complaints against him and hence they would be prejudiced while speaking with him. Additionally, considering that the Quraysh were in an excitable mood, a person whose tribe was present in Makkah should be sent to negotiate with them. There was no one strong enough from the Banu ‘Adi in Makkah who could provide him with any protection. This advice was very sound. Hence, ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan (rta) was chosen for the purpose. He belonged to the Banu Umayyah which was leading the Quraysh. ‘Uthman (rta) left for Makkah. On the way, he met Aban ibn Sa‘id ibn al-‘As who was one of his well wishers and also from his tribe. He took him under his protection and arranged meetings with the leaders of the Quraysh. The Quraysh responded by saying that they would not allow the Muslims to perform ‘umrah that year at any cost, but there was no barrier for ‘Uthman (rta). He could proceed to offer ‘umrah. ‘Uthman (rta) rejected this offer by saying that since the Prophet (sws) was being stopped from ‘umrah, he would not do it without him.

The Pledge of Ridwan

To give an even more serious visage to their threat to the Muslims which they had initiated by cutting off the legs of Khirash's she-camel and attacking him, the Quraysh took advantage of 'Uthman's visit. They delayed their negotiations with him unnecessarily and spread the rumour within his camp that he had been killed in Makkah. Biographers do not assign specific responsibility for the spread of this rumour, but indications are that the Quraysh were responsible. It is obvious that such a rumour could not have spread among Muslims by itself. Firstly, they were in a situation of siege themselves and were not even allowed to move freely, let alone be aware of the situation of the Quraysh. Also, the people of faith had been trained on such lines that every person adopted a highly responsible attitude and sought guidance from the Prophet (sws) in every matter. Secondly, the hypocrites who were experts in rumour mongering were not part of this journey; this group was entirely made up of true Muslims. Thirdly, the Quraysh had assigned people to hover around the Muslims to keep a watch, jeer at them and make fun of them. It was very easy to spread any rumors through them and considering the hostile attitude of the Quraysh, such actions were expected. It seems therefore, that conspirators within the Quraysh had spread this rumour and as soon as the Muslims came to know of it, they were sure of its authenticity.

The Quraysh had spread this rumour so that the Muslims might become even more frightened. But its impact was opposite to their expectations. Instead of Muslims running away from the place which held danger for them, every individual became livid with anger and wanted to take revenge. To control the anger of the Companions, the Prophet (sws) sat down under a cactus tree and began to take an oath from every Muslim, that he would not rest without avenging the murder of 'Uthman (rta) and for this, would not desist from sacrificing his own life. All Companions took this oath with great passion and religious fervour. This turn of situation caused the Quraysh to adopt a more reasonable attitude. Instead of further delay in the negotiations, they decided to send 'Uthman (rta) back to his camp and promised him that they would send their representative to discuss and finalise an agreement with the Prophet (sws).

When the oath-taking process was over, and 'Uthman (rta) returned to the camp of the Muslims, everyone realized that the rumour was false. Thus, it was no longer necessary to carry out any action according to the oath. However, the success which the Companions had achieved remained their hallmark forever.

The unique feature of the oath taken by the Prophet (sws) in Hudaybiyyah was that it had occurred under conditions of poverty and being away from home, in the centre surrounded by enemies and when Muslims had imposed the conditions of the ahram upon themselves. They possessed only swords; they had neither shields, nor archery equipment, nor spears. On the other hand, the enemy was giving continuous signals that it would use every possible weapon of oppression and cruelty. While taking the oath, the assets of the faithful was the power they gained by submission to and focus on God; faith and belief, pride in their religion and belief in help from God. God Almighty accepted this fealty; gave satisfaction and a sense of calm to the hearts of the Companions; bestowed His blessings and gave tidings of continuing success in the near future. The Qur'an mentions this in the following words:

Allah's Good Pleasure was on the Believers when they swore Fealty to thee under the Tree: He knew what was in their hearts, and He sent down Tranquillity to them; and He rewarded them with a speedy

Victory; And many gains will they acquire [besides]: and Allah is Exalted in Power, Full of Wisdom. Allah has promised you many gains that ye shall acquire, and He has given you these beforehand; and He has restrained the hands of men from you; that it may be a Sign for the Believers, and that He may guide you to a Straight Path; And other gains [there are], which are not within your power, but which Allah has compassed: and Allah has power over all things. (48:18-21)

In the history of Islam, this oath became known as the Pledge of Ridwan, and all those Companions who took this oath and demonstrated an exceptional example to sacrifice their lives in the way of faith assumed a special status in Muslim society. The verse says that God Almighty Himself motivated these Companions. This motivation is the real strength that cannot be defeated by the strongest of enemies. The faithful were rewarded with many successes as a result of this oath; although these were still hidden in the future but had been decided upon in the divine Court. Success in the near future meant the victory of Khyber which Muslims attained soon after return from Hudaybiyyah and where they also gained war booty in plenty. The victory which was to be defined by God Almighty refers to the victory of Makkah which was gained after two years.

Agreement for Peace

Before the oath, the Quraysh were satisfied that they had forced the Muslims to stop advancing towards Makkah by threatening them and that their policy had been successful as per their expectations. Hence, the signals and messages they sent out became harder and more non flexible. Suddenly, they saw their plan go awry as the environment for revenge became stronger within the Muslim camp and unforeseen circumstances arose due to the latter's passion to sacrifice their lives. At this stage, any counter revenge actions could have been disastrous for the Quraysh themselves. It may have produced the danger of a battle within the boundaries of the Haram in which one party would have been those who had come to offer the 'umrah and who wished to abide by the sanctity of the Haram, and the other party would have been the custodians of the Haram and their allies. The blame for such a battle would have lain solely upon the Quraysh because the leaders of the three powerful tribes: Ahabish, the Banu Khuda'ah and the Banu Thaqif had observed with their own eyes that the Muslims had no intention of starting a war and that they had come only with the passion to pay tribute and perform the actions as prescribed by God. They had gone to the extent of offering a compromise in order to convince the Quraysh to adopt an attitude of reason, but the Quraysh were adamant not to do so. If such a war had been fought, it would have been a clear proof of their egotism, rigidity and unfair use of their status, which would have greatly harmed their reputation and they would not have been able to compensate for it ever. In this completely changed situation, the Quraysh had no option but to extend their hand to calm the enraged Muslims, so that the danger of a war could be averted and they did not lose face. This was the same solution which had been suggested by the Prophet (sws) earlier. The Quraysh accepted it now, but only after considerable loss. They sent one of their leaders, Suhayl ibn 'Amr to the Muslim camp for negotiations on a compromise. On seeing him coming, the Prophet (sws) said that God had made matters easy for them. This was a signal to the fact that the Quraysh had given up their insistence and

adopted the advice which he had been giving to them and that an opportunity for a compromise was evident.

A question arises here that, when the Quraysh were denying the Prophet (sws) and that the confrontation with them till then was due to the fact that it was not possible to arrive at a peaceful agreement with them because they were deniers of the Prophet (sws), why was there a change in the approach adopted by the Muslims? In our view, the answer is that in spite of condemning the leadership of Quraysh and declaring them to be liable to divine punishment, the Quran had never, at any stage, announced that their people would not be given time to correct themselves. In Surah Anfal, after commenting upon the Battle of Badr, while very strong and strict language has been used against the Quraysh, more time was given to them to reform themselves and the following instruction was given:

But if the enemy incline towards peace, do thou (also) incline towards peace, and trust in Allah. For He is One that heareth and knoweth [all things]. (8:61)

In the light of this guidance, the Prophet (sws) brought the possibility of a truce to their attention, but the Quraysh gave this a wrong meaning altogether, and thought that this change in the attitude of Muslims was due to their weakness. They insisted upon confrontation, but the Pledge of Ridwan was enough to open their eyes. In order to escape from this predicament, it became necessary for them to accept the offer of a truce. When they expressed their agreement for this, the Prophet (sws) had already been assigned to agree to such an agreement according to God's above instruction. He, therefore, welcomed Suhayl ibn 'Amr and began negotiations.

The Quraysh created unnecessary problems in agreeing to the terms of the agreement and tried to gain the upper hand on every point. Although they satisfied their ego through this approach, they were unable to obtain any political benefit in the future.

Biography books and narratives and Ahadith tell us that the wording of this agreement was somewhat as follows:

"These are the points on which Mohammed bin Abdullah has agreed with Suhayl ibn 'Amr.

· That the two have agreed to remove the danger of war from people for a period of 10 years. During this period, the people will live in peace and both parties will refrain from attacking each other.

· That any person from the Quraysh who goes to Muhammad (sws) without permission from his guardian will be returned and any person from the Companions of Muhammad (sws) who goes to the Quraysh will not be returned.

· That between us, all kinds of hostile activities will remain suspended. Neither will go against the other either openly or in secret.

· That anyone else who wishes to side with Muhammad (sws) and to enter into this agreement can do so, and anyone who wishes to side with the Quraysh and to enter the agreement can do so.

· That you (the Prophet) shall return this year and shall not enter Makkah, but next year, we (Quraysh) will retire and you will be able to enter Makkah with your Companions. You will stay there for three days and you will possess the arms of the soldier (swords in their sheaths). You will not carry any other arms into the city.

The witnesses to this agreement were Abu Bakr (rta), ‘Umar (rta), ‘Uthman (rta), Sa‘d ibn Abi Waqqas (rta) and Muhammad ibn Maslamah (rta) from the side of Muslims and Huwaytab ibn ‘Abd al-‘Uzza and Makraz ibn Hafs from the side of the Quraysh.

(Translated by Nikhat Sattar)

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1. Ibn Kathir, Al-Sirah al-nabawiyyah, vol. 2, 228.

CHAPTER 36

Distress of Muslims at the Terms of the Hudaybiyyah Agreement

During the settlement of the terms of agreement, dissatisfaction prevailed among the Muslims in the camp. The reason for this was the insistence of the Quraysh upon certain points which demonstrated their superiority and the Muslims felt that they were accepting these under pressure from the Quraysh. ‘Umar (rta) became impatient with the terms and asked the Prophet (sws) whether the Quraysh were not on the side of falsehood and themselves (Muslims) not on the side of truth? The Prophet (sws) answered: “Certainly!” ‘Umar asked again whether the Quraysh would not go to Hell and Muslims to Paradise in case a war was fought. The Prophet (sws) answered: “This will happen, without doubt.” ‘Umar then said that in that case, why should they face humiliation and return to Madinah, whereas God had still not decided between the Quraysh and the Muslims? The Prophet (sws) answered: “Ibn Khittab; I am God’s prophet. He will not waste me.”[1]

The mindset represented by ‘Umar (rta) in this dialogue shows that he felt humiliated at returning to Madinah and wished to fight in order to meet the requirement of the Pledge of Ridwan and to bring it to its natural conclusion. The Prophet (sws) reassured him that there was no need to worry. God’s prophet was under the direct protection of God. He does not do anything which could cause embarrassment for those on the path of the truth.

The inequality that was evident in the clause related to Muslims who went to Makkah from Madinah and would not be returned was also a matter upon which Muslims sought clarity from the Prophet (sws). He answered: “Anyone who leaves us to go to the Quraysh will be rejected by God. He will be of no use to us. As far as he who comes to us from Madinah is concerned, God will find a way out for him soon.” This clause was implemented at the same time that the agreement was signed upon Abu Jandal, the son of Suhayl ibn ‘Amr himself. He tried to run away to the Muslim camp. He cried and lamented that he was being oppressed in Makkah and wanted to be saved from that situation. Suhayl demanded that according to the agreement, his son should be returned to him. If this was not done, the agreement would become invalid. The Prophet (sws) consoled Abu Jandal and told him that God would take care of him and returned him to the Quraysh. This incident shook the entire Muslim community and they felt the one sidedness of the agreement severely. The clarification which the Prophet (sws) gave about this clause indicates that he interpreted it in the light of the Sunnah of God related to guidance and perdition. The individual who wished to return to the darkness of ignorance after being exposed to the light of Islam was already bereft of God’s blessings to accept the truth. Why should then such a person remain associated with the community of Muslims? What could be the benefit of regaining him from the Quraysh? Similarly, the hope of success for the Muslims of Makkah was based on the fact that the

agreement had been finalized at the hands of the Prophet (sws) under direct supervision of God. Thus, its consequences were His responsibility.

When the truce agreement had been signed, it was useless to lengthen the stay in Hudaybiyyah. For the situation when barriers were faced after Muslims had made a formal intention to offer ‘umrah or hajj, and it no longer became possible to fulfill this intention, verse 196 of Surah Baqarah had also been revealed according to which animals already dedicated for sacrifice were to be sacrificed and ahrams taken off. With this instruction in mind, the Prophet (sws) asked his Companions to sacrifice their animals, shave off their heads and remove their ahrams. The Companions were so sorrowful at the terms of the agreement that they made no move to do anything and no one got up to act upon the instructions. The Prophet (sws) went to his tent in a state of extreme worry. When the mother of the believers, Umm Salamah (rta) saw his face so strained, she asked him the reason. He told her about the response from the Companions. She advised him to carry out the sacrifice of his own animal. When people saw him, they would not lag behind in following his example. The Prophet (sws) followed her suggestion and people started to move and in obedience to their Prophet (sws), began to shave their heads and sacrifice their animals. After removing the ahrams, the Prophet (sws) ordered return to Madinah.

During the return journey to Madinah, the Muslims were very tired and sorrowful. Everyone was lost in his/her thoughts. The questions that were worrying all of them and for which they could not find any answers were:

1. What was the benefit of a journey as a result of which Muslims were returning without having gained their purpose while the enemy rejoiced?

2. After taking an oath to fight, why was there a need for a truce, when the real purpose had been to conquer Makkah?

3. The dreams of prophets are always true; why did this dream of the Prophet (sws) appear to be false?

The Prophet (sws) reassured his people that they had returned safe and sound and that, despite having gone to the central place of the enemy, the stage of bloody fighting had not been reached. However, the rewards for jihad and ‘umrah were reserved for them with God. Returning in the manner they did was not at all the same as returning without having achieved their purpose. As far as the dream was concerned, that was true, but it had not specified any time. Hence, if the ‘umrah had been postponed by one year, that was the most appropriate and relevant time for it to be offered. But the Companions were so shocked at their return that their minds could find no solace. At last God honoured them and revealed Surah Fath during the journey. After the revelation, the Prophet (sws) told the Companions that the surah that had been revealed to him that night was more precious to him than anything else in

the world. It is narrated that he called ‘Umar (rta) specially because he had openly expressed his dissatisfaction. This surah gave convincing replies to all the queries that had been troubling the minds of the Companions.

Surah Fath praised fully the attitude which the faithful had adopted during this mission. It said that the attitude was made possible by the sakinah which God had blessed his servants with. The surah criticised the attitude of the Quraysh which resulted in their pride becoming the cause of their ignorance. This needs further elaboration.

Sakinah means patience, perseverance, serenity, forbearance, dignity and wisdom. God had blessed his servants with these qualities during that journey. They did not get influenced by the lowly actions of their foe nor did anything in retaliation that might have been against God’s will or against the appropriateness of their faith, although many groups may well act in haste under such provocative circumstances and damage their cause irretrievably. Examples of the occasions at which sakinah were demonstrated are:

1. Muslims showed no fear at going inside the enemy’s den without any arms at the call from the Prophet (sws) to accompany him. They had belief in the dream of the Prophet (sws) and faith in the fact that God was with His Messenger. Hence this journey served to enhance their faith.

2. Muslims had left Madinah with the intention to offer ‘umrah. They did not let this purpose out of sight throughout the journey and did not forget any of the rules that were binding as a result. The base actions of the Quraysh were unable to turn them away from their objective.

3. In spite of the humiliating attitude, ridicule and sarcasm of the Quraysh, they persevered and did not lose their patience.

4. Although they were sorrowful and intensely emotional about some of the terms of the truce agreement, they did not undertake any rebellious action, but showed steadfastness at the orders of the Prophet (sws) and left the matter to God.

5. At the rumours of ‘Uthman (rta) having being killed, they took the oath with great fervor, although they had not come prepared for a formal battle. They had full faith in assistance from God.

(Translated by Nikhat Sattar)

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1. Muslim, Al-Jami‘ al-sahih, vol. 2, 99.

CHAPTER 37

The Treaty of Hudaybiyyah

Pride in Ignorance

This means the insistence of the Quraysh upon their wrong views merely to maintain a false sense of ego, contrary to truth and justice. There are several occasions at which these too were demonstrated.

1. As the news of arrival of the Muslims was received, without determining the reason for their arrival, and assuming that they had come to conquer Makkah, they took an oath not to let the Muslims enter Makkah. This was merely an emotional decision.

2. In spite of receiving news from various sources that the Muslims were sincere in their intention to offer ‘umrah, the Quraysh were not ready to change their stance and this caused a rift within their own ranks.

3. In contradiction to international practices, the Quraysh did not even respect the ambassadors of Muslims, although had they done so, they would have increased the dignity of their own status and this would have resulted in better consequences for them.

4. They created unnecessary problems at the time of negotiating terms of the agreement merely for the sake of satisfying their ego. As became clear later, they were unable to gain any political gains through these terms.

5. The attitude they adopted in this clearly demonstrated to the world that they employed their unwarranted and ignorant ego when discharging their responsibilities related to the House of God. They were not concerned with respecting the Ka‘abah as much as they were with maintaining the upper hand in talks. This was the same point that the Prophet (sws) had been mentioning over the years. The Quraysh gave a practical example of this.

The Wisdom of the Agreement

Surah Fath also described the wisdom that was evident within the agreement.

1. Delay in ‘Umrah

Referring to the dream of the Prophet (sws), Surah Fath says:

Truly did Allah fulfill the vision for His Messenger. Ye shall enter the Sacred Mosque, if Allah wills, with minds secure, heads shaved, hair cut short, and without fear. For He knew what ye knew not, and He granted, besides this, a speedy victory. (48:27)

This means that the opportunity to offer the ‘umrah would come. And it would come with such grandeur that Muslims would have no danger from anywhere and no concern of fighting or chaos. This was as if the ‘umrah had been postponed for one year in order to make it safe and protected for them. In other words, if Muslims had insisted in offering ‘umrah in spite of the attitude of the Quraysh at that time, the latter would not have deterred from fighting according to their oath and the alleyways of Makkah would have become red with spilt blood. Even assuming that the Muslims had a chance to offer ‘umrah, it would have been under extremely dangerous circumstances and their attention would have been towards the intentions and actions of the enemy instead of towards worship. According to the agreement, there was a delay of the ‘umrah for one year, but as per the promise of God, it was made possible without shedding a single drop of blood and without any fear.

2. Protection from Battle

Taking an oath for fighting and then agreeing upon truce had many points of wisdom which were disclosed by Surah Fath. It was said:

They are the ones who denied Revelation and hindered you from the Sacred Mosque and the sacrificial animals, detained from reaching their place of sacrifice. Had there not been believing men and believing women whom ye did not know that ye were trampling down and on whose account a crime would have accrued to you without [your] knowledge, [Allah would have allowed you to force your way, but He held back your hands] that He may admit to His Mercy whom He will. If they had been apart, We should certainly have punished the Unbelievers among them with a grievous Punishment. (48:25)

This verse includes three points of wisdom for not going to war:

1. In case a battle was fought within the boundaries of the Haram, a poisonous propaganda would have spread in the whole of Arabia that the followers of the new faith respected neither the Holy City nor the House of God. They wished to destroy the traditions of the Arabs. Such propaganda would have resulted in sowing the seeds of misunderstanding against Islam within Arabia and Muslims would have been forced to defend their character everywhere, as if they were criminals. By the Muslims adopting a path of truce instead of war, the Quraysh became the criminals. Every Arab accused the Quraysh of misusing their status to bar those who came for ‘umrah and animals from reaching the House of God. Hence, the comments made by Islam about the inability of the Quraysh leadership were correct. In contrast to this

attitude of the Quraysh, the Muslims ensured that the Haram and the House of God were fully respected and thus, everyone became full of admiration for them.

2. Many men and women had accepted Islam in Makkah but full information about them had not reached the Muslims in Madinah. Had a war broken out in Makkah at this stage, the former would have suffered at the hands of their own brothers in their ignorance. God had wanted that Islam not be deprived of these loyal individuals. Some of these individuals were Abu Jandal, Abu Bathir ‘Utbah and Umm Kulthum bint ‘Uqbah.

3. There were many people in Makkah who had not accepted Islam, as such, but were very dissatisfied with the attitude of their leaders. Their hearts and minds had become convinced of the truth of Islam. God wanted not to waste such people and to take them within His fold of mercy. These were the people who came towards Islam rapidly in an environment of peace. Prominent names among the Quraysh include Khalid ibn Walid (rta), ‘Amr ibn al-‘As (rta) and Mu‘awiyah ibn Abu Sufyan (rta). They accepted Islam after the truce but before the victory of Makkah.

3. Clear Victory

The repercussions of the agreement did not become obvious to people immediately due to the provocative attitude of the Quraysh and emotions of the Muslims. This caused a sense of superiority in general among the Quraysh and despair and sadness within Muslims. Surah Fath cleared this up by saying:

Verily We have granted thee a manifest Victory. (48:1)

When, in the light of this prediction, people analyzed the terms of the agreement, they realized that in reality, it was the key to victory over Makkah. The various aspects of declaring it a clear victory are very evident:

1. For the Quraysh to have accepted truce for a decade was akin to them accepting that the Muslims possessed a clear strength in terms of warfare over them. They viewed the constant state of war to be harmful for themselves and had no hope for a solution to their problems through war. When the fact is kept in mind that the three battles fought to date - Badr, Uhud and Khandaq were all imposed upon Muslims by the Quraysh, this psychological change becomes very meaningful and demonstrates the latter’s sense of defeat. For any party to show signs of defeat is a first sign towards being conquered. In contrast, there were no such signs among the Muslims that could provide an argument for their weakness.

2. According to the agreement, the Quraysh accepted the right of Muslims upon the House of God, whereas until then, they had been depriving them of the pilgrimage by declaring them rebels of their traditions.

3. For as long as the Quraysh were ruling Makah, they were a power. The agreement shook this power to the extent that all tribes of Arabia recognized this and they also realized that they would need to be close to the Muslims and enhance their relationships and influence with them. With the establishment of communications in this environment of truce, the barriers of mistrust and hostility which the Quraysh had built were destroyed. As a result, Arabs had the opportunity to observe the social norms of Muslims, the beauty of the manner in which they dealt with matters and their purity and truthfulness. It was possible to assess the revolution which had been brought about within the lives of Muslims through Islam. Therefore, Islam spread very rapidly during this period of truce.

4. According to the truce, the Quraysh accepted Muslims as an equal political power in the country and gave them the right to form alliances with other tribes. Until then, those tribes used to accept the leadership of the Quraysh. Some of the tribes around Madinah had signed agreements of non partisanship with Muslims, but they were not ready to become allies openly. After the agreement, there was no barrier for those tribes to become formal allies of Muslims. Immediately following the agreement, the Banu Khuza'ah signed an agreement of friendship with the Muslims and interactions with other tribes developed later. Banu Khuza'ah's enemy tribe, Banu Bakr sided with the Quraysh and entered the agreement by signing up with them. Both the tribes resided in valleys around Makkah.

5. The Quraysh could not take action upon signing of the agreement on ceasefire, but it became possible for Muslims to take action against those of their enemies who had been trying to harm them through conspiracies. Those conspirators had then to face the Muslims without support from the Quraysh. The first casualties in that action were the Jews of Khyber who had incited the Battle of Ahzab and who were planning to bring Ghatfan to invade Madinah. The Jews were defeated in the battle of Khaybar and this was an eye opener for other tribes who realized that they could not be safe while retaining hostilities with Muslims.

With such consequences of the agreement, it was not difficult to assess the fact that the ground would soon split from under the feet of the Quraysh. The power of the Muslims would increase exponentially soon and victory over Makkah would become a definite possibility. The Qur'an declared this agreement a clear victory because it was from the womb of this agreement that the victory over Makkah would emerge.

4. The Matter of going to Madinah without Permission from the Guardian

The specific condition within the agreement which caused much sorrow to the Muslims and gave the Quraysh a sense of superiority was the one which related to sending back to Makkah the Muslims who

went to Madinah without permission from their guardians. The same condition did not hold for those who left Madinah and went to Makkah, as they would not be returned by the Quraysh. This difference created a sense of inequality between the two parties concerned.

By including this clause within the agreement, the Quraysh attempted to stop their people from accepting Islam. It was obvious that if a person could not gain protection in Madinah after becoming a Muslim, why would he entail himself with such a burden and become a Muslim in the first place? But what the Quraysh did not understand was that Islam is the name of an ideology and philosophy and no barriers can be placed upon the thinking of humankind. Those who became Muslims would be so, even while remaining within Makkah and they would also motivate others to accept their faith. Prior to this, there were so many from the Quraysh who had accepted Islam while bearing great difficulties and who had migrated later. This condition would also not benefit the Quraysh if such a person left Makkah, and instead of finding refuge in Madinah, would have obtained protection somewhere else or decided to make it his permanent home.

On the other hand, those who had made great sacrifices for their faith and migrated to Madinah had reached a dignified status. They were receiving glad tidings of a beautiful end result from God and His Prophet (sws). Why would any of them bring misfortune upon himself by foregoing Islam and taking protection under the falling wall of the Quraysh? This is the reason why there are many examples of people who became Muslims and left Makkah but there is not a single example of anyone leaving Madinah to find refuge in Makkah.

After the passage of some time, this condition became a headache for the Quraysh themselves. It so happened that a Muslim, Abu Basir ‘Utbah ibn Usayd (rta) from Makkah reached Madinah. His guardian sent a person from the Banu ‘Amir and a freed slave to Madinah to bring him back. The Prophet (sws) gave charge of Abu Basir to them. These people had just left the boundaries of Madinah when Abu Basir seized the sword of the person from Banu ‘Amir and killed his companion. That person went to the Prophet (sws) with a complaint. Abu Basir also came and said to the Prophet (sws) that the former had fulfilled his responsibility under the agreement and therefore, he was not answerable to God afterwards. It was now Abu Basir’s responsibility to take care of his faith and he would do as he saw best. Saying thus, Abu Basir left Madinah and made his home in the mountains at al-‘Ays, located on the national trade route. Whenever a caravan of the Quraysh would pass, he would attack it and obtain something for himself. His example became a light for other Muslims who joined him until, according to narratives, their number increased to 70. This became a real problem for the Quraysh. The latter sent a delegation to the Prophet (sws) to help in addressing the issue but the Prophet (sws) excused himself and said that those people were outside his jurisdiction and he could not influence them. When the Quraysh insisted, the Prophet (sws) suggested that the condition for their return be removed from the agreement. They would return to Madinah themselves and would not continue to pose a problem for the Quraysh. Thus, by mutual agreement, this clause was removed.

The question whether the clause applied to women also arose. After the agreement, when Umm Kulthum bint ‘Uqbah ibn Abi Mu‘it migrated to Madinah, her brothers ‘Ammarah and Walid came to Madinah to demand her return. The Prophet (sws) sent them back and told them that the agreement

was valid only for men and not for women. The Quraysh insisted that it was valid for both. The words of the related clause of the agreement which are quoted in narratives include pronouns that are all for the masculine gender. Hence the Prophet's stance was correct. God Himself gave a decision on this matter in Surah Mumtahinah and opened a way out in the middle. It was said that it was to be assessed whether women coming to Madinah had accepted Islam sincerely and had migrated only for the sake of their faith. If they were not able to prove their faith, they would be returned, but if they had become Muslims, returning them to their guardians was not legitimate. In such a situation, if they were already married, they could not remain married to disbelievers. They would be kept in Madinah and the dower (mahr) which their husbands had paid to them would be returned to them.

In such a manner did the clause that had developed a sense of superiority among the Quraysh create many problems for them and it was removed from the agreement at their own request.

(Translated by Nikhat Sattar)

CHAPTER 38

The Rewards of the Hudaybiyyah Treaty

1. Victory of Khaybar

God Almighty rewarded the faithful for their patience and perseverance and wisdom by promising them in Surah Fath that He will provide them with a magnificent victory in the near future in which they will also obtain war booty in plenty. This victory came two months after return from Hudaybiyyah. This was the victory over Khaybar, the largest centre of the Jews.

The Jews had a large population in Khaybar and its suburbs, Fadak and Makkah. When the Banu Nadir were exiled from Madinah, they had settled in the Khaybar. These people were instrumental in planning for the Battle of Ahzab. Even after they were defeated in that battle, their conspiracies did not end. Instead, they kept plotting with the idolatrous tribes of northern Arabia, the Banu Ghatfan and the Banu Sa'd and continued to assess the possibility of preparing a large army to launch an attack on Madinah. This is the reason why the Prophet (sws) had to send commissions to many tribes to intimidate them and prevent them from becoming instruments of such conspiracies.

During the return journey from Hudaybiyyah, the Prophet (sws) was instructed about a new order to come soon from God. Only those people who had taken the oath of Ridwan were to be included in it. Those who had remained behind and not gone for 'umrah would try to participate in anticipation of the booty but they were to be refused and told clearly that because they had refused to join them for 'umrah, they had been forbidden to accompany them in this mission too.

Those who lagged behind [will say], when ye [are free to] march and take booty [in war]: "Permit us to follow you." They wish to change Allah's decree: Say: "Not thus will ye follow us: Allah has already declared [this] beforehand": then they will say: "But ye are jealous of us." Nay, but little do they understand [such things]. (48:15)

In the month of Muharram, 7th hijrah, the Prophet (sws) decided to break the influence of the Jews by attacking Khaybar. According to the above instruction, he took only those companions who had taken the oath of Ridwan and when others requested to be taken along, he refused. Biographers have quoted that his instruction was that no one who was not inclined towards jihad should be with them, but this does not explain the fact as described in Surah Fath. Narrators have not given the proper perspective. He must have said that only those people who had agreed for the first jihad should come on this journey; others were not required. This is the reason why the number of people in the army was 1400-1500, exactly the same who had gone for 'umrah. The Quraysh had always assisted the Jews, but this

time, they were unable to do so because of the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah. Thus, the Jews had to fight their own battle.

Because the Jews and the Banu Ghatfan were in cahoots, and it was quite possible that the Banu Ghatfan might come to the rescue of their allies, the Prophet (sws) camped at a place called Al-Raji‘, that was at the meeting point of the area of the Banu Ghatfan and Khaybar. The Banu Ghatfan came out to help the Jews, but when they sensed danger to their property and families, they preferred saving the latter.

The Prophet (sws) attacked Khaybar early in the morning. When the people of Khaybar came out with their spades and mattocks to work on their land, they found the army in front of them. They ran and took refuge in the Fort of Na‘im and closed its doors. They told the people within the fort that Muhammad (sws) was outside with his full army. The Prophet predicted: “God is the greatest! Khaybar shall be destroyed!” the Jew, Salam ibn Mishkam was present inside the fort and he was accompanied by people who were able to fight. During the siege, the famous Companion, Muhammad ibn Maslamah (rta) was standing under a wall of the fort when a door of the mill was thrown at him and he was killed. Both armies continued to throw arrows at each other. Finally, the Muslims were successful.

From among the Muslim army, the Banu Saham asked the Prophet (sws) for help as they did not have anything to eat or drink. The Prophet (sws) was short of rations. The Prophet (sws) prayed to God, saying that He knew of the circumstances of His servants; could He give them a castle in their custody from where they could meet their food needs? Thus, when the castle of Sa‘d ibn Mu‘adh was conquered, it had a large amount of foodstuff. A difficult castle was the castle of Qamus. This was possessed by the sons of Abu al-Huqayq, the leader of the Banu Nadir. It was conquered after a 20 day siege. The persons who were captured during this conquest included Safiyyah, the daughter of Huyy ibn Akhtab, the chief of the Banu Nadir. She was married to Kananah ibn Abi al-Huqayq. The Jews gathered within the castle of al-Zubayr which was situated at the top of a hill. The siege prolonged, but the castle could not be conquered. At last, the Muslims came to know that there was shortage of water within the castle and the Jews went down during the night to obtain water from a spring. The Muslims found the spring and stopped access to it. The Jews came out and after some resistance, the castle was conquered.

A large number of the Jews were concentrated within two castles, al-Watih and al-Salalim. The Prophet (sws) asked who would fight them. Muhammad ibn Maslamah (rta) got up and said: “O Prophet of Allah, these people have killed my brother Mahmud. I will go out to take revenge for him.” The Prophet (sws) prayed for his victory. As he went forward, Marhab attacked him with his sword. The sword was stuck in the helmet and, while he was trying to disengage it, Muhammad ibn Maslamah (rta) killed him. After this, Marhab’s brother Yasir came forward and called out for competition. Zubayr ibn al-‘Awwam fought and killed him. Some narratives suggest that ‘Ali (rta) had killed Marhab. Finally, these castles too were conquered.

Kananah ibn Abi al-Huqayq possessed in his custody the treasures of the Banu Nadir, which they had brought from Madinah. The Prophet (sws) called Kananah and asked him about this, first taking an oath that he would tell the truth and not hide anything. Kananah showed his ignorance about such a

treasure. It was conveyed to the Prophet (sws) that Kananah had been seen going to a certain deserted place. The Prophet (sws) gave orders for digging there and the treasure was discovered. Then the Prophet (sws) gave Kananah in the custody of Muhammad ibn Maslamah (rta) who made an effort to force the former to give information about the rest of the treasure but was unsuccessful. Ultimately, Kananah was killed.

When the Jews were no longer able to fight, they requested for peace. Muhaysah ibn Mas‘ud negotiated with them to find out their views. It was decided that the Muslims would possess all the property and wealth but the Jews would continue to work on the agricultural land. Half of the produce would belong to them and the other half to the new masters. Further, this arrangement would not be permanent. Muslims could expel the Jews anytime they wished.

When all matters had been settled with the Jews, Salam ibn Mishkam’s wife Zaynab sent a roasted goat to the Prophet (sws). She had poisoned it well. As soon as the Prophet (sws) took a mouthful, he realized that it was poisoned and threw it out. Bishr ibn Bara’a ibn Ma‘rur had swallowed his mouthful. He fell sick and died. The Prophet (sws) asked for Zaynab who admitted her crime but the Prophet (sws) forgave her.

Considering the situation in Khaybar, the rest of the Jewish population in Fadak and Wadi al-Qura’ etc made an agreement with the Muslims on the same terms as those for Khaybar before they came towards them.

After the war, when the Prophet (sws) distributed captives among the soldiers, it was found that Safiyyah was the daughter of the Jewish leader, Huyy ibn Akhtab. The Prophet (sws) freed her first and then married her.

(*Translated by Nikhat Sattar*)

CHAPTER 39

The Rewards of the Hudaybiyyah Treaty (cont)

1. *'Umrah al-Qada'*

According to the terms of the agreement, the Prophet (sws) could not offer *'umrah* during that journey, but he was permitted to do so the next year, so he decided to offer the *'umrah* during exactly the same days in Dhu al-Qa'dah 7th Hijri. The number of people embarking upon this journey was larger than that which had not been able to offer it the last time. The reason for this could be the environment of peace that may have prevailed after the agreement. As a preventive measure, weaponry was taken along but it was left outside the boundaries of the Haram in a valley and a contingent of 200 soldiers was assigned to guard it. According to the agreement, the Quraysh leaders left Makkah for three days but the rest of the population stood in lanes and on rooftops to watch the arrival of the Muslims. After three days spent in offering the rituals of *'umrah* and sacrifice of animals designated for this purpose, the Prophet (sws) gave orders for the Muslims to leave Makkah before sunset. This was the implementation of the dream which the Prophet (sws) had seen a year before. As promised by God, this entire journey was undertaken without any fear and no mischief was created from any source.

2. Acceptance of Islam by the Sons of the Quraysh

Some important sons of the Quraysh were forced to think realistically after the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah and subsequent successes of the Muslims and they became convinced of the truth of Islam. Thus, Khalid ibn Walid (rta) who had fought on behalf of the Quraysh in many battles was now ready to succumb to the attack of Islam itself. He left Makkah to go to Madinah to accept Islam. On the way, he met 'Amr ibn al-'As who asked him about his destination. He opened up his heart to him, thinking that he could no longer deny reality and told him that he was going to accept Islam. 'Amr ibn al-'As said that he had himself reached the same conclusion. Both of them came to the Prophet (sws) and entered the fold of Islam. Their services to the cause of Islam constitute a radiant period in the history of Islam. 'Uthman ibn Talhah was friends with Khalid ibn Walid. When the latter told him that he was going to Madinah, he also was ready to go along and accepted Islam with the other two. It was also during the peace times that Mu'awiyyah ibn Sufyan came to Madinah and accepted Islam. It seems that he came in a state of great poverty. One Hadith relates that when a companion asked the Prophet's (sws) advice about giving Mu'awiyyah his daughter's hand in marriage, the Prophet (sws) said that he was poor. Obviously, if the son of the leader of the Quraysh was poor in Madinah, it was because he had migrated and it was not

possible for him to bring any possessions, so he was still in want at that time. This is why the Prophet (sws) must have informed those asking for advice about his financial status.

3. Call to Faith during Peace Times

After the agreement on peace with the Quraysh, the believers had an opportunity to spread out within the country and preach Islam, as a result of which the new faith became well known throughout Arabia and many people embraced it. However, books of biography and history are silent on the details of this. ‘Allamah Shibli writes in his Sirat al-Nabi that after the agreement, the Prophet (sws), addressing the believers, advised them that they should spread out in the country like the apostles of Jesus (sws) and call people towards Islam. Under the new circumstances, every Muslim worked for preaching according to his/her own capacity because then there was no danger of a backlash from anywhere. Obviously, every Muslim must have implemented this to the utmost possible.

It seems that during those times, tribes sent their own people to assess the situation, or to learn about the new religion. Some of the questions they raised and the answers given to them are found in books of Hadith. Mention is also found of the People of Safa, for whom a platform near the Masjid-e Nabawi had been built. This was their school. Some companions taught them about faith and, after gaining knowledge from the Prophet (sws), they would return to their tribe to preach themselves. It was during those times that the famous Companion, Abu Hurayrah (rta) came from the tribe Daws to learn about Islam.

Some of the tribes that had supported Muslims during the victory over Makkah and sent thousands, not even hundreds of men to serve as soldiers in their army included those that had never been mentioned before the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah such as the Banu Layth, the Banu Salim, the Banu al-Husayn etc. It is obvious that the call to religion reached them during times of peace, they were able to evaluate it and later, guided towards faith, they participated in *jihad* for the success of their religion. Ten thousand Muslims took part in the *jihad* at the time of the victory of Makkah. This could not have been possible without the Muslims, who, taking advantage of the peaceful environment, made efforts to spread the message of Islam in each and every corner of Arabia and the non believers, after having assessed the lifestyle of the Muslims at close range, recognized and accepted the truth of Islam.

Many groups were sent towards tribes in the days after the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah under orders to preach Islam and, if they faced resistance, to fight them. The members of these groups were few and limited. Some tribes showed an inclination towards Islam; some dispersed and others were ready to fight. Sometimes it so happened that tribes would recite the *shahadah* or greet them by saying al-salam u ‘alaykum but the group members thought that they were doing so out of fear of getting killed and that they were really not Muslims at heart. Therefore, they dealt with them with severity. Such Muslims faced anger from the Prophet (sws). The natural result of the environment created by the agreement was that Arab tribes became curious to know more about Islam and when they thought about it without prejudice, they saw much in it to their benefit. This is why the number of Muslims increased exponentially during these times.

The Prophet (sws) also sent his ambassadors to some of the tribes. According to Ibn Sa'd, as a consequence of one such ambassadorship, Farwah ibn 'Amr, the leader of the Banu Jazam accepted Islam. Jayfar and 'Abd, leaders of the tribe Azd also came within the fold of Islam. Ghassan, Quda'ah and the Banu 'Adhra' also accepted Islam during this period. A large number of people from the Banu Hanifah came to Madinah and accepted Islam.

The tribes which had expressed their loyalty with the Prophet (sws) before the victory of Makkah are:

i. Banu Sa'd ibn Bakr

Dammam ibn Tha'labah, the leader of this tribe came to Madinah and tied his camel to the door of the mosque. When he entered the mosque, the Prophet (sws) was sitting among his companions. Dammam asked while standing: "Which among you is the grandson of 'Abd al-Muttalib?" The Prophet (sws) answered that it was he. He asked: "Are you Muhammad (sws)?" the Prophet replied in the affirmative. He said: "O' Ibn al-Muttalib! I will ask you a few questions, but in an abrupt manner. Do not take offence." The Prophet (sws) answered that he should go ahead and ask; he would not be offended. Dammam asked: "I ask you in the name of your Lord, the Lord of your forefathers and the Lord of the coming generations, is it true that God has sent you as His Messenger?" The Prophet (sws) answered: "Yes! God is witness". Dammam again asked him in the name of God, whether He had instructed him that they should worship Him only, not associate anyone with Him and forget all those idols that had been worshipped by their ancestors. The Prophet (sws) answered: "Yes! God is witness to this." He asked again: has God ordered us to offer the prayer five times a day?" The Prophet (sws) answered: "Yes! God is witness." In this way, D ammam asked about other obligations: the zakah, the fast, the hajj and the rest of instructions and the Prophet (sws) answered by holding God as witness. Finally, Dammam recited *shahadah* for the unity of God and the messengership of the Prophet (sws) and promised that he would implement the obligations advised by the Prophet (sws), and not add or subtract from them. After this, he turned and mounted his camel. He gave a full account to his tribe upon his return and the entire tribe accepted Islam.[1]

ii. Mazinah

Four hundred people of this tribe came and accepted Islam. Then they expressed a desire to migrate but their abode was not very far from Madinah, so the Prophet (sws) declared their place of residence as one of migration. They remained active in preaching Islam and took part in later battles fought for Islam.

iii. 'Abd al-Qays

A group comprising 14 members of this tribe came to accept Islam and gain knowledge about its instructions. They complained that they came across dangerous non-believers so they could come to

Madinah only to the most famous Haram. According to one narrative, the leadership of the group was with Mundhir ibn ‘A’idh, but according to Ibn Hisham, Jarud ibn ‘Amr was leading it. He was a Christian. He asked: “O Muhammad! I am already a follower of a divine religion. If I leave it for yours, are you a witness to your faith being the true one?” The Prophet (sws) said that he gave a guarantee that God had provided him with a religion better than his previous one. Thus, Jarud became a Muslim. The tribe of ‘Abd Qays was famous for extracting wine by fermenting it in special utensils. They asked: “O Messenger of God! May we be sacrificed for you! Which ones from among drinks are allowed?” The Prophet (sws) answered: “Do not drink that which is made in naqir.” The people, surprised, asked what he knew of naqir. The Prophet (sws) replied:” You empty the centre of the bark of a tree. That is the naqir.” The Prophet (sws) also forbade drinking that which was made in dubba (pumpkin) and muzaffat (utensils that had their pores blocked) and forbade any use of such pots so that these people would change their livelihood. Then he instructed them about the basic tenets of Islam: *shahadah*, salah, zakah, fasting, giving one fifth of war booty towards the cause of God and His Prophet.[2]

iv. Tay

This was the tribe of the reputedly magnanimous leader, Hatim Ṭa’i. His son, ‘Adi ibn Hatim was its king and very influential. He had accepted Christianity and believed that it was the right religion. Upon hearing of the Prophet’s victories, he was angry, and when the Muslims turned their attention to North of Arabia, he went towards Syria. When Muslims attacked his region, his daughter was among the captives. She introduced herself to the Prophet (sws) and asked for her life to be saved. The Prophet set her free after giving her gifts of clothes, equipping her for the journey and giving her animals to transport her. When she reached Syria and met her brother, she was quite upset with him, saying that if Mohammed (sws) was a prophet, there was good in supporting him; if he was a king, there was no humiliation in agreeing to obey him. ‘Adi decided to go to Madinah. He went there and introduced himself when the Prophet (sws) invited him to his house. On the way, an old woman stopped the Prophet (sws) and expressed her need. The discussion took longer than necessary and ‘Adi thought that a person who gave so much time to a lowly old woman could not be a king. When they entered the house, the Prophet (sws) spread out his cushion on the floor and asked ‘Adi to sit on it while he took the floor. This again impressed ‘Adi. The Prophet (sws) asked: “ ‘Adi, do you belong to the Christian sect of Kurkusi?” ‘Adi replied in the affirmative. The Prophet (sws) asked if he took one fourth of war booty from his people as their leader. ‘Adi again said yes. The Prophet (sws) said that this was not allowed in his religion. ‘Adi said that he was right and thought to himself that he must really be a messenger of God; ordinary people would not have known this fact. Then the Prophet (sws) said: “Perhaps the poverty of my companions, the large number of their enemies and their own lesser number is stopping you from entering my faith. Remember that soon these people shall possess so much wealth that they will wish to give it away but there will be no one to take it. You think that rule will always be with others, but remember that the white palaces of Babul will be with Muslims soon.” Hearing this, ‘Adi accepted Islam.[3]

A group under the lead of Zayd al-Khayl from the tribe of Tay reached Madinah. The Prophet (sws) presented the details of the religion to them and all of its members accepted Islam. The Prophet (sws) changed the name of the leader to Zayd al-Khayl.

v. Banu Tamim

Aqra‘ ibn Habis, ‘Atarud and Zabarqan ibn Badar were part of the group of this tribe. In accordance with their tradition, upon reaching Madinah, they sang praises in verse of their tribe and its leaders. The Prophet (sws) asked Hassan ibn Thabit (rta) to answer them. After this, one of their articulate orators gave a speech and the Prophet (sws) again asked one of his companions to answer. The group accepted that the orators and poets of the Prophet (sws) were better than their own. After accepting this superiority, the group members accepted Islam and the Prophet (sws) gave them leave to go after giving them gifts.

vi. Banu Azd

Under the leadership of Surad ibn ‘Abdullah, a group of this tribe came to Madinah and accepted Islam. The Prophet (sws) made Surad (rta) the leader and asked him to spread knowledge of Islam in Yemen and bring the surrounding tribes under his control. Obeying this order, when Surad (rta) went to a city, its inhabitants fought him and were defeated. They accepted Islam and sent their delegation to Madinah.

vii. Banu Kindah

Eighty people from this tribe, under the leadership of Ash‘ath ibn Qays reached Madinah. They entered the Masjid-e Nabawi such that they had combed their hair nicely and worn kohl in their eyes. They wore cloaks embroidered with silk. The Prophet (sws) asked if they had not accepted Islam. They answered that they had already done so. The Prophet (sws) then asked why he was seeing silk attire on their bodies. They answered that they were unaware of this instruction and tore off the silk part of their cloaks.

(Translated by Nikhat Sattar)

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1. Ibn Hisham, Al-Sirah al-nabawiyyah, vol. 2, 57.

2. Muslim, Al-Jami‘ al-sahih, vol. 1, 27.

3. Ibn Hisham, Al-Sirah al-nabawiyyah, vol. 2, 580-581.

CHAPTER 40

The Universal Prophethood of Muhammad (sws)

Although the Prophet (sws) received his apostleship among the Quraysh; the revelation he possessed was in the language of the Quraysh and it was among the Quraysh that he fulfilled his obligations of preaching the faith, this did not mean that he had been sent only for bringing about reforms in the Quraysh. Reforming the Quraysh was indeed his foremost responsibility, as in the verse: "And warn your tribesmen and relatives," (26:214) required him to do, but it was also clear to him that his work did not end with preaching to the Quraysh, but that his addressees were also other tribes and nations. Not only this, but God had assigned prophethood to him so that the religion of Islam would gain dominance over other faiths, regardless of whether the idolaters tried to stop him as much as possible. This can be explained in another way, by saying that there were two aspects to the Prophet (sws)'s divine mission. His specific prophethood was towards the Quraysh and the tribes of the Ishmaelites and the universal one towards people of the rest of the world. According to the demands of the former, he fought with the Idolaters of Arabia and the People of the Book at every stage. Additionally, he made it clear to his companions that two religions could not exist in Arabia. At the time of victory of Khaybar, when he appointed the Jews to work on the land, he had made it clear to them that this was a temporary arrangement and that whenever the Islamic government wished, they could be sent away. This is exactly what happened because at an appropriate time, they were ejected from their lands.

Requirements of Universal Prophethood

This fact was also obvious from the predictions of previous prophets. For example, the promise made to Abraham (sws) by God has been quoted as:

The progeny of Ibrahim would be the owners of the gates and all forces in the world will gain blessings through his generations. (Genesis, 22:18).

This condition for all nations of the world to be blessed through the progeny of Abraham (sws) was never met before the Prophet (sws). Christianity gained popularity in the nations of the world but this was not through the progeny of Abraham (sws), but through other people.

In the gospel of John, the Prophet (sws) has been called the leader of the world, (John, 14:30), who would come and hold the world to be in the wrong about sin, righteousness and justice (John 16:8), he will be the spirit of truth and will show the path towards purity of truth (John 16:13), he will be such a supporter who will stay with people until the end of the world (John. 14:16). In the history of the world, there is no one who comes close to these predictions other than the Prophet (sws).

There are three points that are prominent in these predictions. One, that this messenger would possess complete truth. In other words, the religions which other prophets had brought were based on the needs of their nations or times and were incomplete, but the Prophet (sws) would present a complete religion and he would finalize it. Second, his prophethood would be until the end of the world. Obviously, remaining until the end of the world does not mean physical presence because no one possesses the ability to live forever. It means that the teaching and guidance of this prophet will remain forever. Therefore, the Qur'an is the only divine Book which exists in its original and complete form and will remain so. No prophet shall come after the Prophet (sws). He will be the last prophet. Third, he will be a messenger for the entire world and all nations of the world will benefit from him. His prophethood will not be only for one nation but for all humanity and it will take into consideration the specific needs of humans. This condition, too, does not meet any other prophet's personality. Jesus (sws) was a great prophet but he came only for the Isrealites. He had clarified this very openly and the Qur'an quotes his statement that he was a prophet only for the Israelites. This part of the predictions too is fulfilled by the nature of the Prophet (sws). The Qur'an has articulated all of these points about the Prophet (sws):

We sent you not, but as a Mercy for all creatures. (21:107)

We have not sent you but as a universal [messenger] to men, giving them glad tidings, and warning them [against sin], but most men understand not. (34:28)

Practically it was impossible for the Prophet (sws) to reach out to all people of the world and inform them of the true religion, give glad tidings to those who believed in it and warn those who denied it, of their fate. The Qur'an made it clear that his responsibility would be to provide guidance only to the people he was addressing directly. Those who believed in him would become witness upon the rest:

Thus, have We made of you an ummah justly balanced, that ye might be witnesses over the nations, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves. (2:143)

Invitations to Foreign Kings

When matters in the country settled down after the treaty of Hudaybiyyah, the Prophet (sws) sent his ambassadors to the tribes of Arabia in general and to the rulers and kings of surrounding states in particular, writing to them to invite them towards Islam. This was the requirement of the status according to which he had been granted prophethood for all nations. Thus, he initiated a process which was to be completed by his ummah which he was preparing.

The letters were written to the kings of Abyssinia, Rome, Persia, Damascus, Pope of Rome and many governors. A brief mention of these is as follows:

1. Letter to the King of Abyssinia

Ashamah, the king of Abyssinia, allowed Muslims frustrated with the conditions in Makkah, to stay in his country and provided them with full protection. These muhajirs returned to Madinah after the migration to Madinah. Ja'far ibn Abi Talib reached there after the victory of Khaybar. At this, the Prophet (sws) said: "I cannot say whether I am happier at the victory of Khaybar or at the return of Ja'far from Abyssinia".

The Prophet (sws) first sent a letter to Ashamah and invited him to accept Islam but he declined with an apology despite being impressed with Islam's teachings, saying that his supporters within the government were few. He was trying to garner more support so that the conditions for Islam in his country might improve. Since considerable time had elapsed since then, the Prophet (sws) sent another letter, which was as follows:

In the name of the Most Compassionate and Merciful God, from Muhammad, the Messenger of God to Najashi, the King of Abyssinia.

Peace be upon him who adopts the way of guidance. After this, in front of you, I thank God, other than Whom no one is worthy of being worshipped; He, who is the Real King, the purest being, peace in totality, provider of safety and protection. I testify that 'Īsa ibn Maryam is the act of God and that word which, when He had inspired upon virgin, pure and pious Maryam, she became pregnant through His action and divine inspiration. This happened in the same way as God created Adam through His power.

I call you towards God, the One and Only God, and invite you to establish a shared connection through obedience to Him. I invite you to follow me and believe in the message that has come to me, because I am God's Messenger. I call you and all your armies towards the Almighty and Majestic God. I have communicated my message to you and fulfilled my obligation to advise; therefore, please accept this advice. Peace be upon him who walks upon the path of guidance.

Muhammad the Messenger of God

This letter was taken by 'Amr ibn Umayyah rta). When Najashi listened to its contents, he was very impressed. He kissed the letter and placed it upon his head. Then he wrote in answer, saying that he was witness to the Prophet (sws) being a true messenger of God. He had taken oath upon the hand of his cousin, Ja'far ibn Abi Talib and had entered the fold of Islam. He was sending his son and will soon come to meet the Prophet (sws) if instructed.[1]

This letter from the Prophet (sws) exists even now and its copies can be seen in books documenting letters of the Prophet (sws).[2]

The Prophet (sws) sent a message to Najashi (rta), proposing marriage to Umm Habibah bint Abi Sufyan (rta). Umm Habibah Ramla (rta) had migrated to Abyssinia with her husband ‘Ubaydullah ibn Jahash. ‘Ubaydullah had adopted Christianity after being influenced by the environment there and had passed away afterwards. Umm Habibah (rta) was the daughter of Abu Sufyan, the leader of Makkah and became a widow while in a foreign country. When the Prophet (sws) found out, he made Najashi (rta) his representative and proposed marriage to Umm Habibah(rta). Najashi (rta) talked with Umm Habibah’s relative, Khalid ibn Sa‘id ibn al-‘Ās (rta). When Umm Habibah (rta) agreed, Najashi (rta) gave 400 dirhams in dower and carried out the nikah. Umm Habibah (rta) came to Madinah with a caravan of Muslims.

2. Letter to the King of Rome

Rome was split into two parts at that time. The capital of the eastern side was Constantinople and that of the western side was Rome. The eastern side included modern Turkey, Syria and Palestine. Their ruler was called Caesar. During the times of the Prophet (sws), Heraclius was the king of Rome. The Prophet (sws) sent Ḍahyah ibn Khalifah Kalbi (rta) to Heraclius with a letter. Ḍahyah went to the governor of Basrah and through him, gained access to Heraclius. The latter ordered to find out whether anyone from the community of this person who claimed prophethood was there or not. When people investigated, it was found that Abu Sufyan had come with a group for trade purposes. All of them were called and invited to be seated in front of Heraclius. He asked the person who had the closest relationship with the one who claimed prophethood to come to him. When Abu Sufyan was presented, Heraclius addressed the others and said that he would be asking a few questions of Abu Sufyan. If he lied, they should expose him. Abu Sufyan used to say that if he had not been afraid of becoming known as a liar, he would have included some lies in his replies. With the help of a translator, the following exchange took place:

Heraclius: what is the status of this person in your community?

Abu Sufyan: He is of a high status (belonging to a reputed family)

Heraclius: Has there been a king among his ancestors?

Abu Sufyan: No

Heraclius: before he claimed prophethood, have you ever accused him of falsehood?

Abu Sufyan: No

Heraclius: Do his followers include the weak or leaders of the nation?

Abu Sufyan: They are weak people

Heraclius: Are their numbers increasing or decreasing?

Abu Sufyan: These people are increasing

Heraclius: Has any person who entered this faith left it after being disappointed?

Abu Sufyan: No

Heraclius: have you ever fought a battle with him?

Abu Sufyan: Yes

Heraclius: What was the result of the battle?

Abu Sufyan: The battle was even. We harmed him and he harmed us

Heraclius: Does he break his promises?

Abu Sufyan: No. we are in a period of peace. Nothing can be said about what he might do during this period.

Heraclius: Has anyone else claimed prophethood before this?

Abu Sufyan: No

After this, Heraclius asked his translator to tell Abu Sufyan that, according to him, the man was from a reputable family; prophets always came from among respected groups. There had been no king among his ancestors. Had there been one, he would have said that this man wanted to gain power over his lost state. His followers were weak people; followers of prophets were always weak. He did not lie, so why would a person who did not lie to humans place a false claim upon God? People who believed in him never became renegades; this was exactly what happened when the warmth of faith kindled within the heart. That was why his followers were increasing in numbers. The competition in battles was even; prophets became successful only after passing through challenges and tests. He did not break his promises; this was how prophets behaved.

Then Heraclius asked about the teachings of the Prophet (sws) to which Abu Sufyan answered that he advised them to worship one God and not to associate anyone with Him; to perform regular prayers; pay zakah; be conscientious towards relatives and live a life of high morals and purity.

After this, Heraclius said that if Abu Sufyan was telling the truth, this was a true prophet and, soon, he would conquer the land where his feet were now resting. He knew that a prophet was coming but he was unaware that he would arise from among Abu Sufyan's people. Had Heraclius been there, he would have washed his feet. Saying this, Heraclius asked for the letter to be read out. The content of the letter was as follows:

In the name of the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful God, from Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah, the Messenger of God, to Heraclius, the ruler of the state of Rome. Safety be upon him who follows

guidance from God. After this, I invite you towards the message of Islam. If you accept Islam, you will find refuge. God shall grant you a dual reward. If you turn away, the sin of the entire populace will be upon your shoulders.

O People of the Book! Come to the matter that is common between you and us. And that is, we should not worship anyone except one God; not associate anyone with Him and not make anyone our Lord except God. If they turn away their faces, say that be witness: we have our heads bowed.

Muhammad, Messenger of God.

At this, the courtiers became furious. When the situation became serious, Heraclius apologized and said that what he was saying was deliberate, in order to assess their faithfulness to Christianity. Hearing this, the anger of the courtiers and clergymen subsided but Heraclius could not find the courage to accept Islam.[3]

In his conversation with Abu Sufyan, Heraclius appears to be a ruler of great political acumen, having a keen understanding of the history of prophets, aware of the sunnah of God related to His messengers, knowledgeable about the predictions about the last prophet and a very wise man. In his questions, he has developed such rational standards to judge the veracity of anyone who claims to be a prophet that could only have been thought of by one who was very wise. He had accepted in his heart that the writer of the letter was a true prophet, his success was as clear as the day and ultimately, he would conquer his kingdom too. But he did not possess the strength to face resistance from his courtiers and clergymen, or to sacrifice his status as king, so he remained bereft of faith.

This letter from the Prophet (sws) exists and its copies can be seen in books.

3. Letter to the Ruler of Egypt

The eastern side of Rome was under Heraclius, but its western side, the capital of which was Rome, was completely separate. It was ruled by Egypt and the deputy of state, Maqawqas, ruled over Egypt. The Prophet (sws) had a letter written to Maqawqas exactly on the same lines as to Heraclius. The only difference was that the words “sins of the entire populace” were replaced by “sins of the Copts.” This letter can be found in the Topkapi Museum in Istanbul.

Hatib ibn Abi Baltbin Abi Balta‘ah took this letter to Maqawqas in Alexandria. He wrote back, saying that he had known that a prophet would be coming, but he thought that this would happen in Syria. He had kept the Prophet’s messenger with respect and dignity and sent him two girls from a respectable family, Mariyah and Sirin who were sisters, garments and one high bred donkey as gifts. The Prophet (sws)

married Mariyah and gave Sirin to Hassan ibn Thabit (rta). Mariyah gave birth to the Prophet's son, Ibrahim, who died at the age of 18 months only.

Maqawqas neither expressed a desire to accept Islam, nor did he do so. The Prophet (sws) accepted his gifts, but commented upon his letter, saying that the rule of the state had kept Maqawqas from accepting Islam, although his power was unstable.[4]

4. Letter to the Pope in Rome

When Dahyah ibn Khalifah Kalbi (rta) took the letter to Heraclius, he also took one addressed to the Pope, Honorius. The content of the letter was:

In the name of the Most compassionate, the Most merciful God; peace be upon him who believes in God. I am upon the belief that ʻĪsa ibn Maryam is the spirit of God and His word that was inspired within the pure Maryam by God. I believe in God, His instructions and all of His books that were revealed to me, and that were revealed to Abraham (sws), Ishmael (sws), Isaac (sws), Jacob (sws) and their progeny and those that were given to Moses and Jesus and other prophets by their Lord. We do not differentiate between prophets and we bow our heads in front of God. Peace be upon him who follows guidance.

The Pope read this letter in the church and testified to its veracity. His listeners became so infuriated that they beat him to death.

5. Letter to the King of Persia

At that time, Khusru Parvayz was the ruler of the great kingdom of Persia. The Prophet (sws) sent his letter to him through ʻAbdullah ibn Hudhayfah Sahmi (rta). He was then living in Nineveh. The King was seated on a magnificent throne, demonstrating all the grandeur and majesty he could when a simple but courageous man, attired in ordinary clothes was presented before him by his courtiers. The letter that ʻAbdullah presented was as follows:

In the name of the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful God, from Muhammad, the Messenger of God to Caesar, King of Persia. Peace be upon him who follows the guidance from God, believes in God and His Messenger and testifies that there is no deity except God. He is One, there is no one who can be associated with Him. Also, that Muhammad is His servant and prophet. I invite you towards the message from God because I am the Messenger of God for all people, so that all humans who are alive may be warned and God's decree may be proven upon those who deny it. If you accept Islam, you shall be safe. If you refuse, the sins of all Zoroastrians shall be upon your shoulders.

Khusru was unfamiliar with being addressed in such a manner and he could not imagine the violation of the etiquette of his court. He became extremely angry, tore up the letter and shouted: "How could our servant possess the audacity to write such a letter to us." He sent an order to Badhan, the governor of

Yemen, to arrest the Arab who claimed to be a prophet and present him in court. ‘Abdullah ibn Hudhayfah made a short speech in the court. He warned the King, alerted him to his sorry fate and proceeded to Madinah. When he informed the Prophet (sws) what had had transpired, he said: “Khusru’s statehood will also be ripped off in the same manner in which he tore up my letter.”

Badhan sent his people to Madinah, who read out the governor’s order and told them that if the order was not obeyed, Khusru would destroy their country. The Prophet (sws) asked them to return, since Khusru had been killed by his own son, Shirawayh. “Tell your master that the Islamic rule will soon reach the capital of Caesar.” When Badhan’s people returned, he received news from Persia that Khusru had been killed because of his excessively oppressive ways and that now no hostility should be adopted towards the Prophet of Arabia. Badhan came to believe that Muhammad (sws) was really a messenger of God and he accepted Islam.

This letter from the Prophet (sws), written on very thin parchment and mended in many places because of being torn was discovered in the ancestral library of Henry Phiron, an ex Foreign Minister of Lebanon in 1963. A copy can be seen in the Documents of the Prophet (sws).

6. Letter to Governor of Yamamah

Yamamah, a region in Arabia was then under Persia and Hawdhah ibn ‘Ali was its governor. The Prophet (sws) sent a letter to him through Saliṭ ibn Qays Ansari, inviting him to accept Islam and proposing that in case he did so, his country would remain under his control. Hawdhah replied that if the Prophet (sws) included him in his government, he would be willing to accept the offer. The Prophet (sws) did not accede to this condition and soon afterwards, Hawdhah died.

7. Letter to King of Syria

The progeny of Ghasan was ruling Syria and Harith was its king. The Prophet (sws) sent his letter through Shuja ibn Wahb al-Asadi (rta), in which he proposed if he accepted Islam, his country would remain with him. Harith said that no one dared to look at his country with bad intentions. When the Prophet (sws) came to know his views, he said that his rule would end soon. Thus, this government that had been stable for 500 years ended in 14 AH.

Contents of the Letters

The letters which the Prophet (sws) wrote to Christian rulers contained the beliefs explained in the Qur’an about Jesus (sws), and after this, an invitation to believe in him. All three letters quoted Qur’anic verses. The letters to idolatrous rulers highlighted monotheism but the verses were not quoted.

The rulers were made aware of the fact that they were not only responsible for themselves, but also for their populace. If the latter remained deprived of faith because of their own disbelief, this collective sin would also be on their own shoulders.

When Heraclius and Caesar did not accept Islam, the Prophet (sws) said: “Caesar has been killed. There shall be no Caesar after him. When Heraclius is killed, there shall be no Heraclius after him. By the Being who controls my life, you shall spend the treasures of both empires in the way of God.” [5]

This is exactly what happened. When Heraclius returned to Constantinople from Īliyah, he did not return to Syria while he lived. According to Tabari, while leaving Syria, Heraclius cast his eyes on the land and said: “O Syria! I am leaving you forever.” When Caesar received the Prophet’s letter, he was preparing for a decisive battle with Rome. He was defeated in this battle. During this time, an internal rebellion arose and his son had him and his 18 sons killed. The kingship in Persia ended completely during the time of ‘Umar Faruq (rta). Similarly, the regions of Syria, Palestine and Egypt came under the Islamic Caliphate. In later stages, Islam spread throughout the East, West and the North and thus all nations of the world benefitted from the global mercy of the Prophet (sws).

Missions towards Northern Arabia

The south of Arabia, where Jews and Christians had a heavy influence, received less attention from the Prophet (sws) during many years after migration because the Quraysh were a barrier to its approach. It posed a danger for Muslim groups to go there which could be surrounded and suffer excessive loss of life and property. In contrast, the route to Northern Arabia was constrained only by Jewish areas. Therefore, many commissions to preach Islam were sent and agreements made with the tribes there. During Rabi al-Awwal 5th AH, the Prophet (sws) went with a mission to Dawmah al-Jandal, an important city that controlled trade routes towards Syria and Iraq and which was under the rule of Akidar ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, a Christian leader. Madinah had received the news that an army was being prepared in Dawmah al-Jandal to fight against the Muslims. When the Prophet (sws) arrived, there was no such gathering and if it was, it had dispersed. Hence, he used the opportunity of this travel to develop relations with many of the tribes.

The next year, ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn ‘Awf (rta) was sent with a large group to Banu Kalb. These people continued to preach for many days in this area. Finally, al-Asbagh ibn ‘Amr accepted Islam. Under his influence, many other people also accepted the faith. A similar group was sent to Itlah for preaching. Its leader was Ka‘ab ibn ‘Umayr al-Ghifari (rta) and it included only 15 members. They met another group on the way, which started to throw spears at them, as a result of which all except one Muslim were martyred.

The Battle of Mu’tah

After the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah, the Prophet (sws) sent a letter to the governor of Rome who was based in Basrah. The Prophet’s ambassador, Harith ibn ‘Umayr al-Azdi (rta) was going with this letter when a

Ghassanid leader, Sharjil ibn ‘Amr killed him in a city called Mu’tah in what is now in south Jordan. The killing of an ambassador was an inciting incident which took place while the Roman government was active. It seems that government officials did not take this matter seriously enough due to which it became necessary to take some strong steps in order to prevent such happenings in future. The Prophet (sws) prepared an army of 3,000, led by Zayd ibn Harithah (rta). When seeing them off to Basrah, the Prophet (sws) gave instructions that if Zayd (rta) was martyred, Ja‘far ibn Abi Talib (rta) should take command. And if he was also martyred, ‘Abdullah ibn Rawahah (rta) was to assume commandership. When this army reached the place of Ma‘an, they found that a vast Roman army was in front and were assisted by the Christian tribes of Lakham, Jadham and Qufḍa‘ah. The army suggested that the Prophet (sws) should be informed of this situation and new instructions taken from him. But the spirit of faith prevented the companions from accepting this advice. ‘Abdullah ibn Rawahah (rta) said that people of faith had never succeeded on the basis of their numbers. They should either gain success or be martyred; either of these was better for them, so they should fight with the enemy courageously. This advice was accepted and the army faced the Romans after reaching their destination. When the battle took place at Mu’tah, all three commanders: Zayd ibn Harithah (rta), Ja‘far ibn Abi Talib (rta) and ‘Abdullah ibn Rawahah (rta) were martyred one after the other. All led the army with great valour and steadfastness and, when they were martyred, it was impossible to count the number of wounds on their bodies. According to one narrative, after ‘Abdullah ibn Rawahah (rta) was martyred, Khalid ibn Walid (rta) took up the flag and fighting continuously, brought his army out of the circle of the enemy. According to another narrative, which seems to be more believable, it was evening when ‘Abdullah ibn Rawahah (rta) was martyred and both armies retired to their camps as per rules. The next morning, the Muslim army nominated Khalid ibn Walid (rta) as their commander and he restructured the army, changing the positions of many sections. The right section became the left and vice versa; the front took up positions at the back and that at the back came to the front. When the armies came to the battle field, the Romans found different people in front of them. They thought that the Muslims had been strengthened by fresh troops from Madinah and were demoralized. Khalid (rta) fought with unmatched bravery. Narratives have stated that nine swords were broken in his hands. When the courage and energy of the enemy ended, they retreated. Surprisingly, only 12 people from the Muslim army were martyred in this battle, while the Roman’s loss of life was much higher. It is generally said that Muslims were defeated in this battle and Khalid ibn Walid (rta) had to face criticism on his return. This is not so. Had Muslims been defeated, the Roman army would have followed them and destroyed them completely. Not following them is evidence of the fact that Muslims fought with great valour, because of which the Romans suffered huge losses and they were not ready to take any more risks. Furthermore, when the army reached Madinah, the Prophet (sws) greeted them and, while congratulating Khalid ibn Walid (rta), conferred upon him the title of Sayfullah (the Sword of Allah). Had he faced defeat or run away from the battle front and come to Madinah, it would have been misplaced for the Prophet (sws) to congratulate him.

The commission sent to Mu’tah was not meant to conquer any region. Its purpose was to ensure that Islam would be recognized as a force within north Arabia and this purpose was achieved. The Arab tribes received the message that people who could take on Romans were rising up from within them and that their struggle was not political, but religious and moral. The Romans had not given importance to the

followers of Islam until then and now they realized that if they did not act with justice in matters related to Muslims, things could go out of hand and a great power could confront them.

The very next month, the news reached Madinah that the Christian tribe, Quda'ah was regrouping its numbers in allegiance with the Romans. The Prophet (sws) sent a group of 300 companions under the command of 'Amr ibn al-'Ās to put down the Quda'ah. He instructed the commander to take help from the Muslim tribes of Bala, 'Adhrah and Balqayn which would come on the way. 'Amr (rta) found out that the number of soldiers with the enemy was larger. He asked for additional troops from Madinah and a group of 200, led by Abu 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah (rta) reached them immediately. The armies met at the place of Dhat al-Salasil and the Quda'ah were dispersed. This mission was also effective in impressing the Christian tribes of north Arabia.

(Translated by Nikhat Sattar)

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1. Tabari, Tarikh, vol. 3.

2. For example, copies of many letters of the Prophet can be seen in "Letters of the Prophet" by Sayyid Mahbub Rizwi.

3. Sahih Bukhari, Bab kayfa kana bad' al-wahi

4. Ibn Sa'd, Al-Tabaqat al-kubra, vol. 2, 177.

5. Ibn Kathir, Sirah al-Nabi, vol. 2, 359.

CHAPTER 41

Cancellation of the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah

Orders to review Agreements with the Idolaters

Reconciliation and the environment of peace created a negative impact on some Muslims. Before the agreement, Muslims held great hatred for idolatry and its believers because of lack of communication with them. Under the altered circumstances, love for family and friends was renewed and exchanges of messages and letters began. Similarly, some idolaters found this rejuvenation of relationships, revival of love and desire for co-existence to be satisfactory, but they were still not willing to listen to the call towards faith. Obviously, this was not in alignment with the demands of the Prophet (sws)'s status as a messenger. His objective was not merely the establishment of peace within the country. He had been bestowed with prophethood so that he could establish the superiority of guidance from God and the religion of truth over and above all religions in Arabia. This objective required that Arabs should abandon their original religious views and beliefs and accept Islam. Thus, it became necessary to clarify to the idolaters that peace and reconciliation were of no importance for God and His Prophet (sws). Rather, it was required to turn towards the faith of Islam. Hence, those tribes that had signed agreements with Muslims and were considering these as their safety nets were to understand that this safety would be taken away from them and that they would be either forced to accept Islam or be ready for armed battle with Muslims. In the second situation, Muslims would be assigned responsibility to destroy them.

These were the conditions under which the Prophet (sws) was ordered not to sign any new agreement with the idolaters and, instead, to review those that already existed. For this, the following guiding principles were laid out in the first 15 verses of Surah Tawbah.

1. Maintaining relations of love and friendship with idolaters was not concomitant with the religion of monotheism. The idolaters themselves did not possess true feelings of respect and consideration for Muslims. Why did people of faith have a soft corner for them?

2. The agreements with idolaters that did not have a time limit and were for friendship only were to be brought to an end after a notice period of four months. At the end of this period, their situation would be the same as that for other idolaters. They would not enjoy any special status.

3. Idolaters who had made agreements of a specific duration and did not honour those and conspired against Muslims were to have their agreements brought to an end after four months, even if their duration extended beyond the four months. The reason was that no agreement could be held sacred from one side only.

4. Tribes that respected their agreements and did not conspire with the enemy were to have their agreements remain active until the end of the stipulated period. But when this period ended, the agreements were not to be extended. These tribes, too, would come within the ambit of other idolaters. Biographers have written about the Banu Ḍamra, the Banu Mudlaj and the Banu Kananah that they had always honoured their agreements and that these were also active at the time, so they were secure until the end of their stated remaining periods.

5. Only the agreement that was made in the neighbourhood of the Ka'bah possessed the sanctity of being honoured by Muslims as long as the other party did the same. The only such agreement was the treaty of Hudaybiyyah, signed with the Quraysh. The duration of this treaty was 10 years. The policy given for this was based upon the attitude of the Quraysh. Muslims were to honour it because it was sacred on account of being signed within the Haram, but as soon as the Quraysh were guilty of violating it, Muslims too would be released from their responsibilities under the general policy given for all idolaters. After this, the same law would apply to the Quraysh as to other idolaters.

6. At the end of all agreements, Muslims would remain in a state of war with the idolaters until the latter came to believe, offer ṣalah and pay zakah. If they began to fulfill these obligations of the faith, they were to be included within the fraternity of Muslims. They would possess all rights which other Muslims possessed. If they acted against Muslims, believers would be within their rights to take any sort of armed action against them.

7. During the action against idolaters, if any of them wished to listen to the Qur'an and know more about the faith, he would be given the opportunity and would be protected during this period.

8. This policy related to idolaters would be announced during the time of Hajj so that far flung tribes of the Arabian Peninsula would also know that their status as idolaters would no longer be acceptable in the land.

9. It is difficult to state, with any degree of certainty, the time of revelation of these verses related to acquittal and cutting off of relationships with idolaters of Arabia. It suffices for our guidance that these verses contained the policy related to the Quraysh, that the agreement should was to be honoured until they did so, but if they violated it, Muslims were to enter into war with them. The Prophet (sws) and the Companions of the Baut-i Ridwan had gone to Makkah and offered 'umrah in Dhu al-Qa'dah, 7 AH; hence the Hudaybiyyah treaty had been valid until then. After the treaty had been violated, Makkah was attacked during Ramadan, 8 AH. Therefore, in our view, the above verses of Surah Tawbah must have been revealed sometime between these two significant events, probably mid 8 century AH. By that time, the idolaters of Arabia had had time to remove their concerns about Islam, since they had lived in an era of peace for one and a half years. There is evidence that they had had used this time to their

benefit. It was also the right time to bring to an end the protection afforded by the agreements to the remaining incalcitrant idolaters.

Some historians have suggested that the possible time for revelation of these verses might have been the Hajj period and have given the argument that Abu Bakr (rta) had been assigned the role of the Emir for this hajj. As he left for hajj, the Prophet (sws) sent ‘Ali (rta) after him to Makkah and instructed him to recite these verses to the gathering at hajj. If these verses had been revealed before, Abu Bakr (rta) could have recited them himself. Sending ‘Ali (rta) for a public announcement meant that they were revealed after Abu Bakr (rta) had left. If this view is accepted, it must also be believed then that the instruction to fight with the Quraysh came 15 months after the victory of Makkah. It is extremely ridiculous that an order would be given when it had already been implemented 15 months earlier. If it is said that verses related to the Quraysh might have been revealed earlier, but those related to the overall policy came later during 9 AH, this is not likely. These verses give special mention to the Quraysh, as compared with other idolatrous tribes and exempted them from the instructions that were specific to other tribes. There is a sense of continuity as one reads through the verses. There is no feeling of a break that may indicate that different parts may have been revealed at different times.

Additionally, in light of these verses, the Prophet (sws) gave a grace period of four months to some people for reflection, as will be discussed later. This also shows that these verses must have been revealed before the victory of Makkah.

The reality is that, after deliberating upon the instructions given at many places in the Qur’an, the Prophet (sws) was given a full plan for a particular action and he was to implement it gradually, according to circumstances until the entire plan was completed. A similar plan was also given in Surah Tawbah. Some parts of this were acted upon during the period of peace, some during the victory of Makkah and some during the hajj of 9 AH, under the leadership of Abu Bakr (rta).

As far as the point related to sending ‘Ali (rta) to announce the verses during the hajj indicating that the verses had been revealed close to the departure of Abu Bakr (rta) is concerned, it is not necessary that this should be so. The verse said that it should be publicly announced during the day of hajj. The first hajj in which Muslims could participate was that hajj. During the hajj of 8 AH, Muslims had not yet recovered from the battles against the Quraysh, the Thaqif and Hawazin, to the extent that they could perform Hajj. ‘Ali (rta) was assigned to make this announcement in order to give the matter the necessary importance. When the participants of hajj came to know that a special ambassador had arrived to inform them of instructions from the Prophet (sws), the matter would have doubled in significance in the eyes of every person. This is why it is not wise to assess the timing of revelation of an instruction by noting the time of its implementation.

The verse of Surah Tawbah which states the policy about the treaty of Hudaybiyyah is as follows:

How can there be a league, before Allah and His Messenger, with the Pagans, except those with whom ye made a treaty near the sacred Mosque? As long as these stand true to you, stand ye true to them: for Allah doth love the righteous. (9:7)

Subsequently, it is said: “But if they violate their oaths after their covenant, and taunt you for your Faith – fight ye the chiefs of Unfaith: for their oaths are nothing to them: that thus they may be restrained.” (9:12)

The verse uses the words “chiefs of Unfaith.” This can be applied to no group except the Quraysh. The whole of Arabia was subject to them in terms of religious matters. They occupied the status of leaders and guides. They were behind each and every propaganda, conspiracy or political manoeuvre and did not hesitate to harm either the Prophet (sws) or Muslims. So, Muslims were instructed to keep to the treaties with them, but if they violated these in their arrogance, the former were justified in returning kind with kind.

Advice on Obedience to the Announcement of Dispensation

It has been explained above that the general environment of peace had also affected Muslims negatively. When the announcement to dispense with connections with the idolaters was made, all agreements with them were declared invalid after a notice period of four months and Muslims were told to fight them at the end of this period, these instructions did not hold well with the Muslims whose relatives had not yet accepted Islam. The Qur’an reprimanded these Muslims in the strictest terms and asked them not to befriend those who were their enemies as well as of God’s. While they were thinking well of the idolaters, the latter were blinded by their hatred and enmity of Islam and were ready to crush those well-wishers whenever they found a chance. God asked the Muslims to follow the practice of Abraham (sws), explaining that when he and his followers had declared dispensation from his nation and its idols, they kept their feelings of love for them aside and did not accept anything less than faith for a reconciliation with them. They were steadfast in what they did and put all their belief in support from God. This was the sort of attitude that was befitting of the faithful, not that of communicating with idolaters in secret. These instructions were revealed in Surah Mumtahinah. It was said:

O ye who believe! Take not my enemies and yours as friends [or protectors],- offering them [your] love, even though they have rejected the Truth that has come to you, and have [on the contrary] driven out the Prophet and yourselves (from your homes], [simply] because ye believe in Allah your Lord! If ye have come out to strive in My Way and to seek My Good Pleasure, [take them not as friends], holding secret converse of love [and friendship] with them: for I know full well all that ye conceal and all that ye reveal. And any of you that does this has strayed from the Straight Path.

If they were to get the better of you, they would behave to you as enemies, and stretch forth their hands and their tongues against you for evil: and they desire that ye should reject the Truth.

Of no profit to you will be your relatives and your children on the Day of Judgment: He will judge between you: for Allah sees well all that ye do.

There is for you an excellent example [to follow] in Abraham and those with him, when they said to their people: “We are clear of you and of whatever ye worship besides Allah. we have rejected you, and there has arisen, between us and you, enmity and hatred for ever,- unless ye believe in Allah and Him alone”: But not when Abraham said to his father: “I will pray for forgiveness for thee, though I have no power [to get] aught on thy behalf from Allah.” [They prayed]: “Our Lord! in Thee do we trust, and to Thee do we turn in repentance: to Thee is [our] Final Goal.” (60:1-4)

According to narratives, these verses were specially directed towards one of the companions, Hatib (rta) who had attempted to provide information of the planned attack on Makkah to the Quraysh. This shows that, along with dispensation from agreements with idolaters, Muslims were also advised that they should demonstrate heartfelt disillusionment and acquittal from the idolaters. Therefore, all these verses were revealed a few months before the victory of Makkah and not 9 AH.

Violation of the Agreement by the Quraysh

It must be remembered that there was one group within the Quraysh that had resisted any effort of reconciliation in Hudaybiyyah. They had ridiculed the group from the elite who voted in support of the reconciliation. They had tried to incite the feelings of Muslims in order to goad them to war but the latter thwarted every such effort. They had tried to worsen the situation by making an attempt to kill the Prophet (sws), but even then the Muslims controlled their anger. Since the majority of the Quraysh and their influential leaders had become tired of constant fighting, the treaty of Hudaybiyyah was signed and those emotional leaders were unsuccessful in forcing their decisions upon the majority. When the Banu Khuza‘ah became the allies of the Muslims and the Banu Bakr allies of the Quraysh, and thus parties to the agreement, those leaders found an opportunity to sow the seeds of mischief. There was a history of enmity between the two tribes. They became involved in a brawl once and the Quraysh leaders decided to teach the Banu Khuza‘ah a lesson for siding with Muslims. They equipped the Banu Bakr with funds, arms and men and provoked them to attack the Banu Khuza‘ah. The Banu Bakr made a surprise attack and killed 20 of the Banu Bakr’s men. The Banu Khuza‘ah were forced to take refuge within the boundaries of the Haram but the attackers, goaded on by the Quraysh, violated the sanctity of the Haram itself. The Banu Khuza‘ah gave information of this rebellion to the Prophet (sws) through their representative, ‘Amr ibn Salim and then their leader, Badil ibn Waraqah went to Madinah with a delegation. The Prophet (sws) reassured his allies that the rebellion would not be ignored.

When the Quraysh leaders pondered over the events, they realized the severity of the situation. They had become guilty of violating the agreement by siding with the Banu Bakr against the Banu Khuza‘ah, because attacking any ally of a party was the same as attacking the party itself. To recompense for this rebellion, they sent their leader, Abu Sufyan, to Madinah, to apologize to the Prophet (sws) and request for the agreement to be kept intact. Not only did Abu Sufyan request the Prophet (sws) himself, but also urged the active Muslims leaders; Abu Bakr (rta), ‘Umar (rta) and ‘Ali (rta) to plead with the Prophet (sws) on his behalf. But no one paid any heed to his pleadings. Before this event, the verses which said that the future of this agreement depended upon the attitude of the Quraysh had been revealed. As

long as they respected the agreement, Muslims would do the same. When they violated it, Muslims were to end it. Hence, in response to Abu Sufyan's request, the agreement was cancelled.

Some biographers are of the view that Abu Sufyan had requested for an extension of the duration of the agreement. This would have been useless because the agreement was valid for a decade and only one and a half years had passed. The arrival of Abu Sufyan in Madinah could not have meant anything other than an attempt to save the agreement.

Similarly, some biographers refer to a rarely quoted narrative to say that after violation of the agreement by the Quraysh, the Prophet (sws) put forward three suggestions to them: they could pay the blood money of those killed from the Banu Khuza'ah; they could desist from supporting the Banu Bakr or an announcement be made of the agreement coming to an end. The Quraysh accepted the third suggestion. This narrative cannot be correct in any way. Firstly, according to this, the person who sent the message from the Quraysh about accepting the third option was an unknown entity, whereas normally, responsible people of the respective sides present and accept suggestions in matters of international significance. Secondly, in this case, Abu Sufyan's mission to go to Madinah loses its purpose. Thirdly, the Prophet (sws) had been assigned by God after the revelation of the verses of Surah Tawbah, to end the agreement and fight the leadership of the idolaters so that their power over the Ka'bah would end and God's promise of victory over them would be fulfilled. It is inconceivable that the Prophet (sws) take an action contrary to instructions that had come through the revelation. Hence, in our opinion, this narrative is baseless. The reality is that Abu Sufyan had gone to Madinah to request continuity of the agreement but the Prophet (sws) did not consider this worthy of attention. Then it became clear not only to the Quraysh, but to every person who kept a keen eye on the situation that the old hostility between Muslims and the Quraysh had been revived and that both were now in a state of war. In other words, the treaty of Hudaybiyyah proved to be a precursor to the victory over Makkah and one violation by the Quraysh facilitated the path to this grand victory.

(Translated by Nikhat Sattar)

CHAPTER 42

Conquest of Makkah

The conquest of Makkah is the most significant and glorious event in the history of Islam. The objective given to the Prophet (sws) and his companions immediately after migration was that they were to purify the House of God against the filth of idolatry and dislodge the polytheists who were in its possession. The Muslims had been informed that this would not be an easy milestone to reach. The path to it was extremely hard. At every step, difficulties would be encountered and they would have to suffer loss of property and life in order to overcome those obstacles. They would stumble, but those who believed in God and were steadfast would, ultimately, be the winners. Then, in just the same manner that Surah Fath was revealed after the treaty of Hudaybiyyah and declared the treaty to be a clear victory and predicted that it would certify victory over Makkah, Surah Nasr was revealed before the conquest of Makkah and it gave the news that Makkah would be conquered with God's full support and polytheists would accept Islam in large numbers. After this supremacy of Islam over polytheism, the Prophet's mission would be complete. It is surprising that books of history and biographies depict this most important turning point in Islamic history as that the Prophet (sws) had made this mission a huge secret and had even kept it from his most trusted companion, Abu Bakr (rta). The Quraysh who were directly impacted by this mission remained so ignorant of this mission that the Prophet (sws) surprised them with an army of 10,000 and they were unaware. Then, the entry into Makkah has been related such that our jurists have still not been able to decide whether Makkah was conquered after a battle or whether it was won without any fighting. Perhaps the unusual preferences of biographers find it satisfying that they present the glorious and successful culmination of the Prophet's mission in such an unrealistic style.

Preparations to attack Makkah

After refusing to accept Abu Sufyan's request to maintain the treaty of Hudaybiyyah, the Prophet (sws) began to prepare for a final blow upon the Quraysh. He ordered Muslims in and around Madinah to be ready and also sent his ambassadors to all allied tribes and those who had recently converted to Islam, to prepare people for a war. We have said earlier, in the context of the mission of Hudaybiyyah, that many Bedouin tribes had refused to join the Prophet (sws) for the journey to 'umrah because they considered it to be going to their death. When Surah Fath was revealed after signing of the treaty of Hudaybiyyah, in addition to exposing the weakness and doubtful faith of these tribes, it also gave the information that when opportunities for war booty arose in a mission to come in the near future, those

people would want to participate in it and they were not to be given permission. However, after that, conditions for a more important mission with a stronger enemy would develop and then those people were to be called to demonstrate their loyalty to the cause. The mission that came in the near future was the Battle of Khyber, in which only the companions who had taken the Bay‘t-i ridwan were allowed to participate. The bigger mission and facing the harder enemy was to happen at that time. The Quraysh were the strongest force in the country and conquering Makkah was a difficult task. The Prophet (sws) took steps according to instructions in Surah Fath as follows:

Say to the desert Arabs who lagged behind: “Ye shall be summoned [to fight] against a people given to vehement war: then shall ye fight, or they shall submit. Then if ye show obedience, Allah will grant you a goodly reward, but if ye turn back as ye did before, He will punish you with a grievous Penalty.” No blame is there on the blind, nor is there blame on the lame, nor on one ill [if he joins not the war]: But he that obeys Allah and his Messenger,- [Allah] will admit him to Gardens beneath which rivers flow; and he who turns back, [Allah] will punish him with a grievous penalty.” (48:16-17)

According to narratives, the Prophet (sws) sent companions belonging to the same tribes, to Bedouin tribes of Aslam, Juhaynah, Ghifar, Banu Damrah, Banu al-Husayn, Ashja‘, Muzaynah, Banu Sulaym and Banu Ka‘b, to motivate the people to join the effort and tell them that whoever believed in God and the Day of Judgement was to reach Madinah during Ramad@an. The names of the companions are given in biographies, and to repeat them here would be of no use.[1] The special effort to send ambassadors to convince Bedouins to participate in jihad is seen only during this mission. Obviously, this was carried out in obedience to orders from God. Prior to this mission, a battle had been fought at Mu’tah, but neither did the Prophet (sws) participate in it, nor did it require fighting in large numbers that Bedouins were invited. But for conquering Makkah, the Qur’an itself shamed Muslims by asking them that if they did not stand up at that stage, when would the time to do so come again?

Will ye not fight people who violated their oaths, plotted to expel the Messenger, and took to agression by being the first [to assault] you? Do ye fear them? Nay, it is Allah Whom ye should more justly fear, if ye believe! (9:13)

It is obvious that it was the Quraysh who had not tolerated the presence of the Prophet (sws) in Makkah and he was forced to migrate. The Quraysh had fought with all their strength during the battles of Badr, Uhud and Ahzab to destroy Muslims. After this, when the treaty of Hudaybiyyah had been signed, it was the Quraysh who broke their promises and were guilty of violating the agreement. The verse spells out their crimes in order to motivate Muslims so that they were not overwhelmed by the strength of the Quraysh and faced the enemies of Islam with only the fear of God in their hearts. These verses can refer to no group except the Quraysh.

In presence of this clear instruction in the Qur’an and the the Prophet (sws) sending his ambassadors to Bedouin tribes, the narrative in biographical books that the Prophet (sws) had kept the mission secret from Muslims does not seem to be correct. When the Qur’an itself was stimulating Muslims, why would the Prophet (sws) act in opposition and refrain from developing fervour and enthusiasm for jihad among

them? The Qur'an was not only encouraging Muslims for jihad but also giving predictions for the Muslim's victory in the mission.

Fight them, and Allah will punish them by your hands, cover them with shame, help you [to victory] over them, heal the breasts of Believers and still the indignation of their hearts. For Allah will turn [in mercy] to whom He will; and Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. (9:14-15)

In the presence of these verses, in our opinion, the narratives that tell us that the Prophet (sws) ordered people to prepare for jihad and made it clear to them that he was intending to attack Makkah are preferable. Imam Dhahabi writes in the section of al-Maghazi of his History of Islam:

Then the Prophet (sws) ordered for preparation for war; he also asked his relatives in his house to do the same and told people that he intended to attack Makkah.

It is said in the Zad al-ma'ad:

He informed people that he was going to Makkah and that they should take the matter seriously and prepare for it.

Similar narratives are given in the History by Tabari and in Al-Kamil fi Tarikh by Ibn al-Athir.

Some biographers have written that the route taken by the Prophet (sws) to reach Makkah was an unknown one so that others could be kept in the dark. Facts belie this statement. Not only did people know of the destination, they had been informed of the complete timetable and intermediary stops. This is why, when the mujahidin started towards Makkah on 10th Ramadan, 8th AH, they were 7,500 in number. In between the stopovers between Madinah and Makkah, Muslims from other tribes joined them until they numbered 10,000 by the time they reached Marra al-Zahran, close to Makkah. The tribes that joined them on the way included Ghifar, Ashja', Banu Khuza'ah and Banu Damrah. Even in ordinary life, if people are not informed ahead of time about the schedule after careful planning, their participation cannot be ascertained. This was a matter of attacking a powerful enemy. How could it be expected that tribes living along the route would join the army while being kept ignorant of the time schedule, given that the complete journey took 7-8 days?

Further, the scale of preparation for destruction of an army was unprecedented in the history of Arabia. Tribes were mobilized to participate in the mission by sending 18-24 representatives to them. Verse number 17 of Surah Fath tells us that it was made mandatory for every able Muslim not to stay behind. Only sick and crippled men were exempted. For thousands of men from various regions and tribes to gather at specific dates was an extraordinary event that could not have been hidden. By its very nature,

such an event becomes known far and wide and people against whom action may be taken become particularly sensitive.

Reasons for the Idea of Secrecy

There are two things which may have made the biographers get the idea that the attack on Makkah was undertaken with secrecy. One was the letter from Hatib bin Balta‘ah (rta) to the Quraysh leaders, which was being taken by a woman to Makkah and was apprehended and Hatib was called for an explanation. The second was the prayer to God by the Prophet (sws), that He make the Quraysh blind and deaf so that the Muslims could get them unawares. The Prophet (sws) had prayed for this, much before setting off for the battle while still in Madinah.

The matter with Hatib was that his relatives were still in Makkah. There was no one there who would support them. When he came to know of the planned attack, he wrote to some of his friends, informing them of the Prophet (sws)’s coming with a large army to attack them that would cover them like the night and wash them away like a flood. Even when the Prophet (sws) was alone, God helped him. Now, He was going to fulfill His promise of support and victory, so they were to get ready to defend themselves. When this letter was caught, Hatib (rta) was questioned and he clarified that his purpose in sending the letter was for the Quraysh to become beholden to him so that they would not harm his relatives. Hatib (rta) was forgiven at this explanation. In our view, Hatib’s incident in itself is proof of the fact that people in Madinah were aware of the proposed attack on Makkah. This plan had not been kept secret. As far as Hatib’s questioning is concerned, it is never acceptable in military life that the loyalties of any of its soldiers be with the enemy forces. If such incidents come to light, it becomes necessary to undertake an inquiry, otherwise the foolishness of their own soldiers can lead to great losses. Hatib (rta) had not kept the demands of the announcement of acquittal from the Quraysh, which have been explained above with reference to Surah al-Mumtahinah. In any case, the nature of the contents of the letter was not such that he was guilty of exposing a military secret. Instead, had the letter reached its destination, it would have merely caused fear among the enemy.

The matter related to the prayer of the Prophet (sws) is that when efforts made by Abu Sufyan to keep the agreement intact failed, and he realized that the Muslims were then in a state of war with the Quraysh, he left Madinah greatly perturbed. Seeing him go, the Prophet said: “O’ Allah, bandage the eyes and ears of the Quraysh so that they should see me suddenly.” The Zad al-ma‘ad presents this prayer as: “O’ Allah, stop observations and information from the Quraysh until we reach them in their region.” Acceptance of this prayer is not only in the form of the Quraysh remaining ignorant for a long time of the preparations in Madinah and not being aware of the coming and going of Muslims to the tribes and the jihad movement. This does not normally happen in practical life. Not all people within the tribes were Muslims; there were also polytheists who were sympathetic to the Quraysh. Also, some allied tribes of Muslims lived so close to the Quraysh that their movements were well known to them. In our view, the Prophet’s prayer was accepted, resulting in the Quraysh looking on with resignation and becoming deprived of the strength to fight the Muslims. They did not possess the motivation to prepare and enter the battlefield and confront the Muslims who were on their way. What could be the reason for lack of possession of the will to defend themselves while still retaining their powers of sight and

hearing, other than acceptance of the Prophet's prayer? This reality was stated by the Prophet (sws) later when he said that he was helped through impressing the enemy.

The fact is that the situation had changed drastically during the two years of peace. Noted young leaders of the Quraysh: Khalid ibn Walid, 'Amr ibn al-'Ās, 'Uthman ibn Talhah, Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan etc had accepted Islam and migrated to Madinah. Every house in Makkah was influenced by the call of Islam. During the eight years of conflict, the Quraysh had gained nothing. All their top notch leaders were killed in the wars and their reputation among Arab tribes had been destroyed. When, previously, the maximum number of Muslims who could be brought to the battlefield was not more than 3,000, now there was a 10,000 strong army ready to attack Makkah. Had reconciliation been brought about by Abu Sufyan's efforts, the Quraysh would have been able to retain their dignity. But with the failure of this mission, they had lost their will and their energies were depleted. As it happened, when the Muslim army reached the suburbs of Makkah, they did not meet any resistance from the Quraysh.

Request for Amnesty from the Quraysh

The Muslims army camped at Marra al-Zahran, one stop away from Makkah. The encampment of an army of 10,000 was spread over a large area and when, at night, the mujahidin lit their fires, the lights reflected an extraordinary capacity to vanquish the enemy. According to narratives, three leaders of the Quraysh- Abu Sufyan, Hakim ibn Hizam and Budayl ibn Warqa' ventured out to see which tribe was staying here. When they reached Marra al-Zahran, they thought that these might be the Banu Khuza'ah, and Budayl also was of the same opinion. But then they realized that the Banu Khuza'ah could not be in such large numbers: they were surely some other tribes. While they were discussing and moving about, 'Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib (rta) came across them on the donkey of the Prophet (sws). He was searching for someone who could take a message to the Quraysh that the Muslim army had arrived. Therefore, it was better if they contacted the Prophet (sws) directly and thus save themselves. 'Abbas recognized Abu Sufyan's voice in the dark and took the three Makkan leaders to the Prophet (sws). 'Umar (rta) came behind them, waving his sword. His demand was that Abu Sufyan being in their custody, if he was commanded, he would sever his head. The Prophet (sws) calmed him down and ordered Abu Sufyan and his friends to spend the night in the camp. They would talk the next morning.

This narrative is as unrealistic and unnatural as it is famous. Firstly, the Banu Khuza'ah were so closely connected with the Quraysh that none of their actions could have been hidden from them. If thousands from the Banu Khuza'ah had been preparing for a mission, the Quraysh would have come to know of it during the early stages. Thus, their initial thought that the army belonged to the Banu Khuza'ah is very unnatural. Secondly, the leader of the Banu Khuza'ah, Budayl, was among the group. Did he not know what his tribe was up to that day? And was the tribe so conceited that it would be ready to fight an enemy without prior knowledge of its leader? Thirdly, leaders of a nation and commanders of its army do not go on a reconnaissance mission themselves. There are always other people who are sent, so that if any problems arise, major losses can be prevented. In this narrative, there are two leaders of the tribe and one very important member of the Quraysh elite. And the three ventured out, unarmed, to look into the movements of an unknown group at night? Such a possibility is contrary to tradition and habit. Fourthly, 'Abbas (rta) had accepted Islam just three days before and joined the Muslim army. Obviously

he, himself was a stranger to the army. He could be recognized only by the muhajirun. Moving around within the encampment fearlessly was something which could not have been done by a newcomer. It stands to reason that three new persons would not have been able to wander freely within the camp. Was there no tradition to mount guards among the armies of Muslims? Fifthly, the action which ‘Abbas (rta) was planning to carry out was seemingly against the purpose of the Prophet’s mission. The Prophet (sws) was aiming to defeat the people of Makkah, whereas ‘Abbas (rta) was trying to protect them secretly from the attack. If Hatib ibn Abi Balta‘ah can be reprimanded for writing a letter, the situation regarding ‘Abbas (rta) would be even more serious, in the sense that he came out to provide military information to the Quraysh on his own. But there is no mention of his being questioned anywhere. Sixthly, how could a thinker like ‘Umar (rta) be ready to kill without knowing why the three leaders had come? Had his aim been to kill Abu Sufyan, this could have been achieved when the latter had gone to Madinah with a request to maintain the treaty of Hudaybiyyah and had not been heard. He had met Umar (rta) himself. Thus, in our view, the actual situation was not one as has been presented in this narrative. Instead it was totally different, but it was so obscured by the more famous but unrealistic narrative that it is now difficult to retrieve the original. In any case, indications to the original are as follows:

1. The words in a narrative of the Kitab al-Maghazi of Ṣahih Bukhari are: “In the year of the conquest, when the Prophet (sws) departed from Madinah and the Quraysh found out, Abu Sufyan, Hakim ibn Hizam and Budayl ibn Warqa’ left Makkah to gather more information about the Prophet’s movements. When they reached Marra al-Zahran, they saw fires being lit everywhere, over a large area, just as was done in the ‘Arafat. Then, the guards of the Prophet (sws) spotted them and they were arrested and taken to the Prophet (sws).”[2]

This narrative tells us that the Quraysh were not totally ignorant of the aims of the Muslims. They had been informed about the army coming from Madinah. They did not see the lights of Marra al-Zahran from Makkah, but only saw them when they had reached the valley. The army of the Prophet (sws) was not camping with such abandonment that they were unaware of anyone who wandered in, but it was guarded so that unrelated people could not enter it. ‘Abbas (rta) did not take the Makkan leaders to the Prophet (sws) with him, but the guards arrested them, taking them to be strangers and gave them over to the Prophet (sws), as was the requirement of military discipline.

2. In the history he has written, Tabari has referred to a letter from Hisham ibn ‘Urwah (rta), in which the latter had written details about the conquest of Makkah in answer to questions from Khalifah ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan. According to this, the Quraysh had put together a delegation of two persons, Abu Sufyan and Hakim ibn Hizam to assess the plans of the Prophet (sws). They decided to take Budayl ibn Warqa’ with them when they departed. These people reached Marra al-Zahran, met the Prophet (sws) and accepted Islam. The Prophet (sws) sent then back to Makkah so that they could call the rest of their people to Islam. As a sign of this, whoever entered the homes of Abu Sufyan or Hakim ibn Hizam, or would close the doors of his house and would not pick up arms would be given amnesty.

3. There is a narrative within the Tabaqat of Ibn Sa'd that the Quraysh were very worried about the potential attack from the huge army of the Muslims. They sent Abu Sufyan to the Prophet (sws) to see if he could meet him and seek general amnesty.[3]

These narratives tell us that the Quraysh had themselves formulated the delegation to go and seek amnesty from the Prophet (sws). When they reached Marra al-Zahran, they first accepted Islam and then returned to Makkah with a message to accept obedience to the Prophet (sws), with the news that every person who would not pick up arms to fight the Muslim army would be granted safety. This was general amnesty, but with a condition of not taking up arms.

In the light of all of these narratives, it seems that what transpired might have been as follows. The Quraysh had found out that the Prophet (sws) was moving towards Makkah at a fast pace with a huge army. They remembered their own violation of their agreement and they were aware that at the breaking of this promise, the Prophet (sws) had adopted a severe attitude towards them. But now, they no longer possessed their earlier energy and enthusiasm. Their determination was weak. They viewed coming out and confronting the mujahidin as equivalent to committing suicide. Hence the Quraysh leaders made a very realistic decision. They neither confronted the army of the mujahidin, nor did they try to stop their progress. Instead, they sent their commander to the Prophet (sws), to surrender and seek general amnesty for all. To remove any suspicion of the action being a personal one of Abu Sufyan and to ensure that it would be seen to be supported by all Quraysh leaders, they sent Hakim ibn Hizam and Budayl ibn Warqa' along. The Prophet (sws) welcomed them and pondered over their request. It is possible that he consulted his trusted companions at night. Then, thinking that perhaps all of the people of the Quraysh may not be of the same opinion, he gave amnesty only to those who would not arm themselves and stay inside their homes. Before the army arrived, the Prophet (sws) sent the delegation back to Makkah with this message.

This portrayal of the incident is also supported by the Qur'an. Its prediction was: "Ye shall be summoned [to fight] against a people given to vehement war: then shall ye fight, or they shall submit," (48:16). The verse uses the word yuslimun, that is evidence of surrendering and also accepting Islam. Both these actions took place during the happenings at Marra al-Zahran and this was demonstrated the next day when the mujahidin reached Makkah.

The Quraysh Delegation

The composition of the delegation from the Quraysh was most suitable for the purpose for which it was formed. Abu Sufyan was the leader of the Quraysh and the commander of its army. No other person could have been as interested in the future of his nation as Abu Sufyan. Whatever decision he took would have been the decision of the entire tribe, according to Arab tradition. He was also very realistic. He understood that it was not possible for anyone to defeat the Prophet (sws) and his religion anymore. This is why, when the Prophet (sws) sent his letter asking Heraclius, the king of Rome to accept Islam, Abu Sufyan had given his opinion of the Prophet (sws) with great honesty in answer to Heraclius's queries. Despite his religious and political opposition, he had not tried to falsify the image of the Prophet (sws). At this, when the king had commented that these were the signs of a true prophet and

that the Prophet (sws) would reign over his own kingdom one day, Abu Sufyan very rightly opined to his companions that Ibn Abi Kabsha's (the Prophet's) situation had gone far ahead; now even the king of foreigners was in fear of him. Abu Sufyan had, therefore, decided that it was no longer possible to stop the spread of Islam's message. Because he was also the commander of the army, his surrender meant the surrender of all people of the Quraysh.

The second member of the delegation was Hakim ibn Hizam who was a very balanced representative of the elite of the Quraysh. He was a nephew of Khadijah (rta) and a friend of the Prophet (sws) from his childhood days. Budayl ibn Warqa' was the leader of the Banu Khuza'ah and was staying in Makkah. His tribe had a good opinion about the Prophet (sws) and Muslims from the beginning. This is why, when the treaty of Hudaybiyyah was signed, the tribe had declared its affiliation with the Muslims. The inclusion of Budayl in the delegation was as a representative of an ally and a recommendation in favour of the Quraysh. All three members accepted Islam on reaching Marra al-Zahran and requested amnesty for their people and for the people of Makkah. What better news could have been given to the Prophet (sws), than obedience from the people of Makkah and the entry into the city with peace? Hence, he accepted their request.

(*Translated by Nikhat Sattar*)

1. Waqidi, Kitab al-Maghazi, vol. 2, 799.

2. Al-Bukhari, Al-Jami' al-sahih, vol. 4, 1559, (no. 4030).

3. Ibn Sa'd, Al-Tabaqat al-kubra, vol. 1, 441.

CHAPTER 43

Conquest of Makkah

Abu Sufyan's acceptance of Islam

There are two different narratives about Abu Sufyan's acceptance of Islam. According to one, when he came to the presence of the Prophet (sws), he asked him: "Abu Sufyan has the time not come when you would accept that there is no god but Allah?" He answered: "By God, had there been anyone other than Allah, he would have helped us." Then the Prophet (sws) asked: "Has the time not come for you to accept that I am a messenger from Allah?" Abu Sufyan said: "My mother and father be sacrificed upon you! You are so merciful and forgiving. By God, I am not fully convinced of this yet." At this, 'Abbas (rta) said to him: "May you be destroyed. Before you are killed, witness upon the fact that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is His servant and His messenger." Abu Sufyan gave this statement. After this, 'Abbas (rta) pleaded to the Prophet (sws) that Abu Sufyan was the leader of his nation and that he liked to be appreciated. So he may be awarded a special honour. Thus, the Prophet (sws) said that whoever entered the house of Abu Sufyan would be safe.

In this narrative, forcing Abu Sufyan to accept Islam on the threat of being killed is evidence of ignorance of Islam. Such an exchange could not have happened in the presence of the Prophet (sws). The rules for idolaters in the context of Islam had been laid out in the initial verses of *surah* Bara'ah. These said that idolaters should be given four months and if, during this period, they did not accept Islam, they could be killed. As far as the appreciation and honour for Abu Sufyan was concerned, when the purpose of arrival of the leaders of Makkah was to seek safety for their nation, it was appropriate to honour them by declaring their homes as safe havens. To do this, any mention of a special consideration for their desire to be honoured is unnecessary. Every person in Makkah who would close the door of his house had been promised safety, so why would be Abu Sufiyan's preference be relevant here?

In contrast to this, al-Dhahabi has presented another narrative. According to this, in answer to the Prophet (sws)'s question, Abu Sufyan said: "I had sought help from my gods in this struggle and you had done the same from your God. Not even once did it happen that we fought each other and you were not dominant upon me. Had my gods been truthful and your God been false, I would have overcome you. Therefore, I give witness to the fact that there is no god but God and Mohammed is the messenger of God." This narrative seems to be the true one in the context explained above.

Entry of the *Mujahidin* into Makkah

When the army received orders to march towards Makkah, the Prophet (sws) instructed his soldiers to give a demonstration of the grandeur of Islam to Abu Sufyan. He stood with ‘Abbas (rta) on top of a hill, and observed the armies of the *Mujahidin*, Ansars and other Arab tribes march past with great aplomb. Narratives state that when Sa‘d ibn ‘Ubadah, who was the leader of the Ansars and commander of one of the battalions, marched by Abu Sufyan, he said: “This is the day of an intense battle; the sanctity of the Ka‘bah will not remain. Today, God shall vanquish the Quraysh.” Abu Sufyan was horrified by these words because they negated the promise of safety which the Prophet (sws) had made to him. He complained of these taunts to the Prophet (sws), who reassured him by saying: “This is the day of kindness; today, the sanctity of the Ka‘bah shall be restored. Today, God shall honour the Quraysh.” After this, he ordered that Sa‘d (rta) surrender the command of his battalion to his son so that the people of Makkah would not be concerned about their safety. After observing the army, the members of the Quraysh delegation proceeded to Makkah to announce general amnesty. They made an announcement to this effect once they reached Makkah and advised people to remain inside their homes. During this period, the Prophet (sws) gave instructions to his army to stop in the suburban region, Dhu Tuwa of Makkah.

In Dhu Tuwa, the Prophet (sws) reorganized the army and gave strict orders to them not to kill anyone or to be the first to use weapons. The entry into Makkah was to be completely peaceful and orders for safety of the people of Makkah were to be obeyed fully. He instructed Khalid ibn Walid (rta) to enter Makkah from the south and Zubayr ibn al-‘Awwam (rta) from the north. Qays ibn Sa‘d (rta) entered with his army from Kida, the west and the Prophet (sws) himself entered through Adhakhir. At this stage of completion of his mission, he was reciting *surah*s Nasr and Fath. It has been made clear from the discussion above that both these *surah*s contain predictions related to the conquest of Makkah. Thinking of this great favour from God, that He made this peaceful entry into Makkah possible, the Prophet (sws)’s heart was overflowing with feelings of gratitude and humility, as was demonstrated by his bowed head as he entered, riding his camel.

A group of young men from the Quraysh tried to stop Khalid ibn Walid’s battalion. This had been arranged by three Quraysh leaders: Safwan ibn Umayyah, ‘Ikramah ibn Abi Jahal and Suhayl ibn ‘Amr, who had been against the decision to surrender. But this resistance was so weak that Muslims did not suffer any loss but 12-13 persons from the rioters were killed. The rest of the army entered completely peacefully. When the Prophet (sws) found out that Khalid ibn Walid’s battalion had engaged in a fight, he was very upset. However, when investigations revealed that this was not a mistake by Khalid, but some mischief makers from among the Quraysh had initiated it, he declared it as fate.

All Muslim soldiers gathered in the centre of the city, where a tent for the Prophet (sws) was set up at a place called Hajun. This great incident of the conquest of Makkah took place on 20th Ramaḍan, 8th AH. Thousands of years old predictions came true through this incident. The Torah says: “The LORD came from Mount Sinai and dawned upon us from Mount Seir; he shone forth from Mount Faran with 10,000 holy ones. He held a flaming *shari‘ah* in his right hand.” (Deuteronomy 33:2)

According to research by ‘Inayat Rasul Chiriyyakuti, Sinai is the region between two gulfs at the north side of the Red Sea, where prophethood was bestowed upon Moses (sws) and where he was given the Torah on top of one of its hills. There is a mountain between the salty lake of the Sinai desert and the Suez Canal which is called Seir in Hebrew. The Israelites lived nearby, after they had crossed the river and made a covenant with God. Faran is the place where Ishmael (sws) settled down. Thus, this meant the valley of Makkah. Holy means those with pious values, God fearing, kind and who worship God. At the conquest of Makkah, the number of companions was 10,000.

The prediction means that God had given prophethood to the great son of the Israelites at Sinai, Moses (sws); bestowed the Torah to him in the desert of Seir; then God demonstrated the completion of His guidance through the prophethood of Muhammad (sws) and gave him dominance over Makkah. He entered Makkah with 10,000 of his pious companions and established *shari‘ah* here.

Initial Activities

When all sections of the Muslim army had gathered at Hajun, the Prophet (sws) decided to move towards the Ka‘bah, which had remained the centre of his entire struggle. When he entered the mosque, the grounds seemed too small for the large number of Muslims. He, therefore, performed circumambulation while riding his camel, Qaswa. When he came in front of *hajr-i aswad*, he performed *istilam* with his stick. After the circumambulation, he got down from his camel and said Allah O’ Akbar loudly. This was repeated by all the companions. After performing two *rak‘at*, he drank the Zam Zam.

After this, he called ‘Uthman ibn Talhah who kept the keys of the Ka‘bah. He opened the door, accompanied by Usamah (rta) and Bilal (rta) and performed two *rakahs*. He observed some idols and pictures on the walls. He threw down the idols and with the help of his companions, wiped out the pictures. After removing these, he then had the Ka‘bah washed, while reciting the verse: “Truth has [now] arrived, and Falsehood perished: for Falsehood is [by its nature] bound to perish.” (17:81)

When he came out, ‘Ali (rta) requested that as the Banu Hashim possessed the responsibility to give water to the pilgrims, if they could be awarded custody of the Ka‘bah and given its keys, this would be a great point of honour for them. The Prophet (sws) had no intention to restore custodianship of the Ka‘bah to the Quraysh. So, he called Uthman ibn Talhah and, handing over the key to him, said: “This is the day of loyalty. Keep this key with you always. Except for the evil doer, no one shall be able to steal it from you.”

Address in the Haram

As part of celebrations for the victory over Makkah, the Prophet (sws) gave orders for the people of the city to gather in the Haram. When they had all come, the Prophet (sws) stood at the door of the Ka‘bah and addressed them. At the very beginning, he declared *tawhid* and openly admitted that the promise

made by God to His servant had been fulfilled and all his enemies had been defeated. He said: “There is no god but God; there is no one associated with Him. He has fulfilled His promise, helped His servant and defeated all of His enemies single handedly.”

The central point of his 20 year long teaching was that God is one, He is the one to be worshipped, He has no partner and no associate. The religion of the idolaters was rebellion against God, and it had no authority. The Ka‘bah had been built by God’s servant who worshipped one God, Abraham (sws) who had declared it the centre of monotheism. Therefore, the possession of the Ka‘bah by the idolaters was illegal. This content of monotheism was most appropriate for it to be made the focus of the address to the people of Makkah. Idolaters had always denied this message of the Prophet (sws). They were under the misconception that the message would soon die out of its own accord after some noise and it would never be accepted by the Arab mind. The Prophet (sws) had tried to make the fact clear to them time and again that whenever a prophet from God comes to his people, the only way of salvation for them was to accept his message. If his nation denied or refused him, it basically prepared for its own destruction. This fact that the Prophet (sws) had explained to his people many times was then being put before them in terms of its consequences. God had fulfilled His promise, He had helped His servant and defeated his enemies. If one keeps this part of the Prophet (sws)’s address against verses 171-173 of *surah* Saffat, its real power can be appreciated. It was said:

“Already has Our Word been passed before [this] to our Servants sent [by Us], That they would certainly be assisted, And that Our forces,- they surely must conquer.” (37:171-173)

It is evident that the above three sentences of the Prophet’s address were based on these verses.

After this, the Prophet (sws) announced an end to the claims of superiority of various tribes of the Quraysh over each other and demands of money and blood and said: “Understand that all preferences and demands of blood or money are under my feet. However, the service of protecting the Ka‘bah and giving water to pilgrims shall remain.” This meant that work related to protection of the Ka‘bah and giving water to pilgrims would be given to the Quraysh but all other administrative or political authority would be taken away. In other words, these responsibilities would be fulfilled by the Islamic government. For example, if it was a matter of war, this would not be necessarily handed over to the Banu Umayyah, but the centre would decide upon whoever it wished to give responsibility to. For ambassadorship, it would not be given automatically to the Banu ‘Adi, but the Islamic government would take this service from various individuals, depending upon its requirements. In actual fact, this was an announcement to take over the control of the Ka‘bah. Serving the Haram or giving water to the pilgrims were not laden with perquisites or authority, but were religious responsibilities, so they were allowed.

On this occasion, addressing the Quraysh directly, the Prophet (sws) advised them that Islam did not consider familial elitism to be of any value. Thinking oneself to be above others because of the greatness of one’s forefathers was useless. All humans were equal and children of the same father, created from the same dust. Therefore, declaring oneself to be superior and belittling others as being inferior did not

suit an honourable person. He said: “O’ people of Quraysh, God Almighty has removed from you the arrogance of the days of *jahiliyyah* and claims of superiority over others by naming your forefathers. All humans are children of Adam and Adam was created from dust.” He said that the characteristic of the greatest value in the eyes of God was piety. The person who fears God the most and stays away from disobeying Him would receive the most honour from God. He recited these verses from *surah* Hujurat:

O mankind! We created you from a single [pair] of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other [not that ye may despise each other]. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is [he who is] the most righteous of you.”(49:13)

After this, addressing the people of Makkah in general and the Quraysh in particular, he asked: “Are you aware how I shall be treating you?” This is the same question that every victor asks of his enemies who have been conquered. He is drunk with power. Sometimes, he orders mass killing, sometimes declares their wealth, property and honour open to his army and sometimes finds new ways to torture and ridicule his enemies. But God’s prophet never behaves in this fashion. He does not consider any inappropriate behaviour acceptable for either himself or his soldiers even in the battlefield, let alone for those who have surrendered. The people of Makah were well aware of the Prophet’s nobility and kindness of nature. They understood the purpose of the Prophet’s question. They answered: “Brotherly treatment. You are a kind brother and the son of a kind brother.” At this, the Prophet (sws) said: “I say to you what my brother Joseph (sws) had said to his brothers: there is no accusation upon you today. Go, you are free.”

The Prophet’s reference to what Joseph (sws) had said is of great significance. He was pointing to the incident related in *surah* Yusuf. This *surah* had been revealed when the Prophet (sws) was burdened with the oppression of the Quraysh in Makkah, before migration. In order to reassure him and to give him a sign of change of circumstances for the better, the story of Joseph (sws) life had been related in this *surah*. Joseph (sws) had shown immense perseverance and piety in the face of back to back tribulations. Then, a time came when he was given authority over management of the country’s resources by the king. When the country faced famine, his brothers had to approach the state for help and arrived in the court of Joseph (sws). Seeing their poor condition, Joseph (sws)’s heart melted and he forgave them, ignoring all the troubles they had caused him and said to them: “Today, there is no accusation upon you. May God Almighty forgive you.”

At the time of the conquest of Makkah, the Quraysh were exactly in the same situation as Joseph’s brothers were in front of the senior administrator of Egypt. The behaviour of the Quraysh towards the Prophet (sws) in the past was also the same as that of Joseph’s (sws) brethren towards Joseph (sws). At the time of migration, the Quraysh had expected that the Prophet (sws) would not be able to establish himself anywhere, far from Makkah, after cutting himself away from his tribe, nor would his message receive acceptance. The reality was the opposite. This message found a very suitable environment in Madinah. The Prophet (sws) found very sincere and loyal companions. In contrast, the Quraysh became weaker and weaker, until they were forced to surrender in front of the Prophet (sws).

The last words of the Prophet's address were: "Go, you are free." This did not mean that the people of Makkah had been captured and the Prophet (sws) freed them. After surrender by Abu Sufyan and his obtaining the promise of freedom for his people, there was no possibility of anyone being captured, nor was anyone captured. Therefore, the Prophet's announcement meant that this day, he had the authority to take revenge of all the oppression of the Quraysh and was observing their helplessness, but despite this, he had no enmity towards them in his heart and he was freeing them after forgiving them.

General Amnesty from the Prophet (sws)

The Prophet (sws) made the announcement for general amnesty not only for those who had collected in the grounds of the Ka'bah, but the people who had dedicated their lives to oppose the Prophet (sws) also benefitted. When they were informed of this, they could not believe their ears.

The biggest enemies of the Prophet (sws), and especially those who had formulated a group and tried to stop Khalid ibn Walid's troops either ran away or hid themselves. All biographers, including the Orientalists agree that they were neither chased nor was an attempt made to find them. From those who ran away, some leaders, such as 'Ikramah ibn Abi Jahal, Safwan ibn Umayyah, Suhayl ibn 'Amr and Huwaytib ibn 'Abd al-'Uzza are mentioned in biographies. It is said that they were trying to hide in order to save their lives. People informed them that if they appeared before the Prophet (sws), they would be forgiven. They did so, one by one and this is exactly what happened.

'Ikramah was defeated by Khalid ibn Walid (rta) and ran away to Yemen. His wife, Umm Hakim bint Harith accepted Islam and requested the Prophet (sws) to save 'Ikramah's life. He accepted the request. Umm Hakim went after 'Ikramah and asked him to return. He remembered all the problems he had created for the Prophet (sws) and could not believe that he would be safe once he returned to Makkah. His wife removed his doubts and told him that the Prophet (sws) was the most loyal, considerate of his people's rights and kind hearted of men. She had asked for his protection and he had surely forgiven 'Ikramah. Therefore, 'Ikramah came to the Prophet (sws). Seeing him coming, the Prophet (sws) asked his companions to greet him warmly and refrain from mentioning either his own or his father's previous enmity towards Islam. Impressed by this treatment, 'Ikramah accepted Islam and took an oath to leave no stone unturned in serving the cause of Islam. Safwan ibn Umayyah ran away to Jeddah after the conquest of Makkah. One of his relatives, 'Umayr ibn Wahb who had become a Muslim, said to the Prophet (sws) that Safwan, a leader of his tribe had run away. He would probably commit suicide by drowning in the sea. He requested the Prophet (sws) for amnesty for him. The Prophet (sws) granted him protection and gave him his turban as a sign of this promise. 'Umayr went to Jeddah and informed him of this amnesty and asked him to return. Safwan was hesitant. At this, 'Umayr convinced him that the Prophet (sws) was extremely kind and forgiving. He was his paternal cousin. His dignity was his dignity; his honour was his honour and his government was his government. At this, Safwan came to Makkah, presented himself before the Prophet (sws) and said: " 'Umayr thinks that you have given me protection." The Prophet (sws) answered: "Yes, this is true." Safwan asked for two months in which to make his decision. The Prophet (sws) gave him four months. After a few weeks Safwan accepted Islam.

Suhayl ibn ‘Amr had signed the treaty of Hudaybiyyah but afterwards, he was guilty of its violation. He was among those who had tried to resist the Muslim army on the day of conquest of Makkah. After his defeat, he shuttered himself inside his home. Based on his enmity of the past, he was certain that he would not be forgiven. His son, ‘Abdullah, obtained agreement on his safety for him. Suhayl did not accept Islam immediately, but took part in the Battle of Hunayn, and on the way back, at a place called Ji‘ranah, he accepted Islam.

Huwaytib was hiding in some ground when Abu Dharr (rta) arrived there. As he started to run, Abu Dharr (rta) said that he was safe. If he wished, he could take him to the Prophet (sws) or to his home. Huwaytib asked in astonishment: “Who would allow me to reach my home? I would be killed on the way.” Abu Dharr (rta) went with him and, making an announcement of his safety, deposited him at his house. Later, he obtained a validation of his action from the Prophet (sws).

The impact of this safety and general amnesty from the Prophet (sws) was that the suspicions of the people of Makkah about the Prophet (sws) and Islam were removed and they realized that they had been under misconceptions and had perceived the Prophet (sws) to be their enemy and did not value his message.

The Period for accepting Islam for People of Makkah

Some Orientalists have spread the misunderstanding that because the people of Makkah had been overpowered, they were forced to accept Islam. The actual facts do not provide evidence of this assumption. The leaders mentioned above did not accept Islam immediately, but requested some time to ponder over the matter: this was granted. Practically, these leaders became Muslims after a few weeks, in Ji‘ranah or later. According to narratives, the Prophet (sws) had bestowed considerable quantities of the war booty to console the Quraysh leaders. The purpose behind this was to open up their hearts to the message of Islam so that they would accept it. Had they been forced to do so earlier, there would have been no need for this encouragement and giving of alms.

The instructions that had been given with the revelation of *surah* Bara’ah have been explained above. A four month period was given to the idolaters according to these instructions. If they did not accept Islam by then, they were to be killed. This instruction was implemented upon the people of Makkah. After their surrender, they were allowed this period during which they could decide either upon Islam or denial. In the case of Safwan ibn Umayyah, it has been stated above that he had requested two months but the Prophet (sws) said that he could take four months to decide. The reason for this was that the Qur’an had mentioned four months. It had also been instructed to make the Quraysh aware of the teachings of Islam during this period. As people began to develop a better understanding of Islamic teachings and its code of morality, they began to be attracted towards it. Some accepted it at the time Makkah was conquered. Others took a few days or weeks. Within the stipulated period of four months, the entire population of Makkah had become Muslim. There was no need to use the sword in this matter.

The Second Address to the People of Makkah

Two of the tribes, Hudhayl and Khuza'ah had enmity with each other. A person from the Hudhayl, Ibn al-'Athwa' had killed a brave man, Ahmar from the Khuza'ah tribe. The day after the conquest of Makkah, Khuza'ah's Kharash ibn Umayyah saw Ibn al-'Athwa' and, finding an opportunity, killed him. When the Prophet (sws) came to know of this, he addressed the people of Makkah and informed them of the obligations towards sanctity of the Haram. He said:

O' People! Ever since God made this earth and this sky, He has made the land of Makkah sacred. This land shall remain sacrosanct until the Day of Judgement. It is not legitimate for he who believes in God and the Day of Judgement to shed blood within the boundaries of the Haram, or to cut down any of its trees. It was not allowed for all those who have come before me and it shall not be allowed for those who come after me. Even for me, its sanctity had been lifted for a while only, and it has now been restored as if it were yesterday. The people present here should take this message to all who are absent. O' Khuza'ah, stay your hands from killing. There is no benefit in killing. I shall pay the blood money for the man whom you have killed. But after this, if anyone is killed, the victim's family shall have the right to take the life of the killer or to demand blood money.

Also know that anyone who is killed in error is the same as one who is killed deliberately through whipping or by stick. In case of a killing by mistake, the full blood money shall be paid; i.e. 100 camels including 40 pregnant she camels.

The last part of the address has been included in the first day's address by biographers, although it is completely unrelated. The need for it arose after the incident of the murder and it was suitable for the second address. In our view, it is not appropriate to make it a part of the first address.

This was a timely warning about the sanctity of the Haram and it was witnessed by people who had come from various tribes of Arabia, as well as the people of Makkah. The aim of this warning was to ensure that people, under the excuse of his conquest of Makkah, did not use it as a pretext and attempt to trample its sanctity. This sanctity was postponed for himself because the direct addressees of his prophet hood were the people of Makkah and the law of God for prophets is that if their nation is a denier, it is destroyed and if the numbers of believers is large enough, the deniers are killed through their swords. In any case, God keeps His messengers dominant over their enemies.

Information about withholding the sanctity of the Haram had already been given to the Prophet (sws) previously. The Qur'an said: "And slay them wherever ye catch them, and turn them out from where they have Turned you out; for tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter; but fight them not at the Sacred Mosque, unless they [first] fight you there; but if they fight you, slay them. Such is the reward of those who suppress faith." (2:191)

This charter, given by the Prophet (sws) about the sanctity of the Haram shall remain a shining light for people of Islam until the end of the world.

Mission to purify the Haram from Signs of Polytheism

Soon after the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet (sws) sent delegations to the people of Makkah and nearby tribes to invite them to Islam and end the signs of polytheism but not wage a war with anyone. While he, himself, took part in destroying the idols and pictures placed within the Ka'bah, he had it announced that people should do the same for any such items within their homes. On the day after the conquest of Makkah, a large number of people accepted Islam. The Prophet (sws) was seated atop the Mount of Safa and people would come, take an oath to listen and obey upon his hand and leave. After the men, women came to accepted Islam. Later, during the Prophet's two week's stay, people from around Makkah also came and accepted Islam.

A few days after the conquest, he set up groups to break down idols around Makkah. A statue of 'Uzza was placed at a place called Nakhlah. This was a special idol of the Quraysh, Kananah and Muḍar. The Banu Shayban were its custodians. Khalid ibn Walid (rta) went to bring it down with 30 men. When he returned, the Prophet (sws) said: "Now, no one shall worship 'Uzza." A special statue of Hudhayl stood three miles outside the boundaries of Makkah. 'Amr ibn al-As (rta) was sent to bring it down. The Banu Khuza'ah and the Banu Kalab were particularly attached to Manat, and the tribes Of Aws and Khazraj of Madinah also used to worship it. The Prophet (sws) assigned one of the Ansars, Sa'd ibn Zayd Ashhali (rta) to break it. Along with 20 other men, he destroyed it completely. In this manner, the qiblah of the Muslims was free and purified from every idol or sign of idolatry and made specific for the worship of God Almighty. The Prophet (sws) laid out the boundaries of the Haram while he was there and asked Tamim ibn Usayd Khuza'i to lay out stones alongside these boundaries. He obeyed this order. The Haram was thus returned to its original form that had been built by Abraham (sws). It was then in the possession of the real inheritors of the faith of those who were on the straight path.

Some Important Decisions

At this stage of the conquest of Makkah, many problems arose about which the Prophet (sws) took critical decisions which help to understand the nature of Islam. For example:

a) After the conquest, some people who had migrated to Madinah were under the impression that their property which they had left behind would be returned to them. The Prophet (sws) was also advised to stay in his own house. The Prophet (sws) asked such people not to think about their previous houses in Makkah after they had migrated but to expect that they would be rewarded with better homes on the day of Judgement.

The message behind this advice is that migration in itself means giving up everything in the name of God. If once, property had been sacrificed, the greed to have it returned would only contribute to spoil the real spirit of migration. Therefore, for him who had migrated, there should remain no desire to re-acquire his old home.

The Ansars were concerned that with the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet's love for his homeland may reawaken. When the Prophet (sws) realized this, he reassured them that after migrating, he would live and die among them.

b) Majasha' ibn Mas'ud (rta) brought his brother to the Prophet (sws) and requested him to take his oath on migration. The Prophet (sws) answered that those who had migrated earlier had obtained its benefits. There was to be no migration after the victory of Makkah. Now, he would take oaths only in the name of Islam, faith and *jihad*.

This was an important point. Migration does not mean every displacement. It was only meant for establishment of one's faith and its protection. Religious struggle before the conquest of Makkah necessitated all Muslims to gather together. This is why Muslims from all over the country were asked to migrate to Madinah as their centre. Thus, migration before the victory over Makkah became the distinction between Islam and conflict. When Islam had spread from Makkah to Madinah, what would be the need for migration? The next stage would be one of *jihad* so that the religion could be spread out over the entire Arabian Peninsula. Hence, the Prophet (sws) clarified that from then on, one would need to conduct *jihad* and to keep this intention in mind. This meant that every Muslim was to bear in mind that if he needed to leave home to protect his religion, he was not to refrain from migrating.

c) During his stay in Makkah, a case of theft was brought to the Prophet (sws), in which a Qurayshite woman, Fatimah, was the culprit. Her relatives were worried and they sent Usamah ibn Zayd (rta) to plead to the Prophet (sws), saying that she was a member of a dignified family. She should be forgiven. The Prophet (sws) said in severe tones that these were the kind of actions committed by previous nations that had destroyed them. They would forgive crimes of the wealthy and implement laws on the poor. He said: "By God, if my daughter Fatimah (rta) had committed such a crime, I would have had her hand cut off." Saying this, he sentenced her.

This was a demonstration of the concept of equity and social justice of Islam. The Prophet (sws) taught that laws should be meant for everyone, whether young or old, poor or wealthy, and making an exception on the basis of social status takes a nation to the brink of destruction. At that time, the Prophet (sws) looked angrily at Usamah ibn Zayd (rta) for pleading the case of implementing the law.

d) In other cases during the same period of time, the Prophet (sws) laid out some key principles of the *shari'ah* such as:

i. A will cannot be made for direct inheritors, but only for those who do not inherit.

ii. Inheritance should reach only those who belong to the same nation

iii. A child who is born in a house will be considered to belong there. An adulterer will be damned. (This decision was made by the Prophet (sws) in case of the claim by Utbah ibn Abi Waqqas who said that the child born to the maid of Zama'ah was his and not Zama'ah's. The Prophet did not accept this claim.)

(*Translated by Nikhat Sattar*)

CHAPTER 44

The Battle of Hunayn

The movements of the Prophet (sws)'s attack on Makkah were not secretive and its destinations and timelines were known. The target for the mission was also determined and known. Despite this, the tribes of Hawazin and Thaqif, that resided close to Ta'if, ahead of Makkah, decided to fight the Muslims on their own. On its way from Madinah to Makkah, when the Muslim army had not yet reached Mara al-Zahran, a spy was caught at a place called 'A'raj. When questioned, he said that he belonged to the Hawazin tribe and had been sent to gather intelligence about the mission of the Muslims. The spy also revealed that Hawazin had made a decision to resist the Muslims, because they believed that they would be the next to be attacked after Makkah. The spy gave details of the plans of his tribe and clarified that two sub tribes of Hawazin, the Banu Ka'b and Banu Kalb had distanced themselves from this plan. All other clans had agreed to come under the leadership of Malik ibn 'Awf and had ordered their armies to come together. These revelations were extremely worrying for the Muslims. However, the Prophet (sws) did not deem it appropriate to shift attention away from his real objective, ie. the freeing of the Ka'bah and did not consider it necessary to take immediate action against the Hawazin. But he kept the spy with them so that information would not reach the enemy. After the conquest of Makkah, he continued to take steps to establish Islamic rule in the city.

After establishing a foothold in Makkah, the Prophet (sws) ordered 'Abdullah ibn Abi Hadrad al-Sulami (rta) to go to the area where the Hawazin lived and to gather information while staying there for a few days, about the war preparations of Malik ibn 'Awf. 'Abdullah (rta) went and confirmed the information that had been provided by the spy earlier. He said that the enemy's preparations were complete and its forces were gathering at Awtas, located three miles to the north east of Makkah. The Prophet (sws) decided to advance on Awtas and defeat Hawazin and Thaqif there. He ordered the mujahideen to be ready for the battle. The people of Makkah had accepted Islam just recently. In order to demonstrate their loyalty, they decided to join the army. According to some narratives, some people from among those who had not yet accepted Islam and were taking benefit from the four month grace period also participated. Thus, the number of soldiers increased from 10,000 to 12,000 and the Prophet (sws) had to borrow arms to equip them from Safwan ibn Umayyah, the Quraysh leader.

Departure of the Army

On 5th Shawwal, 8th AH, when an army of 12,000 soldiers left Makkah, it was a huge force to reckon with in those times. Naturally, Muslims felt pride that the Hawazin and Thaqif would not be able to

stand their ground in front of such a large army. Therefore, it would likely be a short lived battle. In the face of such thoughts, people tend to develop the wrong kind of self confidence and they do not take matters seriously or responsibly enough. It seems that the Muslims too became prey to this complacence and failed to prepare to the standards of discipline and clarity that had so far been their pride of performance. On the other hand, the Hawazin had made elaborate arrangements. They had gathered 4,000 men, and, to instill the desire for sacrifice and honour, they had brought their livestock and family members along so that no one would even dream of running away from the battlefield.

The Prophet (sws) had sent his horsemen ahead to assess the situation. One of them returned to inform him that he had seen the Hawazin gathered in the valley between the hills and they were accompanied by their women and livestock. The Prophet (sws) smiled and said that all of this would be their war booty the next day. He assigned a guard on duty at the mouth of the valley so that the enemy would not cause trouble in the darkness of the night.

The Battle with Hawazin

The Hawazin were famous for their archery skills. They posted archers on top of the hills and passes and narrow valleys. When the Muslim army entered the valley in the dark of early dawn, they faced the onslaught of arrows from all sides. The mujahidin who were in the forefront of the army were not in protective clothing, and, taken by surprise by the unexpected attack, were dispersed. The valley was not large, so wherever they turned, they faced the attack. They could not find a way out for safety. When there was a stampede, the Prophet (sws) went to one side, mounted on his donkey. He turned to the right and called out: “O’ group of Ansar!” the Ansar, replying that they were present, gathered around him. Then he turned to his left and called out: “O’ group of Ansar!” the Ansar from this side too gathered around him. Similarly, he called out to the loyal members of Hudaybiyah and gathered them around himself. Now he ordered his forces into ranks and began a concerted attack, reciting martial songs and leading his soldiers. As the battle intensified, he praised his companions and said: “Now the oven has been heated up.” At this stage, he threw sand towards the enemy and prayed to God for victory. When the servants of God are not ignorant of their responsibilities and make their best effort to do what they can, they receive help from God. The Hawazin were uprooted and they started to run in different directions. The battle was won by the Muslims. The Qur’an mentions these two stages of the battle of Hunayn as under:

Assuredly Allah did help you in many battle-fields and on the day of Hunayn: Behold! your great numbers elated you, but they availed you naught: the land, for all that it is wide, did constrain you, and ye turned back in retreat. But Allah did pour His calm on the Messenger and on the Believers, and sent down forces which ye saw not: He punished the Unbelievers; thus doth He reward those without Faith. Again will Allah, after this, turn [in mercy] to whom He will: for Allah is Oft- forgiving, Most Merciful. (9:25-27)

The arrogance mentioned in these verses is that of being in large numbers; how could such a large army be defeated? Commenting on the incidents that had occurred during the Battle of Badr, Surah Anfal had warned the faithful that they were never to enter the battlefield with pride and arrogance, just as the

Quraysh were accustomed to doing. The people of the faith were to rely upon support and help from God and not upon their own strength. It had also been mentioned in Surah Anfal that when the Quraysh left Makkah, the devil had established a firm thought in their minds that no one could overpower them that day. But when they had gone to Badr, they had found that an army that was much smaller in terms of manpower and ammunition had destroyed them completely. Words of pride uttered by some people when leaving for Awtas had violated instructions given in Surah Anfal. To reprimand the faithful, God had subjected them initially to troubling circumstances. Later, when they showed humility and perseverance, God sent down His heavenly armies and provided help of which all the faithful were deserving. Thus, the battle was overturned and the mu'minin were victorious.

Narratives suggest that the reason of the early defeat of the Muslims was that initially they were winning. However, when they started to gather up the war booty, the kuffar turned upon them. In our view, this explanation does not comply with the verses of the Qur'an. Therefore, we believe that the first reasoning is the correct one.

A question has been raised about the Battle of Hunayn regarding its name. There is no valley by this name in Arabia. Hence, if the Qur'an has used this name, it is not as the name of a valley. Some researchers have suggested that the word Hunayn is also used for the noise made by the mooing, baaing and belching of livestock. Because the noise made by the animals was significant during this battle, the Qur'an referred to the day as "The Day of Hunayn.".

As the Hawazin ran, they were dispersed. One part of their army ran towards Nakhlah and another to Awtas which was situated a little further up the valley. Abu 'Amir Ash'ari (rta) chased them and caused damage to them. A third part of the army, under Malik ibn 'Awf, the commander, went to Ta'if and took protection in a castle. A large amount of booty was gained in these missions, the reason being that the Hawazin had brought their livestock with them. On being defeated, they left everything and ran off. This came into the hands of the faithful. The Prophet (sws) gave orders for the booty to be sent to Ji'ranah, near Makkah along with women and children and gave the responsibility for this to Mas'ud ibn 'Amr Ghifari (rta), who was in charge of the Ji'ranah camp. The Prophet (sws) himself proceeded towards Ta'if along with a large number of the mujahidin and surrounded the city. The siege continued for 18 days. During this time, the Prophet (sws) took all surrounding areas under control by sending troops. When he felt that the entire region was under Muslim control, he lifted the siege of Ta'if because it was not possible for a small island of kufr to flourish within such a large Islamic government. Time showed that this decision of the Prophet (sws) was correct.

Distribution of the Booty

The Prophet (sws) went from Ta'if to Ji'ranah and started to distribute the booty. One fifth of the war booty was to be kept for God and His messenger: in other words, for the government. The Prophet (sws) gave 100 and 50 camels each to many leaders of tribes from this portion. The leaders included Ghatfan's 'Uyaynah ibn Hasan, Tamim's Aqra ibn Habis and Abu Sufyan, Safwan ibn Umayyah, Hakim ibn Hizam and Suhayl ibn 'Amr etc. These rewards were meant to send out a message to people that, under an

Islamic government, no revenge was taken for the past harmful activities of the non believers. People were treated according to their position and status. Therefore, people could enter the fold of Islam without any fear or apprehension; they would gain safety and respect. At this stage, the Prophet (sws) also said that if Malik ibn ‘Awf were to accept Islam, he would gain from the same benefits. This kindness of the Prophet (sws) created a good impression upon the Quraysh leaders and their followers and helped them to make up their minds about Islam. Thus, all the Quraysh leaders who were still in a state of doubt became Muslims. Safwan ibn Umayyah used to say that the Prophet (sws) was the most objectionable person in his eyes, but the gifts won him over. As he came closer to the Prophet (sws), the latter became his most beloved personality. In reality, years of fighting had led to misunderstandings in the hearts of some people about Islam and Muslims. The generosity and blessings from the Prophet (sws) played a decisive role in overcoming these.

After the booty had been distributed and the matter of prisoners was still to be settled, a representative of the Hawazin tribe came to the Prophet (sws). These people had accepted Islam and had brought the news. They requested that their property and captives be returned to them. The tribe of Banu Sa‘d, with whom the Prophet (sws) had spent his childhood, told him that his foster paternal and maternal aunts were also in captivity. It was requested that they be released. The Prophet (sws) told them that he had not taken any steps in haste; rather, he had waited for them for many weeks before distributing their property. They asked then for release of the prisoners. The Prophet (sws), addressing the mujahidin, told them that their brothers had come in repentance and that he thought that the prisoners should be set free. It would be good if they did so with a generous heart. As far as returning their property was concerned, the Prophet (sws) was returning the booty that had been given to the Banu ‘Abd al-Muttalib. If other people thought that they should get their share, he would return it to them at some future opportunity. The Prophet’s appeal so affected his people that the entire army returned their shares and the Hawazin returned home with their families, happy and satisfied. Such treatment was absolutely nonexistent in Arab jahiliyyah culture and the effect that the attitude of Muslims had upon Hawazin and other tribes who also received the news is not difficult to understand.

Complaints by the Ansar

When the Prophet (sws) was giving away wealth and rewards to the leaders of the Quraysh, some young men from the Ansar considered this to be nepotism. They thought that they were being ignored in comparison to the Prophet’s tribe, despite the fact that their swords were dripping with the blood of the Quraysh. When lives needed to be sacrificed, they were called but when the time came to distribute booty, the Quraysh were in the front. When this was mentioned to the Prophet (sws), he ordered all Ansar to gather in a tent. When they came, he asked about what he had heard. The Ansar replied that although none of their leaders had said anything of the sort, some young men had expressed these thoughts. The Prophet (sws) said: “O’ Ansar! When I had come to you, were you not misguided? Then God gave you guidance. Were you not deprived? Then God gave you wealth. Were you not each other’s enemies? Then God placed love in your hearts.” They admitted that this was so and that God and His messenger were their greatest benefactors. The Prophet (sws) said: “By God, if you had wished, you

could have answered and you would have been right, had you said that when you came, you had been declared untruthful; we were the ones who placed our belief in you; you were without any support, we were the ones who helped you; you had been put into exile, we were the ones who gave you refuge; you were in need, we were the ones who consoled you." This style of talking to them was to explain to them that the sacrifices they had made were very important for him; hence their understanding that their status has been lowered in his eyes because of the Quraysh was wrong.

Then he clarified the reasons for giving more to the Quraysh. He asked if they had found any worldliness in him. He had wished to assuage people so that they would accept Islam, and left the matter of the Ansar, trusting them to their faith in Islam. The people of the Quraysh were always being killed and imprisoned. The Prophet (sws) wanted to make some compensation for their losses. He said: "O' Ansar! Are you not satisfied that other people may return with livestock while you take the messenger of God to your homes? By God! What you take with you is much better than what other people take with them." At this, the Ansar said with one voice: "O' Messenger of God! We are happy with your decision." To express solidarity with them, the Prophet (sws) said: "By the Being who possesses the life of Muhammad, if migration had not happened, I would have been among the Ansar. If the Ansar walk in one valley and other people in another valley, I would take the valley of the Ansar; Ansar are my real garment, others are merely my outer covering." After this, he prayed: "O'Lord! have mercy upon Ansar, upon Ansar's sons and upon their grandsons." This expression of love and endearment for the Ansar affected people so deeply that their beards became wet with tears.

The Prophet (sws) wore the Ihram, intending to perform 'umrah, and go from Ji'ranah to Makkah. Here he performed 'umrah. He assigned a Makkan youth, 'Atab ibn Usayd (rta) to run the affairs of the region and left Ma'udh ibn Jabal (rta) to guide him. After this, he left for Madinah. According to narratives, 'Urwah ibn Mas'ud Thaqafi was the first person from Ta'if to come and meet him during his travel and accept Islam. Malik ibn 'Awf found this blessing later. When he had accepted Islam, the Prophet (sws) made him the Emir of Ta'aif.

The Objectives of the Mission of Ta'if

This mission of the Prophet (sws), in which not only did Makkah come under his rule but the power of Ta'if was also lost and signs of polytheism over the entire region were destroyed and replaced with those of Islam, was the real purpose of the Prophet's struggle that had began with migration and then continued with battles for defense of Madinah. Other targets were secondary after success in this; for example, preaching of the faith in other regions and tribes and putting down enemies. Western researchers present the struggle of the Prophet (sws) in a different perspective instead of its real background, and their desire is to ensure that their readers see it as an effort of a worldly leader, rather than identify in it reflections of a prophetic purpose. Our intellectuals declare that the famous historian Montgomery Watt was very fair and balanced. He explained the conquest of Makkah by saying that Muhammad (sws) had only a small following. To protect his followers from his enemies, he decided to turn the attention of the Arabs away from their internal matters to an external enemy after uniting

them and to use the administrative skills of Makkans for this scheme. To implement this plan, he instigated the people of Makkah, created fear among them, and then he made peace with them, thereafter frightening them again. In such a state, they surrendered to him. Makkah was chosen because Muhammad (sws) had declared it the Qiblah for Muslims and therefore, it was necessary for them to travel here easily. Victory over Makkah would increase Muhammad (sws)'s reputation greatly. In addition, the people of Makkah were highly skilled in administrative and military expertise and, after an increase in the region under control it was necessary that those disciplined people provide support in running the region. This commentary over the conquest of Makkah is as unrealistic as it is from a most famous historian's pen. Such statements can be made only after closing one's eyes to facts and making wrong assumptions.

The situation of the Prophet (sws) was that for 40 years, he had not presented a nationalistic or a reform program although youth is the age when such aims of people cannot remain hidden. One can perform great feats at this age. Even when the Prophet (sws) reached the age of 40, the program he presented showed no desires of lifting up the Arab nation and having them dominate the Romans. The key elements of the program were the oneness of God and its requirements. In his 13 year long Makkan phase, the Prophet (sws) was seen to be speaking about these requirements and the Quraysh viewed these as a great threat to their rule and an end to their luxurious life styles. To believe in the Prophet (sws) was to put one's life in danger. If Watt's assumption was correct, why did the Prophet (sws) not try to convince the Quraysh during this phase that he was struggling for the dominion of the Arab nation over the rest of the world and that they should assist him? There came a time during the Makkan phase when the Quraysh made an offer that if he wanted to rule over them they were ready to make him King. If the objective of the Prophet (sws) was to conquer the external world, why did he not take advantage of this offer? Obviously, he considered every kind of rule to be useless in face of the message of monotheism he was preaching. He accepted exile from Makkah, but was not ready to compromise over his message.

Instigating, frightening, making peace with the people of Makkah and then defeating them is also a fabricated story by Watt. He considers the Quraysh and the people of Makkah to be the oppressed and Muslims to be oppressors. Hence, according to him all battles were imposed by the Prophet (sws) upon the people of Makkah. We have seen above that until the battle of Ahzab, the Quraysh had continued to conspire with the Jews and left no stone unturned to torment the Muslims. During that time, Muslims could only defend themselves. After being defeated in the Battle of Ahzab, the Quraysh no longer possessed the same strength and energy that they had demonstrated until then. Even then, their arrogance persisted. They showed this during the Treaty of Hudaybiyah. Changes in the situation were brought about primarily through this treaty. As a result of this, Islam grew so rapidly among Arabs that the Quraysh found it difficult to have their status accepted among them and thus defeated, they fell at the feet of the Prophet (sws).

As far as making Makkah the target, this was not because the Prophet (sws) wished to take advantage of the administrative experience of the Quraysh, but because the Quraysh and the people of Makkah were the first addressees of the Prophet (sws). The truth had been made evident to them in a conclusive manner. God's Sunnah in the matter of His messengers is that after conclusive arguments have been

made to their people, the latter's fate is to be decided with justice. Either they believe or they are destroyed. As a result of the mission of Makkah, when the Quraysh surrendered, the Prophet (sws) did not assign administrative responsibilities to them, but in his very first address in the Ka'bah, he ended all their previous responsibilities and took control of the Haram himself. Although Madinah was the capital, he banned further migration to it. Had the purpose been to benefit from the management skills of the Quraysh, they would have been asked to move to Madinah, or the Prophet (sws) would have moved his capital to the central city of Makkah. In the remaining two years of the life of the Prophet (sws), details of all those who were assigned various responsibilities of governance are given in history books. Please consult them. For missions, equal trust was placed upon both the Muhajirun and the Ansar. Not more than three or four names from among the new Muslims of the Quraysh can be found who were given even simple responsibilities. Had the opinion of Professor Watt been based on truth, the Quraysh would have been found to be dominating key positions of governors and army commanders.

The Prophet (sws) turned his attention to outside of the Arabian Peninsula when the Treaty of Hudaybiyah was signed. He sent letters to various rulers. The message common to all of these is the invitation to accept Islam, with reference to responsibility of his prophet hood. History is witness to the fact that the Prophet (sws) did not impose the Quraysh over those rulers who accepted Islam, but let them keep the reign of their land.

When the thesis of Professor Watt cannot be proven from any aspect, we consider ourselves in the right to conclude that his vision is clouded with prejudice and that he wishes to observe everything through this cloud. He should also understand that some of his readers would like to view matters, not through his eyes but with their own.

(Translated by Nikhat Sattar)

CHAPTER 45

Battle of Tabuk

It has been stated above that the areas north of Arabia, adjoining the current Syria and Jordan were loyal to the Roman Empire. The leaders of the Arab tribes who lived there also had their loyalties with the Roman king. The influence and establishment of Islam in these regions and the acceptance of Islam by some leaders was not a matter to be ignored by the most powerful government in the world. Heraclius knew that if the prophet who had gained power in Arabia was the same whose arrival had been announced in sacred books, his success was written on the wall and he would destroy his kingdom too. However, due to pressure from his courtiers and priests, he could not gather courage to accept Islam and adopted a path of political conflict. In 9 AH, he started collecting his armies in Syria in order to stop any further successes of the Muslims and to intimidate them. Wishing to proceed towards Madinah, he gained support from loyal tribes of Lakhm, Jadhdham, Ghassan and 'Amilah and sent the vanguards of his army to the Balkans. The Prophet (sws) found out about his aims and selected northern Arabia for combat. That place was very far from Madinah and the climate very hot, hence special considerations were required for the preparation for battle. The Prophet (sws) appealed to Muslims to donate whatever they could afford: funds, weapons, animals for riding and then come out to war with full preparation. This was necessary so that Muslims not consider this as an ordinary exercise but as a major confrontation between Islam and its enemy forces.

Preparations for the Battle

The Prophet's appeal had desired results. Sincere Muslims spent more than they could afford in this jihad. Narratives related to this battle state that Abu Bakr Siddiq (rta) gave everything in his house for this mission and when the Prophet (sws) asked him what was left, he answered that God and His Messenger remained in his house. 'Umar (rta) thought that he would supersede Abu Bakr (rta) in giving in the way of God and brought half of what was in his house. When he found that Abu Bakr (rta) had given everything that he had possessed, he realized that he could not surpass him. Uthman (rta), whose generosity was demonstrated by his enthusiasm and energy in such cases gave equipment and provisions for one third of the army. Women handed over their jewellery to pay for the preparations. The poorest of the poor companions, who could barely earn for an evening meal, gave barley and wheat as food for the journey. Some people who did not have animals to ride on came to the Prophet (sws) requesting him to provide them so that they could take part in the battle. Since the available resources did not allow for this provision, the Prophet (sws) made his apologies and these men returned, dejected. Seeing their sorrow, some wealthy companions made animals available to them; but even then, many men were not able to take part in the journey.

Narratives state that the Asharites sent Abu Musa Ash'ari to the Prophet (sws), asking him to provide them with animals. When he arrived, he found the Prophet (sws) expressing his displeasure over some matter. When Abu Musa stated his request, he said that, by Allah, he could not make this provision. In view of the Prophet's displeasure, Abu Musa returned to his people, considerably depressed and informed them of the situation. A while later, Bilal (rta) called him and when he went, the Prophet pointed towards some camels and said: "Take this pair, and this one and this one. Take them to your friends and tell them that Allah has made provision for animals for you to ride on." Abu Musa obeyed his orders and told his companions that the Messenger of God had given orders for them to ride those animals but that, by Allah, he would like to suggest that from among those who had heard him earlier, one person would go with him to the Prophet (sws), to ensure that he had not assigned a wrong statement to the Prophet (sws). The people went and reminded the Prophet (sws) that when he had refused to give the animals, he had sworn by Allah. Did he forget his oath when he had given away the animals? The Prophet (sws) answered that when he takes an oath and then later finds a better solution, he atones for breaking it and adopts the better way.[1]

The order for every Muslim to come out for battle was thus: "Come out, whether you are light or heavy." The words light and heavy indicate that they applied to every man: the rich and poor, armed or unarmed, cavalry man or foot soldier. Other tribes and Arabs had also been mobilized for this battle. Hence, the real demand was that everyone should offer his services for this trumpet call and not care if he possessed any provisions or riding animals. It was enough to present oneself for this service to demonstrate one's loyalties. But the period of the battle became one of great trial for many people. It was high summer and harvests were ready. This was the best time to cut the crops and store them. People would have found a way to fight against the intense heat and to postpone the handling of the harvest had the battle been closer. But here they faced a journey of hundreds of miles. Along with other dangers, they would require many weeks just to arrive at their destination. In view of these factors, the weak faith and hypocrisy of the hypocrites became evident at that time.

One of the groups openly suggested that it was not wise to proceed to battle and hence, the mission should be postponed. If people insisted on going, there was a danger that many Muslims would die of the heat. Some people tried to create fear of the Roman army in an attempt to cool down the enthusiasm for jihad. The leader of the hypocrites, 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy went to the extent of saying that it was no game to go out in that weather and face the Romans; he feared that those who went to Tabuk would be tied in chains and thrown in mountains. The people of that group tried to de-motivate sincere Muslims. When people presented their support for the jihad and the giver gave more wealth, they accused him of insincerity. If the giver was a poor man, they ridiculed his modest offering. At times, this cacophony became so loud that they even made fun of the instructions of God and His and His Messenger. When they were reprimanded for this, they said that they were just joking and it was nothing serious.

It was observed at that time that many people made requests to be exempted from going to war on the basis of different excuses. They swore while explaining their difficulties. The Prophet (sws) understood that these were made-up stories, but he accepted their excuses. Many of such people were those whose hypocrisy had already been revealed earlier. Hence their attitude was understandable: they were not

ready to take part in a difficult journey for jihad and, at the same time, also wanted permission from the Prophet (sws) so that no blame come to them later. Some among them made their religiosity a reason for their absence. According to them, staying away from their families could become a great trial for their faith and morality. All of them were wealthy and in full health and were able to participate in jihad. The barriers for them were the long journey, the excessive heat and the fact that they would be encountering the Roman army which was the most disciplined and trained army of its time and which had recently defeated the very strong army of Persia. Also, there were not many chances of winning war booty. Who would then disturb their luxurious and comfortable life? Thus hypocrites continued to go to the Prophet (sws) with applications for permission to stay away. However, they appointed some men of their own to spy on the Muslims during the journey.

From narratives of the Battle of Tabuk, it seems that the People of the Book who had suffered at the hands of the Muslims and who had been exiled were responsible for inciting the Romans against the Muslims. They motivated them to play their role and save their religion. The religious leaders held positions of influence at the King's court and convinced him to help his co-religionists. The People of the Book prepared a conspiracy to communicate and keep in contact with the hypocrites by building a mosque in the suburbs of Madinah. The purpose of this was to gather the hypocrites at one place and develop a cohesive conspiracy. The mosque would have created differences among Muslims and been a centre for spies. The hypocrites built the mosque in Qaba to meet these objectives. To obtain formal acceptance of this mosque, they requested the Prophet (sws) to go there and inaugurate it by leading the first prayer. It was a busy time and because of preparations for the battle, the Prophet (sws) excused himself because of his extremely busy schedule and the event was postponed until after Tabuk.

It had been made compulsory for every able-bodied Muslim man to participate in the battle; thus it was not acceptable for anyone to remain behind. However, there were some sincere Muslims who could not leave with the main army. They thought they would join the army later, but afterwards, they could not, either because of their laziness or because they became busy in other work. Some Muslims did join the army but the remaining did not and thus joined the ranks of those who had remained behind to avoid the battle deliberately. Three Ansars belonging to the early Muslims: Ka'b ibn Malik (rta), Hilal ibn Umayyah (rta) and Murrah ibn Rabi' (rta) were among them. They had made great sacrifices for their faith in the past, but subsequently, they were not part of the army due to laziness and were unaware of their mistake in view of their earlier sacrifices.

The Prophet (sws) in Tabuk

At the time of departure from Madinah, 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy played the same game which he had at the Battle of Uhud. He came out with his army but when the Prophet (sws) gave instructions to march, he retreated along with his soldiers, saying that he did not wish to expose his people to danger. According to narratives, the army which arrived at Tabuk included 30,000 soldiers and 10,000 horses. The Prophet (sws) waited at the border of Syria for three weeks for the Romans to arrive, but it seems that the Roman army was discouraged because of the Prophet's courageous arrival with ten times the size of the army at the Battle of Mutah and they decided not to confront the Muslims. It is also possible that Heraclius thought that since the Prophet of Arabia would, in any case, take over his kingdom, he lost

courage and decided to lengthen his rule by not sending his army to fight against the Prophet (sws). The Prophet (sws) stayed at Tabuk for three weeks and, after gaining many political successes, announced return to Madinah. This return took place in 9th AH.

Conquests and Peace Treaties

During his stay at Tabuk, the Prophet (sws) sent Khalid ibn Walid (rta) to attack Dumah al-Jandal. Its Christian ruler, Akidar surrendered and requested amnesty. Khalid (rta) arrested him and took him to the Prophet (sws), who made a contract of peace after taxing him and writing up an agreement. The significance of Dumah al-Jandal was that it controlled the routes to both Syria and Iraq. Other rulers of northern Arabia who were subjects of the Byzantine state became afraid of the presence of Muslims in the region. They preferred to develop peaceful relations with the Muslims and decided to stop supporting the Byzantines. The king of Aylah, Junah ibn Rubah, accompanied by individuals from the regions of Jarba' and Adhrah came to the Prophet (sws). The Prophet (sws) levied a tax on him and wrote up the peace agreement. According to narratives from Abu 'Ubayd, the Prophet (sws) sent another letter to Heraclius, in which he again invited him to Islam, saying that if he accepted Islam, he would have the same rights as that of other Muslims and would need to follow the same obligations which they did according to the shari'ah. If this was not acceptable to him, he may accept to pay a tax and agree on peace. Otherwise, he was not to intervene between his people and Islam. They were to be allowed to accept Islam if they wished to, or else pay a tax. At that time, it was clear that the great power was not willing to accept the leadership of the Arabs. Therefore, the letter was never answered. Had it been, there would been some mention of the same in the annals of history.

The mission of Tabuk had established the awe of Muslims within the northern Arab states and Romans regions outside. Hence, many tribes of Syria and the Banu Bakr ibn Wa'il and the Banu Taghlib who were settled close to the borders of Iraq made a peace agreement based on tax twice that of the amount of zakah.

Hardened Attitude with the Hypocrites

During the journey of Tabuk, the Prophet (sws) was given instructions to leave his soft behaviour with hypocrites and be hard on them. He was informed that the mission had made a clear distinction between sincere Muslims and those who remained attached to Islam merely for personal gains, and that matters would proceed henceforth on this basis. In the light of these instructions, when he was close to Madinah on the return journey, he told the companions that unless he gave permission, no one was to speak with any hypocrite nor to attend any of their gatherings. When, therefore, at Dhu Awan which was a place close to Madinah, the hypocrites came to greet them, the Muslims followed these orders. Then the Prophet (sws) gave responsibility to 'Asim ibn 'Adi al-'Ajlani and Malik ibn al-Dakhsham al-Salimi to demolish the mosque that had been built by the hypocrites and to set fire to its rubble so that the centre of conspiracy would end forever. In this manner, the fort of the enemies of Islam was shattered to the ground. Similarly, the Prophet (sws) treated the sincere Muslims who had remained behind with extreme coldness. They were so overcome with embarrassment that life became impossible for them. Some of them tied themselves to the pillars of Masjid-i Nabawi, to express their penitence and

desire for forgiveness. They resolved that they would free themselves only after receiving pardon. Three early companions, Ka'b ibn Malik (rta), Hilal ibn Umayyah (rta) and Murarah ibn Rabi'(rta) were boycotted socially until they became penitent and received pardon. At this time, some companions desirous of pardon and forgiveness demonstrated incomparable sacrifice in seeking acceptance of their prayers. One companion, Abu Lubabah (rta) came to the Prophet (sws), saying that he would like to relinquish his house in the way to God because its comforts and luxury had restrained him from going to jihad. He would also give up all of his wealth to God and His Messenger. The Prophet (sws) said that he should give only one-thirds in the way of God and ask Him for forgiveness.

Some of the villagers living around Madinah did not think it necessary to be penitent and continued to give excuses and avoid responsibility. Those among the hypocrites who came to present excuses were told that they were not believed and that God had already informed Muslims that their excuses were lame ones. They would swear upon their loyalty but were informed that their behaviour would be kept in mind for the future and their actions would present proof of their loyalty. Those, whose hypocrisy was in no doubt, were not considered to be worthy of any relaxation. They were not to be taken for jihad in future even if they offered to go and were to be told clearly that since they were satisfied with remaining at home even during the public call for jihad, they would not be allowed now. Their participation in any battle against enemies of Islam was not acceptable. They would give explanations and swear oaths of commitment, but were to be told that God knew their actions well and had also told the Muslims. Therefore they were not to be trusted. Hence their attitude would be decisive towards God Himself.

Impact of the Battle of Tabuk

On the whole, the lack of participation of the worst of hypocrites in the battle of Tabuk benefitted Muslims in that no trouble was created during the journey, of the sort which had occurred during earlier missions and in which the Ansars and Muhajirs had come to swords with each other. There were some spies of the hypocrites, but they could not take the risk of creating a problem without a cohesive group of their own. The second advantage was that the hypocrites were clearly identified. The future policy for them was made so strong that they could not hide themselves, let alone remain on their earlier dual policy through which they had fanned chaos and trouble to weaken Muslims. The third big advantage of Tabuk was that the weaknesses in the character of sincere Muslims too became clear and could be corrected. At that stage, neutral accountability of early Muslims also opened their eyes. They assessed their own weaknesses and corrected themselves. Similarly the Bedouin Muslims realized that they had not made any preparations to become true Muslims and just by getting their names registered as Muslims believed that they had fulfilled their obligations to Islam. The higher obligations towards their faith were something else without which they could not provide any service for their religion. These benefits of the battle of Tabuk were internal. On the external front, the invitation of Islam spread far and wide in northern Arabia. Its Arab tribes were attracted to Islam and the oppressed people under the Romans began to observe an alternate political power that could challenge the rule of the Romans any

time. These people could, therefore, have expectations from them in their need to be rid of the oppressive regime of the Romans.

The army of Islam had left for the battle of Tabuk on 1st Rajab, 9th AH. This was the month of April. They returned towards the end of Shawwal.

(*Translated by Nikhat Sattar*)

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1. Sahih Muslim.

CHAPTER 46

Hajj and the Year of Delegations

It was hajj season after the victory of Makkah in 8th AH, but the Prophet (sws) himself and some of his companions were busy in putting down the rebellion of some tribes. The hajj time had passed and the hajj was carried out according to previously established rites of the Idolaters. The next year was relatively peaceful so the Prophet (sws) made that hajj an opportunity to bring in reforms. He sent three hundred companions under the leadership of Abu Bakr (rta) and after they had left, sent ‘Ali (rta) as his special emissary. The Idolaters among Arab tribes who had come for hajj offered it according to their ancient rituals while the Muslims did so as per the instructions of the Qur’an. Since, after the victory of Makkah, Islam had become a dominant power, Abu Bakr (rta) gave the sermon at ‘Arafat and announced that in future, no Idolater would be allowed to offer hajj nor would anyone circumambulate the Ka‘bah in the nude. Idolaters would be prohibited from entering the boundaries of the haram. The Quraysh believed themselves free of the obligation to go to ‘Arafat and used to stay at Muzdalifah. Abu Bakr (rta) removed this distortion.

After the sermon, ‘Ali (rta) addressed the pilgrims as the emissary of the Prophet (sws). He recited the initial verses of Surah Tawbah, in which God and His Messenger had acquitted themselves from the Idolaters and warned them that they were given four months within which they were expected to either make up their minds about Islam and accept it and demonstrate this practically by performing prayers and paying zakah. In this way, they would become faith brothers of other Muslims and their lives and property would be protected. However, if during this period, they did not refrain from enmity towards Islam and continued to deny the Prophet (sws), the Muslim government would arrest them for the crime of denying the Prophet (sws) and would fight them until they became subjugated. ‘Ali (rta) made it clear to the Idolaters that in future they would not be treated with any leniency. So, if they wanted amnesty, they were to be prepared to take advantage of the four months grace period. The same message was communicated by companions as they went from tent to tent while they were in Mina, to ensure that if anyone had not heard it at ‘Arafat, s/he hear it now and share it with her/his relatives.

The message given by ‘Ali (rta) also included the fact that from then onwards, Muslims would not make any treaty with the Idolaters and no promise of mutual survival would work. Similarly, people of other religions would also be required to accept Islam, except if they accepted to live under the Islamic government and make annual payments as taxes. They would then be able to remain upon their own faith and their lives and property would be protected.

Despite the inclusion of key Muslim figures and a few hundred companions in the hajj of 9th Hijri, the control of Idolaters over the rites of hajj remained strong. They used their old ways. After completing the rites, a man called Qalmus from a branch tribe, Banu Faqim of Banu Kananah, that was responsible to run the system of Nasi (changing months of the hajj according to timings of trade) stood in the chamber, showing off previous pomp and glory and announced what would become the last announcement of the calendar change and declared the month after the coming Muharram as the month to be changed according to the solar calendar.

Arrival of the Tribal Delegations

After the victory of Makkah, and especially after the hajj of 9th AH, no tribe in Arabia was in any doubt about Islam being the only power in the whole country and that the tribe that did not accept Islam would be given the same treatment which the Prophet (sws) had been warning of for a long time. That was that it was mandatory for all Idolaters to accept Islam, or else to prepare for war. Henceforth, there would be no leniency for them. People of the Book were to be given the same invitation to Islam. If they refused, they would be told to live under the subjugation of the Islamic government and begin to pay taxes. If this was not acceptable to them, they were to be ready to fight. The people of Arabia decided about themselves immediately and started to arrive in Madinah in large numbers. This created the same situation to which the Qur'an had referred: "And you will see the people entering the religion of God in multitudes," (110:2). This is why the 9th AH is known as the Year of Delegations, i.e. the arrival of groups of people. In this year, so many delegations came that it is not possible to count them, but here we shall mention a few of the more important ones.

1. Thaqif

After the victory of Makkah, the Prophet (sws) distributed the booty received from the tribes who lived in the south east of Makkah at Jir'anah, then returned to Makkah and on to Madinah. The tribe of Ta'if, Thaqif did not accept Islam but one of its leaders, 'Urwah ibn Mas'ud (rta) became a Muslim and began preaching Islam to his tribe. Angered by this, his tribe killed him. After some time, the people of Thaqif realized that most of Arabia was accepting Islam: how many enemies could they afford? They advised their leader, 'Abdiyal ibn 'Amr to go to the Prophet (sws). He said that it was not possible for him to do it alone. Hence, three men from Banu Malik and two from allied tribes were sent with him. They used Khalid ibn al-'As (rta) as the go between to meet the Prophet (sws). These people placed certain conditions for accepting Islam: for three years their idol Lat would not be destroyed; they would be exempted from offering the salah and would not be prevented from indulging in drinking, gambling and adultery. The Prophet (sws) told them that destroying the idol would not be their responsibility but Abu Sufyan (rta) and Mughirah ibn Shu'bah (rta) would undertake that work. There would be no exemption from prayer because the religion that had no prayer had no good in it and evil and immoral deeds could not be accepted in any Muslim community. Finally, those people accepted Islam and 'Uthman ibn Abi al-'As (rta) was assigned by the Prophet (sws) to teach the faith to them.

2. Juzam

Farwah ibn ‘Amr Juzami was the administrator of the Romans over the regions of northern Arabia. He sent his representative to the Prophet (sws) to inform him of having accepted Islam. Later, Rafa‘ah ibn Zayd Juzami reached Madinah and accepted Islam. The Prophet (sws) sent a letter through him to his nation that if they accepted Islam on the invitation of Rafa‘ah, they would be considered to be a party of God and His Messenger. If they resisted, they would be given two months as amnesty. When this letter reached the tribe, all of its members accepted Islam.

3. Banu ‘Adhrah

Zamal ibn ‘Amr came to Madinah from this tribe and accepted Islam. The Prophet (sws) wrote a similar letter for them as the one written for Juzam. This tribe too, upon invitation from Zamal, accepted Islam.

4. Hamdan

This tribe was settled in Yemen. Malik ibn Namt came with a delegation representing the tribe and said to the Prophet (sws) that the delegation comprised the best people of Hamdan, representing all urban and rural populations. The Yemeni tribes of Mikhlaf, Bam and Shakir had accepted Islam and all Yemenis were then united through Islam. Their oath was as strong as the mountains. The Prophet (sws) praised them and wrote an agreement to the effect that they would have rights over the ups and downs of their region and would possess all produce as long as they ensured Prayer and payed zakah dues.

He sent a similar letter to Banu Juwayn, Banu Zuhayr, Banu Muhrah and Banu Lakham etc.

5. Shahan Himyar

The leaders of Himyar, Harith ibn ‘Abd al-Kilal, Nu‘aym ibn ‘Abd al-Kalal and Nu‘man sent Zur‘ah Dhuwayzan Malik as their representative to inform the Prophet (sws) of having accepted Islam and of their weariness from Idolatry and Idolaters. The Prophet (sws) sent them written and detailed guidelines about religious instructions. He sent Mu‘adh ibn Jabal (rta), ‘Abdullah ibn Zayd, Malik ibn ‘Ubadah (rta) and a few more people with Dhuwayzan for their education and for receipt of sadaqah. He instructed them that they should treat people with kindness, give glad tidings on the acceptance of Islam and not turn them away from it. If anyone from the People of the Book were to ask about the key to heaven, they were to answer that it was to witness upon a single God and negation of polytheism.

6. Banu Harith ibn Ka‘b

This tribe belonged to Yemen. Khalid ibn Walid (rta) was sent to them along with a group of soldiers. Khalid sent his soldiers in different directions to preach Islam. He instructed them that if people accepted Islam, their protection would be their responsibility. The people were impressed by these invitations towards the faith and promised to obey Islam, God and the Sunnah of the Prophet (sws). Khalid ibn Walid (rta) informed the Prophet (sws) of this situation, upon which he expressed happiness and wrote to Khalid that he should return and bring a delegation from the tribe of Banu Harith with him. When the delegation arrived, the Prophet (sws) appointed Qays ibn al-Husayn their leader. He sent ‘Amr ibn Hazm (rta), with a detailed written set of instructions that included Islam’s principles and the

Prophet's Sunnah, with them as their teacher. The instructions covered purity, the prayer, zakah, tithe, hajj, 'umrah, jihad, war booty, jizyah etc. When the Prophet (sws) saw them off, he gave them silver as a gift.

7. Delegation from Najran

Najran was the largest centre for Christians in Yemen. There was a grand church in that city and many bishops and priests lived here. The Prophet (sws) wrote to them, inviting them to accept Islam. At this, a large delegation which included 60 soldiers and many elite members and bishops, under the leadership of 'Aqib 'Abd al-Masih, came to Madinah. This group stayed in Madinah for many days and raised questions about beliefs. The Prophet (sws) satisfied them on every point, but the delegation did not accept Islam. The Qur'an gave instructions that they be invited for mutual cursing, in which each opposing party would say "The curse of Allah may be upon the ones of us who are wrongdoers." The members of the delegation had already formed the belief in their hearts that the Prophet (sws) was the last of the Messengers and that in case they agreed to the cursing, their destruction would be certain. They decided, therefore to pay tax. This was agreed to be in the form of Yemeni apparel. According to the agreement, each piece of apparel was the equivalent of an awqiyah and 2,000 such pieces were to be paid in two six monthly installments. It was also possible to pay in the form of camels and horses if it was difficult to pay in apparel. In lieu of the tax, there would be no interference with their religious matters, places of worship or idols. Their priests would not be removed from their positions and their lives and property would be protected.

According to narratives, when the delegation returned from Madinah, the archbishop came out to receive them. When he read the document written by the Prophet (sws), he said: "Indeed, this man is a prophet and messenger." As soon as he heard this, his cousin Bishr ibn Mu'awiyah turned his camel towards Madinah and accepted Islam upon reaching it.

8. Banu Muharib

When a delegation from this tribe came, the Prophet (sws) looked at one of its members closely. When he asked him the reason, the Prophet (sws) said that he had seen him somewhere before. He agreed and told the Prophet (sws) that at the festival of 'Ukaẓ, he had spoken very vilely and had rejected the Prophet's invitation with disgust. Now, he would accept Islam. He requested the Prophet (sws) to pray for his forgiveness. The Prophet (sws) said that Islam washed away all sins of the era of denial.

During that period, delegations from many tribes, including from Banu Kalb, Banu Hind, Banu al-Baka, Khawlan, Sada, Dhi Murrah, Bala, Bihra, Banu Asad, Banu Khazar etc came and entered the religion of God in multitudes. The Prophet (sws) sent preachers to far places to invite people towards Islam and to educate them about its teachings.

Some Jewish tribes agreed on payment of tax. These included Banu Ghada and the people Miqna who lived along the beach of the Gulf of 'Uqbah and the people of 'Adhrah who lived at the border of Syria.

(*Translated by Nikhat Sattar*)

CHAPTER 47

End of Prophet hood

The news given by Jesus (sws) of the Kingdom of Heaven and of its signs has been explained in detail in the beginning of this book. One of the characteristics stated by Jesus regarding the prophet who would come after him was that "God would bestow upon you your helper who would remain with you until the Hereafter," (Jonah 14:16). The Qur'an has even explained that Jesus (sws) had given his name to be Ahmad, although the Gospels that exist today do not mention this name.

A requirement of the above trait is that this prophet would be the last one, after whom no other prophet or messenger would come and he would establish the teaching of his religion on such foundations that no one would be able to destroy them. The second requirement is that the book of guidance given to this prophet would not be vulnerable to any changes, additions or modifications over time. Both these requirements came to be true in the case of the Prophet (sws). At the end of his prophethood, the announcement of end of future prophets was made and God took upon Himself the responsibility to protect the Qur'an.

End of Prophethood

When the Prophet (sws) married Zaynab bint Jahash (rta), the hypocrites raised a storm of propaganda. This has been explained earlier. The Prophet (sws) was advised to remain steadfast. In this respect, the Qur'an also said:

Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but [he is] the Messenger of Allah, and the Seal of the Prophets: and Allah has full knowledge of all things. (33:40)

Being a messenger of God, the Prophet (sws) was required to preach to his audience so well that they received his message comprehensively and to the last degree of arguments. The seal of prophets means being the last prophet. One who is the last of his nation is called the seal. The seal of prophets means he was the last of the group of prophets. After his coming, the edifice of prophethood is so complete that there is no crevice to fill for which another prophet is required. Being the seal of prophets is one characteristic that no other prophet shares with Muhammad (sws). Possession of this status necessitated that he perform all those actions that were essential for completion of the religion and shari'ah. To fulfill this obligation, he clarified the instructions given in the Qur'an, and by acting upon them himself, he lit up the way, which, if adopted by other humans, can provide religious guidance.

These religious explanations, deeds and actions of the Prophet (sws) are called his Sunnah, which have come to us in continuity from his companions and have been absorbed within the actions of the ummah.

In the past, with the passage of time, some part of religious guidance was lost. At times, an unfortunate nation was guilty of distorting or modifying the teaching of its prophet. Then it became necessary for God to send another messenger or prophet, in accordance with His promise to Adam (awa), to clarify His guidance once again. The guidance revealed to the Prophet (sws) was completed and the announcement was made:

This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion. (5:3)

To protect it from becoming extinct, God took upon Himself the responsibility to preserve it so that it may be retained by humans until the end of the world. Such an arrangement was necessary and history is witness to the fact that this promise was fulfilled. Each and every word of the Qur'an is preserved in the same way in which it was delivered to the Muslim nation by the Prophet (sws). Since a person receives prophethood for the purpose of communicating guidance, and the guidance brought by the Prophet (sws) has been preserved for the benefit of the nations of the world, prophethood ended with him and he is the seal of prophets, after whom no prophet would ever come. If religion was something which was never ending, no doubt it would have been necessary to continue with prophethood. But, once God had completed religion, it can be deduced that the process of prophethood or messengership has also ended.

The Prophet (sws) himself did not hide any of the aspects of his status, but highlighted these clearly though his actions and words. For instance, he explained his status of being the seal of prophethood through a simile. He said that other prophets and he can be compared with a very beautiful and grand building built by a man who kept one corner free of a brick. People would walk around the building and praise it, but when they came to the empty slot, they would say that had the man put in the final brick, the building would have been complete. The Prophet (sws) said that "I am that brick and I am the last prophet".[1] This means that when the edifice of prophethood was being created, every prophet played a part in its building, beauty and grandeur. Before the prophethood of the Prophet (sws), although this building had been constructed, one brick was still left to be placed in it. The Prophet (sws) put in this brick and filled up the gap. Now, there is no space for any further gaps. Therefore, the process of prophet hood has been stopped.

Another Hadith says:

It is narrated from Anas ibn Malik (rta) that the Prophet (sws) said: “After me, the process of prophethood and messengership has ended. Now, there will be no prophet and no messenger.” Anas (rta) said that people were saddened by this. Then the Prophet (sws) said that mubashsharat shall remain. People asked him what these were. He said that these were the dreams of a pious Muslim and this was one of the elements of prophethood.[2]

This Hadith clarifies a few points:

Revelation has ended after the Prophet (sws). Only dreams of pious people, as one of the elements of prophethood remain. Obviously these are not equivalent to revelation. Similarly, if anyone claims to possess the ability to make predictions or reveal secrets, it will not be accepted.

- Anyone who sees good dreams will not occupy the status of a prophet.
- Whoever claims to be either a prophet or a messenger will be considered to be false.

A question arises here. Who shall fulfill the responsibilities of a prophet then? Firstly, heavenly guidance shall remain until the Day of Judgement because of the Qur’an’s preservation. Secondly, the ills created in beliefs and actions shall be corrected collectively by the Muslim ummah. The Prophet (sws) made it clear that such scholars and reformers who would set right the problems created by evil doers would continue to be born in Muslim society, although their numbers could be low.

Objections on the concept of end of Prophethood

Some people criticize this idea by saying that 1400 years have passed since the Prophet’s prophethood. Humans have made dramatic progress during this time. Unprecedented changes have occurred in civilizations and cultures. In such a situation, the concept of end of prophethood is akin to depriving humankind of the guidance of prophets. The reality is that the institution of prophethood has been set up by God for guidance to humans and its principles and regulations are determined by Him. According to these principles and regulations, the messenger from God is sent when His Word has been destroyed and it is no longer available for guidance. The Messenger presents it again and clarifies it. After the Prophet (sws), the Book of God has been preserved and so have the Prophet’s clarifications. A well intentioned person can obtain guidance from these even today. As far as provision of guidance is concerned, this is a matter of God’s will. Even when a messenger is present, it is God who bestows guidance to his servants and, in his absence it is again God who gives them guidance. Therefore, due to the preservation of the Qur’an and Sunnah, it is no longer necessary for another prophet to come. As far as the development of new issues is concerned, the Prophet (sws) has trained his nation to develop solutions in the light of instructions from the Qur’an and Sunnah and careful deliberation and use of rationality by conducting ijtihad. In this manner, Islam can confront problems of any period of time.

Considering the progress of humans, this has not been made within the moral and spiritual contexts with which prophets have been concerned. Progress has been made in the physical fields, with which faith comes in contact only when they contradict moral principles. The system of morality and ethics presented by the Qur'an is still present today and it is so complete and lofty that humans, despite their dazzling inventions cannot reach its basics. Had man adopted the system of morality presented by the Prophet (sws) and its concepts of good and evil and, his desire for even higher standards not being satisfied, would have sought a better system and the Qur'an had not met his needs, it would have been legitimate for him to criticize the concept of the end of prophet hood. The situation, however, is that man is falling deeper and deeper into immorality. The Qur'an exists for his guidance but he keeps his eyes shut and away from it.

In matters of collective significance, the format of teaching adopted by the Qur'an covers the basic demands of faith that are essential to be kept in mind. What is left is their detailed structure, the building of which has been left to humans so that they may give it whatever shape they wish according to the requirements of their age, keeping the basic principles in consideration. If humans adopt this method, they will neither be deprived of sacred guidance, nor will the progress made during their times present any barrier.

Another objection raised at the idea of the end of prophethood is that many people have claimed to be prophets after the Prophet (sws) and have also managed to influence others by their message. Therefore, this concept is not a proven one by historical facts. The chains of prophethood are linked together. The faith of all prophets was the same in its essence. Their call was based on acceptance of a single God, understanding of His characteristics, recognition of good and evil, spreading goodness and removing ills of society and developing belief in the Day of Judgement. They received guidance toward these through revelations. The prophets were, in their very personalities, such examples of high moral character that they stood out among all their contemporaries. While calling people to faith, they faced many trials and tribulations, as per the laws of God. Only then their mission was completed. The people who claimed prophethood after the Prophet (sws) did not possess any teaching coming to them from revelation that people might have recognized and said that their teaching had sprung from the same source through which guidance from the Torah, Bible and Qur'an had come. The ingredients that were evident in the preaching of prophets are not visible in the communication of such people. Instead, those who claimed to be prophets attempted to destroy the system of purity and piety that had been set up by the prophets. They opened the doors to beliefs against taboos set by religion and were hailed mainly by people who were free from any moral considerations. They had no status of morality, character, sincerity or closeness to God which was so evident in real prophets. Except for a few, most of their contemporaries did not accept their claims. Hence, their calls did not survive. They created a momentary commotion and, after gathering a small group around themselves, vanished from the scene. The religion of most of these false claimants died along with their own demise. As long as they were alive, they did not go through the stages which prophets had to face according to God's laws. These claimants of prophet hood, therefore, appear different from real prophets. Their situation is as if someone painted himself white in an attempt to join a flock of swans. The Prophet (sws) was totally unique by way of his behaviour, character, his heavenly message, good deeds of his followers, the

results of his struggles and the spread of his faith. No prophet comparable to him came before him or will come after him.

(Translated by Nikhat Sattar)

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1. Muslim, Al-Jami‘ al-sahih, vol. 2, 314.

2. Tirmidhi, Sunan, (Abwab al-ru’ya), ch. 2.

CHAPTER 48

Collection and Compilation of the Qur'an

The Qur'an was the greatest wealth that the Prophet (sws) held in custody for his ummah. It was the message of God which he had been assigned to deliver to all humans and his ummah shares with him the responsibility of protecting it until the Day of Judgement. He was never forgetful of fulfilling his responsibilities towards the Qur'an.

There are some facts related to the Qur'an that are determined and proven through revelation. One is that arrangements have been made while revealing the Qur'an that no falsehood may enter into it. Further that God Himself would protect it. It is said:

We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it [from corruption]. (15:9)

And indeed it is a Book of exalted power. No falsehood can approach it from before or behind it: It is sent down by One Full of Wisdom, Worthy of all Praise. (41:41-42)

Secondly, compilation of the Qur'an, which was being revealed in the form of different verses according to the needs of the times in a coherent manner and then read out to the Prophet (sws) was also the responsibility of God. The Prophet (sws) was instructed that once he had heard it according to the new sequence, he was to read it out to his audience. It was said:

It is for Us to collect it and to promulgate it: But when We have promulgated it, follow thou its recital. (75:17-18)

These promises were fulfilled by giving the responsibility of bringing the revelations to Gabriel, the strongest and most trusted of angels. Interference from devils and jinn was prevented by placing guards against their entry into the skies. Gabriel revealed the Qur'an directly upon the Prophet's heart, thereby closing all routes of possible interference by devils. Then the Qur'an indicated right at its beginning that God has made the pen the tool of education. It was said:

Proclaim! And thy Lord is the Most Bountiful, He Who taught [the use of] the pen. (96:3-4)

In other words, the requirement was that the Qur'an be written and protected in the form of a book. Hence, the Prophet (sws) made arrangements for the Qur'an to be written down while he was still in Makkah. At this, the Quraysh saw an opportunity to say that he created the verses himself and had a few people who kept writing it down day and night. The Prophet (sws) continued this process throughout his life until the complete Qur'an was available to his ummah in its final sequence.

The above verse from Surah Qayamah indicates that these promises were to be fulfilled during the life of the Prophet (sws) and not after his demise. Otherwise, what would have been the relevance of the instruction: "After We have recited the complete Qur'an to you, then you should do the same for people?" The obvious meaning is that the Qur'an was to be compiled according to the instructions from God, the Prophet (sws) would recite it to his people accordingly and, after having it written down as per the new arrangement, he would deliver it to his ummah. Thus, it was necessary that after the complete revelation of the Qur'an, he would need to have sufficient time to carry out this responsibility himself.

Let us see now how the Prophet (sws) fulfilled this responsibility.

Recitation of the Qur'an

The first responsibility of the Prophet (sws) towards the Qur'an was to recite its verses. It was his routine that however much Qur'an was revealed, he would recite it to the Idolaters repeatedly, so that their hearts became clean and they would be inclined to accept the truth. In Makkah, he recited the verses loudly, sitting close to the Ka'bah, so that his voice could carry to the Idolaters and catch their attention. This new teaching was a blessing for those who had already accepted Islam and they absorbed it eagerly, corrected their words and deeds in its light, kept it safe in their hearts and discussed it among themselves. In this manner, the Qur'an entered their lives and became the source of expanding their intellect.

Memorizing the Qur'an

Collective prayers were arranged from the time of the Makkan phase of the Prophet's preaching. The Prophet (sws) used to recite the longer surahs during fajr and 'isha'. In this way, the part of the Qur'an that was recited again and again was memorized by the faithful. Some companions loved the Qur'an immensely and they would continue to memorize it. The Prophet (sws) asked such companions to recite the Qur'an frequently. The books of Ahadith include narratives about 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (rta) and Ubayy ibn Ka'b (rta) reciting the Qur'an to him.

Those companions who remembered more of the Qur'an were given the responsibility to teach the new converts to Islam. It is narrated that 'Ammar ibn Yasir (rta) taught the Qur'an to 'Umar's (rta) sister, Fatimah bint al-Khattab (rta). The first ever school of teaching Qur'an was the Dar al-Arqam, where the companions gathered and learnt the Qur'an and memorized it. It was a consequence of the love of the companions for the Qur'an that when Najashi called the Muslims who had migrated to Abyssinia to his

court and asked them about their views about Jesus (sws), Ja'far ibn Abi Ṭalib (rta) began to recite the verses in the Qur'an which directly addressed Najashi's queries.

Teaching Qur'an

At the time of the Bay'ah of 'Aqbah, the tribes of Aws and Khazraj requested the Prophet (sws) that someone be sent with them to teach the new faith to them. The Prophet (sws) sent Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr (rta) to Yathrab to teach Qur'an to the Muslims. After migration he sent many teachers to various tribes for the same purpose. When, after some tribes went back on their promises and caused harm to the teachers, the Prophet (sws) had a raised platform constructed close to the Masjid-e Nabawi and sent a message to the tribes that they should send their men to Madinah to be taught the Qur'an. The people who came stayed on those platforms, memorized the Qur'an and learned religion from the Prophet (sws). The Islamic society fulfilled their entire needs. Those people were called people of Suffah. According to narratives from Abu Da'ud, 'Ubadah ibn Samit (rta) was assigned as their Qur'an teacher. Once a group had learned the essentials of the faith, it returned to its tribe and another group would take its place.

In the Islamic society, the people who were more knowledgeable about the Qur'an were given more respect. The Prophet (sws) would give them preference over others and had more confidence in their advice. People tended to gather in groups and discuss and ponder over the Qur'an. It has been stated in narratives that when the Prophet used to come to the Mosque and observe such enthusiasm, he would indicate his pleasure and sit down amongst the people. There are many examples of the Prophet's preference given to young men for governance of tribes, based on their understanding of the Qur'an. Makkah was a centre of noblemen and big names could have been considered for its management. But after the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet (sws) made a young man, 'Itab ibn Usayd (rta) its governor. The reason was his love for the Qur'an.

Documenting the Qur'an

The Prophet (sws) continued with documenting of the Qur'an. Books contain 40 names, more or less, of companions who contributed to writing of the revelation. These revelations include both Makkan and Madinan verses. Whenever some verses were revealed, the Prophet (sws) called the companion who was skilled in writing and instructed him to write down the verses under a particular surah, after a particular verse and before another verse. This instruction was given because it was not required to write the Qur'an in the chronology in which it was revealed, but it was being compiled according to the instructions of God and given a new sequence. Such a sequence is called setting; that is, a sequence determined according to God's instructions. The Qur'an is written and recited in the same sequence to date. Today, enemies are attempting to recompile the Qur'an according to their made up sequence. They claim that the current sequence was set up by the companions and Zayd ibn Thabit (rta) and needs reform because it contains editing errors. The reality is that this sequence was formed under surveillance of the Prophet (rta), with instructions from God. There was no input from humans. Orientalists have made many efforts to recompile the Qur'an but their own researchers have rejected these as useless work and no such effort has gained any popularity.

The Prophet (sws) placed the written verses in his special compilation of the Qur'an. Initially, this book was placed in a box close to a pillar of the Masjid-e Nabawi. This pillar came to be called "Pillar of the Book". The companions sat there and wrote verses as they needed. Narratives quote Zayd ibn Thabit's (rta) statement:

We used to compile the Qur'an from pages of the Prophet.[1]

Later, when conspiracies of the hypocrites increased, the Prophet (sws) had the Book removed from the Mosque and placed within the room of Hafsah (rta).

Discussion with Gabriel

The arrangement for the Prophet (sws) to listen to the Qur'an according to a sequence as determined by God was made by God Himself. The Prophet (sws) retired to the Mosque for i'tikaf during every Ramadan and would hold discussions with the Trustworthy Gabriel (asm) then. Once the Qur'an was completed, the Prophet did i'tikaf for twenty days during the last Ramadan and recited the Qur'an twice to Gabriel. In this manner, while the collection of the Qur'an was completed, it was recited to the Prophet (sws) in its final form according to God's promise and then he recited it in the same form to Gabriel and taught his ummah similarly.

It is a proven fact from narratives that many people had made copies of the original book in possession of the Prophet (sws) for their personal use. According to one narrative, the Prophet (sws) gave prediction of a double reward after life to the one who read from the book, rather than from memory. Obviously this was only possible in the circumstance of availability of books during his lifetime.[2] According to yet another narrative, the Prophet (sws) forbade people from taking the written form with them on journeys to avoid any chance of the Idolaters gaining access to its pages and the possibility that they may destroy them.[3]

According to narratives, the Prophet (sws) had the Qur'an written on bones, wooden boards, leather and other similar items. People infer from this that the Qur'an was not available in a compiled form. This can be accepted only in the situation if the Prophet (sws) was not familiar with any other form of writing material. The fact is that just as there is the indication to make the pen the instrument of education, there is also reference to the riqq-e manshur (open parchment of). Riqq is a thin piece of skin. This material which is extremely strong and lasting has been used for writing the Torah from ancient times. A roll was made of it and it would be opened and its pieces spread out and the Torah written on it would be recited. This is why they were referred to as the riqq-e manshur. Even today, when Jews take out processions for the Torah, they walk with this roll in front of them. The letters of the Prophet (sws) that were protected from the ravages of time and are found in museums were written on this parchment. When the Prophet (sws) was familiar with this material of his times, and used it for his letters, why would he not have used it in case of the Qur'an, since it had also been referred to in the Qur'an? Hence, in our view, the copy which he had had compiled and placed in Hafsah's room must have been written on parchment. It would not have been necessary to have it written on bones and planks. If bones, planks or skin were used, this must have been during journeys or temporarily, when parchment could not be arranged.

Thus, in our opinion, the Prophet (sws) had met his obligations towards custodianship of the Qur'an before his demise. This trust was safe within the hearts of many through memory and a written compiled copy was also made available. After this, it was the Muslim ummah's responsibility to publish the Qur'an in this form and to also memorize it to maintain its protection. Thank God that the ummah has carried out both tasks.

Narrative of Qur'an Compilation during Abu Bakr's Caliphate

For us, the situation was just as has been described above. However, ideas have been floated about compilation of the Qur'an during the times of the Caliphs. Although this matter is related to the time after the demise of the Prophet (sws) and hence not related to our topic, but because it suggests negative implications for the supreme performance of the Prophet (sws), it becomes necessary to review such narratives comprehensively. The first narrative which has been popularized by Imam Bukhari by placing it in his Sahih, is that many memorizers of the Qur'an were martyred in the Battle of Yamamah during the caliphate of Abu Bakr (rta). 'Umar (rta) thought that if this continued in future wars, there was a danger of some part of the Qur'an being lost and no one who knew it be alive. He convinced Abu Bakr (rta) to compile in the form of a book the Qur'an that the Prophet (sws) had instructed to be written. Therefore, he gave this task to Zayd ibn Thabit (rta). After great difficulty and effort, verses were located from many sources and were written down. The last verses of Surah Bara'ah were obtained from Khuzaymah or Abu Khuzaymah.[4]

If this narrative is accepted, we would need to relinquish many facts. The promise of God to collate the Qur'an seems to be, God forbid, unfulfilled. If the Qur'an had been collected, what difficulty would Zayd ibn Thabit (rta) have faced that he did not use this collection, but went searching for its verses? Secondly, we would need to believe that the muhajirun and the ansar remained with the Prophet (sws) for such a long time, but were not able to be blessed by memorizing the complete Qur'an. So that when the search for verses began, no memorizer of the Qur'an who could have said that he memorized it by listening to the Prophet (sws) came forward. If there was no memorizer of the Qur'an among the earlier companions, where did the ones who were martyred during the battle of Yamamah come from? It seems from the wording of the narrative that the complete Qur'an was not available with the martyrs of Yamamah either; other people would memorize a few parts only. This is why 'Umar (rta) felt the danger of losing some part of the Qur'an. If the Muslims of earlier times memorized the full Qur'an, what was Umar's point? Thirdly, by accepting this narrative, one cannot but deduce that the trust placed with the Prophet (sws), of the custody of the Qur'an and its communication throughout the world, God forbid, was not fulfilled. Neither was the Qur'an collated at its original sequence, nor did people memorize it accordingly. Fourthly, it also follows that, the enemies of Islam would like to use this narrative to get accepted the notion that the current format of the Qur'an is dubious and that it is doubtful whether the current Qur'an is according to the original. Perhaps some verses may not have been included and may have remained with some people and could not be available at the time. The blame for this could easily be laid upon the Right Guided Caliphs for having compiled an incomplete Qur'an and established it among the ummah.

As a Hadith, if the authenticity of this narrative is assessed, its original and only narrator is found to be Zayd ibn Thabit (rta), who gives news about it to only one person, ‘Ubayd ibn al-Sabbaq, who, in turn, passes it on to one person, Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri. He communicates this to four people: Yunus, Shu‘ayb, Ibrahim and ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Khalid. By coincidence, all four authoritative narrators are Shiites. According to Imam Bukhari’s own research, ‘Ubayd ibn al-Sabbaq died in 118 AH at the age of 68 years. So, his date of birth should be 51 AH. There are many narratives about the date of the death of Zayd ibn Thabit (rta): 45 AH, 48 AH and 54 AH. ‘Ubayd would not be born in the first two years, and, according to the third narrative, he would have been only 2 or three years old at the time of Zayd’s death. So, there is no question of Zayd being the source of this Hadith. Thus this narrative remained a piece of information from a single person, to another and then to another, during the first century of the hijrah calendar and there was no other witness to it. Had the event of the compilation of the Qur’an actually happened, it was such a great and magnificent one that scores of companions would have been its narrators and they would have narrated it with great pride that they, too, were associated with this noble deed. Thus, we believe that this narrative is a self concocted story and it never occurred in reality.

Collation of the Qur’an during the Caliphate of ‘Uthman (rta)

Another narrative is from the time when ‘Uthman (rta) was the caliph. Narrators state that when people recited the Qur’an, differences emerged when some people declared their recitation to be the correct one and others believed that they were right. As a result, fights would ensue. When this situation was brought to the notice of the third Caliph, it was realized that people were not reading the Qur’an as per its original pronunciation, but were using their own regional accent and elocution. ‘Uthman (rta) formed a committee of three members who were experts in the Quraysh language and instructed them that since the Qur’an had been revealed upon the Quraysh, it was to be written in this language by Zayd ibn Thabit (rta). Zayd carried out the writing and many copies of the Qur’an were sent to the main cities under official arrangements. People were asked to use only those copies to make additional ones for their use and to read the Qur’an in the Quraysh language only. For this service, ‘Uthman (rta) is also known as the collector of the Qur’an.[5]

This narrative, too, has been stated as coming from only Anas ibn Malik (rta), and the only person who received it from him and communicated it onward was Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri. No other companion or a subsequent follower of the companions related this grand piece of work. If this narrative is accepted, then it must also be accepted that no one knew that a verse which said: “by revealing this Qur’an to you in your language, we have made it very appropriate,” had been revealed and that, according to which, it was the language of the Quraysh that was the only language for the Qur’an that was acceptable to people and people had been learning and teaching the same. This language was also preferred and liked by all Arabs and they had no issues with reciting the Qur’an. If ‘Uthman (rta) is considered to the collector of the Qur’an, what value does the promise in the verse “It is for Us to collect it,” (75:17) hold, in which the Collector of the Qur’an is God Himself. It is possible that ‘Uthman (rta), as the Caliph, had copies of the Qur’an made and dispatched to various cities. Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri then gave it the form of a tale in order to lend credence to the story of collection of the Qur’an by Abu Bakr (rta) and thus render the protection of the Qur’an a dubious reality.

Variant Readings of the Qur'an

As far as the readings of the Qur'an in various languages and accents is concerned, these matters relate to later times. All famous readings came in the second or third century hijrah, whereas the Qur'an was being recited in one single manner since the times of the Prophet (sws). Practically, the ummah did not popularize these readings and they were limited to the pages of a book. Sometimes, a reader would recite along these lines in a gathering and receive applause. The ummah's unanimous consent was the same that remains the reading of common people. This is why the Qur'an was always written according to this reading. The oldest copies of the Qur'an found in museums have been written in the same style. No one has dared to publish a Qur'an with a different style. Even during the decline of Muslims, a Qur'an using the recitation of Warsh 'an Nafi' was published in 1930. Following this example, another one was published in Sudan in 1978 on the recitation of al-Duri 'an Abi 'Amr and in Tunis in 1981, using the recitation of Qalun 'an Nafi'. These recitations are now used only in some parts of North and West Africa. The Qur'an of the rest of the Islamic world is the same as that we have in our hands.

Some people who recite the Qur'an have promulgated false stories to make different versions popular and get the ummah to swallow this bitter pill, but they have not succeeded. If such styles are accepted, one becomes guilty of changing the Qur'an and one's faith in the promise of God to protect the Qur'an falters. It is an absolute lie that by using these readings, no changes occur in the meanings of the Qur'an. If you deliberate on these objectively, you realize that some people have made additions to the content of the Qur'an. Some have changed the diacritical marks, thereby altering the meanings. Because in the beginning, there were no dots and marks on the content, it seems that some people tried their hand at allocating whatever marks they wished to on the words and named them readings.

The pronunciations and cadences of the Qur'an are unlimited. People have attempted to limit these to 14, 10 or 7. If these are accepted as a part of religion, then it must also be accepted that God's promise for protecting the Qur'an has been put aside and people changed the Qur'an. The reality is that there is only a single reading of the Qur'an and it has been accepted by a large number of Muslims. It was established by the Prophet (sws) himself, he had it written down and kept safe during his lifetime. The Muslim ummah has protected it and kept it untouched. Billions of people have memorized it and have not allowed attempts at alteration to be successful.

(Translated by Nikhat Sattar)

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1. Al-Suyuti, Al-Itqan fi 'ulum al-Qur'an, vol .1, 57.

2. Mishkat, Bab Fada'il al-Qur'an, 180.

3. Muslim, Al-Jami' al-sahih, vol. 2, 143.

4. Al-Bukhari, Al-Jami‘ al-sahih, no. 4986.

5. Ibid., 4987.

CHAPTER 49

The Farewell Sermon

During the Ramadan of the year of 10 AH, Gabriel recited the complete Qur'an in its final form to the Prophet (sws) and the latter recited it back, twice to Gabriel (asm) in the same format during that month. This was a sign of the completion of religion, which indicated to the Prophet (sws) that his mission was about to come to fulfillment.

A massive increase in the number of people accepting Islam occurred after the Battle of Tabuk and delegations from Arab tribes came to Madinah in rapid succession. This was the sign which made the Prophet (sws) recognize that his time of moving towards eternal life was near. He had been instructed:

When comes the help of Allah, and victory, And thou dost see the people enter Allah's religion in crowds, celebrate the praises of thy Lord, and pray for His forgiveness: For He is Oft-Returning [in Grace and Mercy]. (110:1-3).

Since the Arab tribes had joined Islam recently, the Prophet (sws) decided to offer *hajj* the same year so that he could address them collectively. He had a general announcement made in the tribes that he would be proceeding to Makkah for *hajj* and that as many Muslims should join him in this worship as possible. The Idolaters had been forbidden to come and perform the *hajj* according to their own rites a year before.

Thousands of Muslims resolved to go for *hajj* as soon as the announcement reached them. A large number started for Makkah before the Prophet's departure, either on foot or riding on animals so that they could receive the blessings of *hajj* in his company. The Prophet (sws) used this *hajj* to train them on the rituals and demonstrated every action himself in front of people. Before departure, he instructed the Muslims of the *Miqats* (places in Arabia where Muslims put on robes for *hajj* and *'umrah*) so that they would dress themselves properly at these places and begin to chant the "*Labbaik*".

Departure for *hajj* and performing of *hajj* rituals

Five days were left for the month of Dhu al-Qa'dah to end, when the Prophet (sws) departed from Madinah with a huge number of Muslims and put on the *Ihram* at Dhu al-Halifah which is now called Abyar 'Ali. He took animals to be sacrificed at Mina and then proceeded to Makkah with the intention

of *hajj*. He reached Makkah on 2nd Dhu al-Hijjah and offered circumambulation and Sa'i but did not take off the *Ihram*. However, he instructed his companions to perform Umrah and take their *Ihram*s off. They were to put these on back again with the aim of *hajj* when the time came to depart for Mina. For himself, he clarified that since he had brought sacrificial animals, he could not take his *Ihram* off until the sacrifice had been performed. The others were to declare their *hajj* as that of *tamattu'* (offering *'umrah* with *hajj*), thereby taking off their *Ihram* after offering the rituals of *'umrah*.

He went to Mina on 8th Dhu al-Hijjah and left for 'Arafat at daybreak the next day. Once there, a tent at the place where Masjid-i Namrah now stands, was erected for him. He rested in this tent. When the sun had set, he came out to the ground, riding a she-camel. People gathered around him and he delivered an extremely eloquent and meaningful sermon. He informed them of the completion of his mission of prophethood; explained instructions for some of the more significant aspects of Islam; instructed people to ensure implementation, especially the fulfillment of their obligations towards the weak; forbade them to offer the *hajj* according to the wrongful practice of changing its days as per the solar calendar and asked them to witness that he had met his obligations to communicate their religion fully. The entire crowd made this declaration with a single voice and the Prophet asked God to be witness to this.

The *Hajj* Sermon

One hundred thousand Muslims performed this *hajj*. His voice could not reach everyone in such a large crowd, so the Prophet (sws) asked Rabi'ah ibn Umayyah ibn Khalaf (rta) to stand some distance from him. Whatever he said would be repeated by Rabi'ah in a loud voice for people to hear. The Prophet's complete sermon was not written down at that time. Different parts of it remained in people's memories, and have been quoted in books of Hadith from these narratives. The key points of this sermon can be extracted based on such narratives.

In the beginning, the Prophet (sws) asked people to listen to him in silence and said that it was possible that this was his last speech at that place: "O' People! Listen to me carefully because I don't think that I shall be able to meet you here after this year."

Protection of Life and Property

When the people had become silent and attentive, the Prophet (sws) asked them which month was it. They answered that it was the respected month of Dhu al-hijjah. A this he said: "God has forbidden to you your lives and property, just as this month is sacred, until you go to meet your Lord."

Then he asked again which day was it. People answered that it was the day of the great *hajj*. At this he said: "God has forbidden to you your lives and property, just as this day is sacred until you go to meet your Lord."

He then asked the crowd again which city was it. People answered that it was the respected city of Makkah. At this he said: “God has forbidden to you your lives and property, just as this city is sacred, until you go to meet your Lord.” You shall soon meet your Creator and He will ask you about your deeds. I have communicated this to you completely.”

“All claims of blood from the age of *jahiliyah* will now come to an end. I begin this by forgiving the killing of my relative Rabi‘ah ibn al-Harith ibn Muttalib. In future, deliberate murder shall be paid for through *Qisas* (retribution) and similar killing such as the one caused by sticks or stones shall be paid for by 100 camels as *diyat* (blood money). Whoever demands more than this would be from the people of jahiliyyah.”

“Whoever holds something in trust for another shall fulfill this trust to the person who has made him a custodian. All usury has been banned. However, you have the right to your original capital. Neither shall you torment anyone, nor shall anyone else usurp your rights. This is God’s decision that usury shall no longer be practiced. Hence I invalidate the full amount of usury for ‘Abbas ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib.

Rights of Wives

“O people! Your right is upon your wives and your wives have their rights upon you. Your right upon them is that they shall not ruin your beds by other men, which is unacceptable to you. Their responsibility is that they are not guilty of clear immorality. If they do so, God has given you permission to separate them from your bedrooms. You can also give them a physical punishment that does not leave any mark on their bodies. Then if they desist, they are entitled to food and clothing as per the norm.

“Keep my advice close to your heart that you will behave kindly to your wives because they have been put under your care. They cannot do anything for themselves. Undoubtedly, you have gained them as a trust from God and made your conjugal relationships with them legitimate under God’s instructions.”

Good Behaviour towards Slaves

“Listen! Pay attention to your slaves. Feed them from the same food which you eat yourselves and clothe them in similar garments that you wear yourselves. O’ people! Understand what I say, because I have communicated the message.”

The Book and the Sunnah

“O’ People! Satan has lost hope that he will ever be worshipped on this land in future. But he is also satisfied with the fact that he may be obeyed in other deeds, which are not acts of worship and which you think are insignificant. Therefore, be careful in matters related with your religion. I am leaving with

you a clear thing. If you hold on to it tightly, you will never go astray. This God's Book and His Messenger's Sunnah. O' People! Listen to me carefully and understand it well."

Equality among Humans

"O' People! Your Lord is One; your father is one; you are all from Adam and he was made from dust. He who is most honoured in front of God is the one who is most pious amongst you. No Arab is preferred over a non Arab; no non Arab over an Arab; no fair person over a black one; and no black person over a fair one, except if anyone is superior to the other in piety. Understand that every Muslim is the brother of every other Muslim and all Muslims are brothers to one another. It is not legitimate for a person to take anything that belongs to another except if the latter gives it of his own willful choice. Hence, never ever usurp each other's rights. Do not return to the way of denial of truth, that some people from amongst you start killing others."

"O' People! God has determined the share of every legatee in his inheritance. It is not legitimate to will more than one third of one's property (to someone who cannot inherit). Children born on a person's bed would be called his children and deprivation is for adulterers. Whoever relates himself to any person other than his father or if any slave develops a relationship with someone other than he who has freed him, would be cursed by God, His angels and all humans. No payment in lieu of this crime will be accepted from him on the Day of Judgement."

"O' People! No prophet will come after me; nor would any ummah come after you. Be careful. Worship your Lord; perform five prayers; fast for the month of Ramadan; pay zakah as per your possessions good heartedly; offer *hajj* of your Lord's House and obey your rulers. You will enter the Paradise of your Lord."

Forbidding Changes in the Calendar

"O' People! Changing the calendar is an addition to denial of truth, on the basis of which the kuffar are led astray. They add one month during a year, making it halal, and reduce the next year by one month, making it haram, in order to make up the number to that which God has declared haram. As a result, they convert that which is haram according to God's instruction, to halal and vice verse. Today, time has revolved to the same conditions which existed on the day when God had made the earth and skies. Undoubtedly, the number of months in God's world is 12, of which four are sacred. Three of these are consecutive (Dhual-Qa'dah, Shu al-Hijjah and Muharram) and the fourth is Rajab of the tribe of Muḍar, which falls between Jumadah al-Thani and Sha'ban."

After this, the Prophet (sws) said: "O' my Lord! Have I not communicated the message? A voice came from the crowd: "Yes! O' Messenger of God! You have communicated the message." At this, the Prophet (sws) said: "O' God! Be witness." Then he addressed the crowd: "When you are asked about me, what will you answer? The people said: "We will answer that you have fulfilled your obligations of

communicating the message; did well by the ummah; cut down the curtain of darkness and kept trust in such a manner that was demanded by it." At this, he said: "O God! Be witness! Be witness! Be witness!"

After this, he advised the people present that they should communicate all these points to those who were not present.

Some Clarifications

There are a few points that need clarification in the Prophet's address.

His asking the crowd which day, month or city was it, was for the purpose of focusing their attention on his sermon. Secondly, during the days of jahilliyah, the day of 'Arafat, sanctity of the Mosque and city of Makkah were observed. It was considered a great crime to desecrate this in any way. Hence, the Prophet (sws) compared the sanctity of wealth and property of other people to that of the days of *hajj* and the Ka'bah.

The Prophet (sws) forgave the murder of Rabi'ah ibn al-Harith. This murder had taken place during the days of jahilliyah. When Rabi'ah was sent to be suckled to Banu Layth, Hudhayl killed the child. This murder was awaiting a decision in Banu Hashim. Similarly, the trade of 'Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib was run on a widespread system of usury. The Prophet (sws) ended this as a first step and created the first example of ending usury.

Change in the calendar was one of the established bid'at of the Quraysh. They added three months every eight years and thus brought the lunar calendar aligned with the solar one. The result was that *hajj* always fell during good weather conditions. But on the other hand, the sacred months were moved from their original placement. In this way, halal was made haram and vice versa. This movement of the months was completed just at the time of the Prophet's *hajj*. This *hajj* of 10th AHi occurred when Dhu al-Hijjah was actually Dhu al-Hiijjah. This is why the Prophet (sws) said that time had revolved and come back to its original place. In future, the process of change in calendar would be cancelled and *hajj* would take place according to the lunar sequence.

After the sermon, the Prophet (sws) instructed Bilal (rta) to give the adhan and led the zuhr and the 'asr prayers one after the other. Then he went to the Jabl al-Rahmah and stayed on the hills until the sun began to set. After sunset, he proceeded to Muzdalifah. When people ran after his she camel, he advised them to walk peacefully. After reaching Muzdalifah, he led the maghrib and 'isha prayers one after the other and then rested until fajr. After fajr, he stayed at the Mash'ar al-Haram until dawn broke. Then he proceeded towards Mina. After the Rami of Jamarat, he sacrificed 63 camels himself and gave the rest to 'Ali (rta) to be sacrificed by him. During his stay at Mina, he gave an opportunity to people to learn how to perform the *hajj* rites and answered questions. After completing all the necessary rites of *hajj* and other requirements, he returned to Madinah.

(Translated by Nikhat Sattar)

CHAPTER 50

Journey towards Supreme Companionship

A few days were left in the month of Safar, 11th AH, when one night, the Prophet (sws) woke one of his slaves whom he had freed, Abu Muhibah, from sleep. He told him that he had been instructed to go to the graveyard of al-Baqi‘ of Madinah and pray for the faithful who had reached their Lord. “Abu Muhibah! Come with me.” The Prophet (sws) went to the graveyard and prayed for forgiveness for the departed souls. When he returned home, he developed a headache. He kept performing his duties with the pain and also stayed with each of his wives according to his schedule. His headache continued and he also developed fever. The day when he was staying with Umm al-Mu’minin, Maymunah (rta), his pain increased and so did the fever. He called all his wives and told them that his illness had gained severity and if the wives permitted, could he spend the days of his illness with ‘A’ishah (rta)? All of them gave permission readily and the Prophet (sws) moved to the room of Umm al-Mu’minin ‘A’ishah (rta) with the help of two men.

Choice to Leave the World

He went to the Mosque in the same condition, and, sitting on the pulpit, prayed for forgiveness of the martyrs of the Battle of Uhud, and continued to pray for God’s mercy for them for a long time. Then he told his audience that God had given one of His servants the choice of either staying in the world or leaving to go to the blessings which are with God. The servant had decided to go to God. On hearing this, Abu Bakr (rta) started to weep. He understood that the servant was the Prophet (sws) himself and that he was to leave the world soon. The Prophet (sws) then instructed that the doors of people’s homes that opened to the Mosque be closed but that of Abu Bakr (rta) was not to be closed because he (the Prophet) had found no other companion better than Abu Bakr (rta). If he was ever to have made someone a close friend, he would have made Abu Bakr (rta) so, but his relationship with him was that of a companion and brotherhood in faith. This would remain thus until God gathered all of them unto Himself.

Arrangements for the Last Battle

Before the advent of his illness, the Prophet (sws) had made arrangements for the last battle of his life. He had put together an army and made Usamah ibn Zayd (rta) its commander. He had been ordered to

go into the region where the Battle of Mawtah had been fought and of which his father, Zayd ibn Harithah (rta) was the commander. Zayd (rta), ‘Abdullah ibn Rawahah (rta) and in which three commanders: Ja‘far ibn Abi Talib (rta) had been martyred. Usamah (rta) was to attack the region of Balqa near Palestine. Experienced and older Ansars and Muhajirs were placed under him. The army was being prepared when the Prophet (sws) fell ill and the pace of preparations became slow. At this time, some people started saying that assigning a young man like Usamah to be the commander of and to lead older and experienced companions was not appropriate. When the Prophet (sws) came to know of this, he came to the Mosque with a band around his head due to his headache and said to the people that he had come to know of the objections of some people to the assignment of Usamah as the commander of the army. “By my life! you had also objected to his father being given the position of commander whereas, undoubtedly he was fully eligible. Similarly, Usamah too is capable of this responsibility. Hearing this sermon, people began preparing to go for the battle. Usamah gave orders for the army to gather at the place of Jarf, a few miles away from Madinah. He himself reached Jarf, but kept communications open with Madinah to ensure he knew of developments there.

The army was ready. The Prophet (sws) became severely ill. Usamah decided to wait and see.

Fulfilling the Obligation to give Advice during Illness

When it became impossible for the Prophet (sws) to fulfill his responsibilities of the Mosque due to severity of illness, he ordered that Abu Bakr (rta) be asked to lead prayers instead of himself. ‘A’ishah (rta) suggested that since Abu Bakr (rta) was a soft hearted man and might not be able to stand at the pulpit; his voice faltered and he started crying while reciting the Qur’an, someone else be given this responsibility. The Prophet (sws) did not agree and insisted that Abu Bakr (rta) be asked to carry out this responsibility. Hence, Abu Bakr (rta) led the prayers.

Even when he was very ill, the Prophet (sws) fulfilled the rights of the faithful and continued to give them advice and instructions. ‘A’ishah (rta) said that he would say often: “May God destroy the nation that converted the graves of its prophets into mosques.” Similarly, he instructed that there should not be two religions in the Arabian Peninsula. He also said that God had always given the choice to live longer to every prophet.

Narratives on Writing the Last Instructions

Certain narratives about the last moments of the Prophet (sws) have been quoted according to which he had asked for something to be written down for the ummah, but it was not implemented. For example, Sa‘id ibn Jubayr narrated that Ibn ‘Abbas (rta) used to say: “Oh, the day of Thursday! How painful was this day!” and he would weep so much that pebbles on the ground would become wet. Sa‘id said that when he asked how was this Thursday, Ibn ‘Abbas (rta) said: “On that day, the Prophet’s illness became worse and he asked for writing material with which to write, so that after him, people would not go

astray. At this, there was a difference of opinion among those present, although it is not appropriate to express difference of opinion in front of a prophet. People said: 'Just look at him. He is in a state of extreme illness. Try to understand what he says.' The Prophet (sws) said: 'Leave my condition. I am well in whatever condition I am. I advise you three things. One is that you are to exile all Idolaters from the Arabian Peninsula; second is that just as I have been welcoming delegations, you should do the same.'" At the third, Ibn 'Abbas (rta) became quiet, or if he did say it, I have forgotten it.'[1]

The second narrative about this matter is from al-Zuhri. In this, Ibn 'Abbas (rta) narrates that when the time for the Prophet (sws) came, some people, including 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (rta) were present in the house. The Prophet (sws) said: "Bring some material with which I could write, after which you will not be misguided." 'Umar (rta) said: "The Prophet (sws) is extremely ill. You have the Qur'an, so God's Book is sufficient for us." At this, a difference of opinion emerged among the people and they began to argue with each other. Some of them said that the things should be brought so that the Prophet (sws) may have his instructions written down after which they will not go astray. Others were in agreement with 'Umar (rta). When the debate heated up and voices became loud, the Prophet (sws) asked them to get up. One narrator, 'Ubaydullah said that Ibn 'Abbas said that it was such a great calamity that became a barrier between the Prophet (sws) and the writing, and its cause was the argument and voices of the people.[2]

These are the narratives on the basis of which the Shiites claim that the Prophet (sws) had wished to write down the name of 'Ali (rta) as having the right to the caliphate. But the people present at the time, including 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (rta) did not provide the writing material due to which this important document could not be written.

If the above two narrations are considered, we find that they provide information about the same event but there are no similarities between the two. The only common point is the personal view of Ibn 'Abbas (rta).

'Umar's presence is not proved by the first narration. But his name has been mentioned deliberately in the narrative from Zuhri. It is obvious that the purpose was to assign the responsibility of the calamity that became a reason to prevent the Prophet (sws) from having his words documented to 'Umar.

As far as the purpose of the document is concerned it implies that as long as it remained, people would not be misguided, this is an unattainable objective and the Prophet (sws) was very well aware of this fact. The guidance to and going astray of humans are in the hands of God. This is why it had been made clear to the Prophet (sws): "It is true thou wilt not be able to guide every one, whom thou lovest; but Allah guides those whom He will and He knows best those who receive guidance." (28:46)

The Qur'an is the book of guidance. After the Prophet (sws), humans can find guidance only from this book. No other document can be of equivalence to the Word of God. Therefore, in our view, the Prophet (sws) could not have said something which was totally against the teachings of the Qur'an. Not communicating such important guidance before his death, acting upon which His servants could have been protected from misguidance, amounts to lack of fulfillment of the responsibilities of prophet hood. The Prophet (sws) was completely free of such errors.

When writing material was not provided to the Prophet (sws) and he was requested to give his advice verbally, the two points which he spoke about were not related to guidance or to going astray. They concerned management or etiquette. The third point was forgotten by the narrator. So, if the Prophet (sws) had something written down, he would have stated a similar point. Hence, the purpose of writing could not have been what seems to be from the words of the narration.

In our view, while the narrative is weak, it is also contaminated by the wishes of the narrators.

Increase in Illness

When his illness increased, the Prophet (sws) became unconscious. When Usamah came to know, he came to Madinah. The Prophet (sws) regained consciousness before his arrival but was not in a state to speak. He recognized Usamah, raised his hands towards the sky and passed them on Usamah. It seemed as if he was giving his blessings to Usamah.

'A'ishah (rta) said: "When in extreme pain, the Prophet (sws) would often repeat: 'No, but I want the companionship of the supreme and highest companion in Paradise.' Since he had earlier told people that prophets are given a choice between life and death, I assumed that he was making use of this choice and choosing the companionship of the people of Paradise. He did not wish to stay in the world after fulfillment of his responsibilities: hence he wanted to be raised up."

Offering the Last Prayer

During fajr of 12th Rabi' al-awwal, he felt better and was able to get up from bed to stand at the door of the room. People were offering prayers under the leadership of Abu Bakr (rta). Seeing them, the Prophet (sws)'s face lit up with happiness. When people saw him, they made way for him into the Mosque, but he asked them to stay where they were. When Abu Bakr (rta) sensed some movement among the faithful, he realized that the Prophet (sws) was present amongst them and tried to give space to the Prophet (sws) at the pulpit. The Prophet (sws) prevented him to move behind and sat down to his right to offer his prayers. After this, he sat down facing the others and said: "The fire of Hell has been lit. Devils are advancing to spread like a dark night. What the Qur'an declared to be halal, I have done the same, and what the Qur'an declared to be haram, I have done the same."

Death

After prayers, when the Prophet (sws) went towards his house, Abu Bakr asked his permission to visit his home in the locality of Sakh in the upper part of Madinah. When he had gone, the Prophet (sws) took a turn for the worse. Meanwhile, 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Bakr came to see him. He had a new miswak with him. The Prophet (sws) was looking at it with great interest. 'A'ishah (rta) realized that he

wished to brush his teeth. She took the miswak from her brother, softened it by chewing on it and gave it to the Prophet (sws). He brushed his teeth well and then lay down. He was ill again. ‘A’ishah (rta) saw that his eyes had become fixed. She held him, he was repeating the words: “No, but I want the companionship of the supreme and highest companion in Paradise.” While in this condition, his soul left his body.

The news of the Prophet’s death spread like fire throughout the city. Abu Bakr (rta) came immediately from Sakh, went inside the room, removed the cloth from the Prophet’s face and kissed his forehead. Then he said: “My parents be sacrificed for you. The death which God had ordained for you has been faced by you. Now you will not need to face another death.” This was the afternoon of Monday, 12th Rabi al-Awwal.

According to narratives, when Abu bakr (rta) came out, he saw ‘Umar (rta) overcome by extreme emotions, scolding people who were saying that the Prophet (sws) had passed away. He was saying that just as Musa (sws) had gone for 40 days to the mountains, and Israelites had started to say that he had died and would not return, the same way Muslims were saying the same thing. In reality, the Prophet (sws) had not passed away. Abu Bakr (rta) tried to stop ‘Umar (rta) but he kept repeating the same thing. At this, Abu Bakr called the attention of people to himself and said that those who had been worshipping Muhamad (sws), should understand that the Messenger of God had passed away, and those who had worshipped God should remember that God was alive and would never die. He reminded people of the verse: “Muhammad is no more than an apostle: many were the apostles that passed away before him. If he died or were slain, will ye then turn back on your heels? If any did turn back on his heels, not the least harm will he do to Allah. but Allah [on the other hand] will swiftly reward those who [serve Him] with gratitude.” (3:144)

People were so affected by this sermon that they realized that they had never understood the content of this verse, even though it had been revealed after the Battle of Uhud. ‘Umar (rta), riveted by fear, sat down on the ground.

Selection of a Successor

Some time later, the news came to the Mosque that a group of Ansars, the Saqifah, had collected in Bani Sa‘idah and were arguing about succession as to who would lead the Muslims after the Prophet (sws). The influential leader of the Ansars, Sa‘d ibn ‘Ubadah (rta) was also present in Saqifah. This was most significant news as the future of Islam was related to it. Any wrong decision at this time could have resulted in creating rifts among Muslims. So Abu Bakr (rta) and ‘Umar (rta) proceeded to the Saqifah. Sa‘d ibn ‘Ubadah (rta) was lying down and influential Ansars were giving their opinions. They said that the Ansars had sacrificed most for Islam and Muslims and so it was the right of Ansars to take over the caliphate after the Prophet (sws). Sa‘d ibn ‘Ubadah (rta) would be the best person for this responsibility. Abu Bakr (rta) spoke then and said that while the services of the Ansars were massive and they were also highly influential in that region, but Islam had spread over the whole of Arabia. Arab tribes would not accept anyone from other than Quraysh. The Ansars suggested that there be two caliphs: one from

the Ansars and one from the Muhajirin. Both should rule together. Abu Bakr (rta) reminded people that the Prophet (sws) had said clearly that the leader of Muslims should be from the Quraysh. When people became satisfied at this, he asked them to take a pledge at the hands of either ‘Umar or Abu ‘Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah, who would be the best candidates. ‘Umar (rta) came forward to say that Abu Bakr (rta) was the most trusted companion of the Prophet (sws) and the one who had stayed in the cave with him. The Prophet (sws) had nominated him to lead prayers during his lifetime and to be his deputy. There was no one better than him. He would take a pledge on his hand. ‘Umar said this and took Abu Bakr (rta)’s hand in his, thus taking the pledge. The Ansars did the same. Thus, Abu Bakr (rta) was selected as the caliph of the Messenger.

After the burial of the Prophet (sws), when some people said that the Prophet (sws) had nominated ‘Ali (rta) to be his successor, ‘A’ishah (rta) differed. She said that in his last moments, the Prophet’s head was in her lap. At this stage, he had asked for water in a bowl but his body had sagged at the same time. When could he have named ‘Ali (rta) as his successor?

In the same manner, the question had been raised as to what will he left behind. When it became clear that he had not left a will, some people began to discuss the issue. ‘A’ishah (rta) then clarified that if the Prophet (sws) had not left dinar, dirham, goats or sheep or camels as his legacy, why should he have made a will?[3]

Burial

The Prophet (sws) was bathed on Wednesday and clothed in burial sheets. The question arose whether to make his grave within the Mosque or in Jannah al-Baqi‘. Abu Bakr (rta) repeated the Prophet’s saying that a prophet was to be buried at the place he had died. Therefore, Abu Talhah Zayd ibn Sahal dug the Prophet’s grave at the place of his bed. His body was not removed from his room so there was no need for a collective prayer. People entered the room in groups and offered their prayers. On the night between Wednesday and Thursday, the Prophet (sws) was lowered into his grave by his cousins. Thus, this shining sun of the world disappeared from the eyes of the people of the world.

(Translated by Nikhat Sattar)

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1. Muslim, Al-Jami‘ al-sahih, vol. 2, 15.

2. Ibid., vol. 2, 16.

3. Ibid.

CHAPTER 51

Mothers of the Faithful

The Prophet (sws) was married 15 years before the advent of prophethood. This marriage continued for 25 years. He did not enter into a second marriage during these 25 years. After this, during eight or nine years, he married 10 ladies. When he departed from the world, nine of his wives were still living. Details about his wives are as follows:

1. Khadijah bint Khuwaylid ibn Asad

She belonged to the branch of the Banu Asad of the Quraysh and her family tree is connected to the Prophet in the fifth generation. She was initially married to Ati'id ibn 'Abdullah Makhzumi and Abu Hala ibn Niyas Tamimi. Both had passed away. Abu Halah's children were still infants when she married the Prophet (sws). Khadijah (rta)'s companionship with the Prophet (sw) remained for 25 years. During this time he did not even think of marrying again. He was extremely saddened by her death. Later, praising her, he would say that she had accepted faith when all others were deniers; she sacrificed her wealth for him when he was deprived by others and God blessed him with children through her. Truly, she was the wife who shared his grief and helped him in every way when he was being oppressed from all sides in the difficult environment of Makkah. She gave birth to two sons and four daughters. Her sons died during infancy but the daughters grew up and were married. When the Prophet (sws) passed away, three of his daughters: Zaynab (rta), Ruqayyah (rta) and Umm Kulthum (rta) had died. The fourth daughter, Fatimah (rta) lived only for six months after his death.

2. Sawdah bint Zam'ah ibn Qays

The Prophet (sws) was 50 years old when he married Sawdah (rta) This was his second marriage. She was almost his age. She belonged to the older group of Muslims and belonged to the branch 'Amir ibn Luyyi of Quraysh. Her first husband Sakran ibn 'Amr (rta) had migrated with her to Abyssinia. On their return, Sakran (rta) passed away. With Khadijah (rta) having passed away, and given the conditions in his house, the Prophet (sws) chose Sawdah (rta) for marriage. After migration to Madinah, when the Prophet (sws) married again, in order to maintain justice amongst his wives, the Prophet (sws) stayed with theSm one by one. Sawdah (rta) gave her assigned turn to 'A'ishah Siddiqah (rta).

3. ‘A’ishah bint Abi Bakr ibn Abi Quhafah (rta)

She belonged to the branch of the Banu Tamim of the Quraysh. He was the daughter of a man who was very reputed for his morals and character among the Quraysh even before the advent of Islam. Not only was he among the first to have accepted Islam, his services to the cause of Islam are second to none. This personality, for whom even the Prophet (sws) had expressed gratitude, was Abu Bakr, who was the Prophet’s companion during migration and his trusted advisor for all religious and national work.

After Khadijah (rta)’s demise, when the Prophet (sws) felt the need for someone to look after domestic responsibilities, two names were suggested to him. One was that of Sawdah (rta) and the other of ‘A’ishah (rta). At that time ‘A’ishah (rta) was engaged to Mut‘am ibn ‘Adi’s son, Jabir. Hence, the Prophet (sws) married Sawdah (rta). Abu Bakr (rta) decided to ask Mut‘am ibn ‘Adi his opinion about the engagement and the latter expressed some hesitation in going through with the marriage. At this, Abu Bakr broke off the engagement and informed the Prophet (sws). To fulfill the wishes of his loyal friend, the Prophet (sws) married ‘A’ishah (rta) but delayed her departure to his house according to the custom in Arabia. This event took place after migration, in Madinah. Amongst all his wives, she was the only virgin wife and most beloved because of her traits and capabilities.

It is commonly believed, and this belief is based on a narrative found in books of Hadith, that ‘A’ishah (rta) was six years old when she was married to the Prophet (sws) and when she went to her husband’s house, she was nine years old. In his house, her interests were playing with toys, calling girls over and listening to their songs. When she was 18 years old, which is the age considered to be adulthood, the Prophet (sws) passed away. On the other hand, many biographers such as Muhammad ibn Ishaq, ‘Asqalani and Zarqani describe her as being one of those who accepted Islam after its advent. This means that at the time of prophet hood, she must have been of an age when she understood the difference between truth and falsehood and chose Islam for herself. Narratives related to the migration to Abyssinia and Madinah can be traced back to her and their style of narration is not that of small children. Instead, it shows depth of understanding and thought. She herself said that she remembered the revelation of Surah Qamar, which was revealed in 4th Nabavi. Thus, she was of an age when she could understand something requiring scholarship. Children may remember a few isolated events, but to remember the time of revelation of a specific surah at a young age is not possible. Her companionship with the Prophet (sws) lasted eight years. In those eight years, she gained such a status in her understanding of religious matters that many earlier companions had not attained. She had differed on many issues with famous companions and provided rational arguments for the same. No one was more knowledgeable than her on matters related to the reasons, wisdom and evolution of religious instructions. It is beyond comprehension to find such depth and analytic thought in a playful girl of tender years.

If her age is accepted as being so young, it will be necessary also to accept many things that go against known facts. Firstly, she was engaged to Jabir ibn Mut‘am. It is also known that this engagement had lasted for quite some time and her departure to his house was being delayed. This is why it is considered acceptable for Abu Bakr (rta) to speak with Jabir’s father. Otherwise he could have said that only a little time had passed and he should not worry about the wedding. Jabir was his parent’s young son. There

must not have been any lack of suitable matches for him. What problem did his parents face that they had arranged a match for him with a 4-5 year old child, who needed another 7-8 years to grow up? This is against all norms and customs of the time.

Secondly, this match was suggested to the Prophet at a time when he wanted a well mannered, adult woman to take care of his household, not a child. Had 'A'ishah (rta) been really very young, the Prophet (sws) would have stopped the lady who had suggested this match to him and would have told her that the child who played with dolls would not be able to take care of his house.

Thirdly, narratives indicate that the Prophet (sws) did not bring 'A'ishah (rta) to his house for one year after migration. When he was asked about the reason, he did not say that he was waiting for her to gain puberty, but instead, he said that he did not have anything to give her as dower. Then a loan was arranged for him and so 'A'ishah (rta) came to his house.

The idea of 'A'ishah (rta)'s young age has come from a narrative by Hisham bin Urwa. He said that she was six years old when her nikah took place, nine when she went to her husband's house and 18 when she became a widow. In the view of researchers, there is no narrator from Madinah who supports this narrative, although Hisham was from Madinah and lived there until 145 AH. During that year, he traveled to Iraq when he was 84 years old. In Iraq, not one or two, but 11 narrators of this narrative are found to have come up. Then, unreliable narrators produced proofs to support this narrative.[1] Consider this to be Hisham's forgetfulness or the use by Iraqis of Hisham's name for an unrealistic narrative, this strange narrative gained fame and spread in the entire ummah. In our view, facts indicate that at the time of the Prophet (sws)'s demise, 'A'ishah (rta)'s age was probably 28 years. At this age, her grasp of religious matters, the wisdom behind God's instructions and her debates with other companions are better understood and nothing remains incomprehensible.

4. Hafsah bint 'Umar bin al-Khattab

Her connection is with the Banu 'Adi, a branch of the Quraysh. Her husband Khanis ibn Hudhayfah ibn Qays Sahmi (rta) was from the first people who had accepted Islam. He had migrated to Abyssinia first with his wife. He was wounded in the battle of Uhud and did not recover. In consideration of Hafsah (rta)'s religious services and the status and position of her father, the Prophet (sws) married her. The honour bestowed on her was that the book in which the Prophet (sws) used to have the Qur'anic verses documented was entrusted to her safe keeping. Even after the demise of the Prophet (sws), it remained with her. There are 160 Ahadith that have been narrated from her in the books of hadith.

5. Zaynab bint Khuzaymah ibn al-Harith

She did not belong to the tribe of Quraysh. She was initially married to two cousins of the Prophet (sws): Tufayl and 'Ubaydah, who were sons of Harith ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib. After their deaths, she married 'Abdullah ibn Jahash (rta), who was martyred in the Battle of Uhud. 'Abdullah was also the Prophet (sws)'s cousin. Taking her difficult life and long association with Islam into account, the Prophet married her. She died two or three months later.

6. Umm Salamah bint Abi Umayyah ibn Mughirah

She belonged to the influential and wealthy clan of the Banu Makhzum of the Quraysh. She was among the first who had accepted Islam and had married the Prophet (sws)'s cousin who was also his foster brother, Abu Salamah ibn 'Abd al-Asad (rta). They had migrated to Abyssinia after being tormented by their families. Upon their return, they spent some time with Abu Talib. When the environment in Yathrab was noted to be congenial for Islam, they decided to migrate there. They had just left Makkah when the Banu Makhzum stopped Umm Salamah (rta). Abu Salamah (rta) went to Yathrab alone. Their family deprived the mother of her child also. Thus Umm Salamah (rta) spent a very painful life. One year passed before she was allowed to go to Yathrab.

Abu Salamah (rta) was wounded during the Battle of Uhud. These wounds resulted in his death. In Shawwal of 4th AH, the Prophet (sws) sent Umm Salamah a proposal of marriage. She had two sons and two daughters by Abu Salamah and hesitated because of her children, but the Prophet (sws) was desirous of supporting these children himself. Hence they were married.

In terms of intelligence and capabilities, Umm Salamah (rta) is considered only second to 'A'ishah (rta). She has narrated 1378 Ahadith as found in the books. During the journey of 'umrah, at the time of the Treaty of Hudaybiyah, she was accompanying the Prophet (sws). The Muslims were not satisfied with the terms of the treaty and the Prophet (sws) was very worried about the situation. Umm Salamah (rta) advised him to open his ihram and sacrifice the camels. When the Prophet (sws) carried this out, the Muslims followed suit.

7. Zaynab bint Jahash ibn Ri'ab

She belonged to the tribe of the Banu Asad ibn Khuzaymah. She was the Prophet (sws)'s cousin and among the first ones to accept Islam. The Prophet (sws) married her to Zayd ibn Harithah (rta), against the wishes of her tribe. Zayd was the Prophet (sws)'s adopted son. The couple could not get along well and Zayd divorced his wife. The Prophet (sws) was very saddened by the whole affair. Because the marriage had taken place upon his insistence, he felt that he was also responsible for the breakup. God made this incident the source of a significant societal reform and instructed the Prophet (sws) to marry Zaynab (rta). In Arab society, the widow or divorcee of an adopted son was considered to be a real daughter in law, so the hypocrites found an opportunity to criticize the Prophet (sws) and spread malicious rumours about him. The same rumours have been used by the Orientalists of this period to cast aspersions upon the character of the Prophet (sws). The Prophet (sws) obeyed God and Zaynab (rta) was proud of being thus blessed throughout her life.

8. Umm Habibah Ramlah bint Abi Sufyan bin Harb

Umm Habibah (rta) was closest to the Prophet (sws) after Khadijah (rta) in terms of her status. She was initially married to 'Ubaydullah ibn Jahash and both migrated to Abyssinia. In that environment, 'Ubaydullah converted to Christianity and died later. Umm Habibah (rta) was left alone in an unknown land without resources. When the Prophet (sws) found out, he decided to marry her, considering her familial position and religious services. He sent 'Amr ibn Umayyah al-Damari (rta) to the King of

Abyssinia who had converted to Islam. He communicated the Prophet (sws)'s proposal of marriage to Umm Habibah who accepted the proposal. The king himself read out the sermon of the nikah and paid her a large amount of mahr from his own pocket. After the Battle of Khaybar, she reached Madinah with a caravan of Muslims. Her daughter Habibah grew up under the patronage of the Prophet (sws). Books of hadith include 65 narratives traced to her.

9. Juwayriyah bint al-Harith ibn Abi Darar (rta)

She was the daughter of the leader of the tribe of the Banu Mustaliq. Due to the conspiracies and constant problems created by this tribe, the Prophet (sws) attacked it and it was defeated. Juwayriyah was made captive and was handed to Thabit ibn Qays (rta) as his slave. She asked him to release her on payment of ransom and came to the Prophet (sws) to ask for assistance. When he found that she was the daughter of the leader, he suggested that he would pay Thabit and free her and then marry her. When Juwayriyah accepted this, her father married her to the Prophet (sws). The Banu Mustaliq was very impressed with this treatment and became Muslims. The Muslims also returned to them the war booty they had collected. In this way, the enmity between two tribes was transformed into love on the basis of a single marriage. Juwayriyah had been initially married to Musafih ibn Safwan.

10. Safiyyah bint Huyi ibn Akhtab (rta)

She was the daughter of the leader of the Banu Nadir and was captured during the Battle of Khaybar. Her family was traceable to Harun (sws). When the Prophet (sws) found out about her lineage, he chose her for himself and then married her. She had been initially married to Salam ibn Mushkam and then Kananah ibn Abi al-Huqayq. Kananah was killed in the Battle of Khaybar.

11. Maymunah bint al-Harith (rta)

It is said about her that she was the only woman to have gifted herself to the Prophet (sws) and he too wished to marry her. He had been given permission by God to enter into such relationships. She had been initially married to Abu Rahm ibn 'Abd al-'Uzza who had died. There are 76 narratives that are attributed to her as the source.

12. Mariyah Qibtiyah (rta)

The king of Egypt, Maqawqas sent two maids for the Prophet (sws) on receipt of a letter from him. They were sisters. The Prophet (sws) gave one to Hassan ibn Thabit (rta) and kept Mariyah (rta) for himself. She gave him a son who was named Ibrahim. At the age of 18 months, he passed away.

A Look at the Married Life of the Prophet (sws)

Enemies of Islam have attempted to despoil the pure and pious life of the Prophet (sws). The detractors of today have used the false propaganda which was deployed by both Jews and hypocrites and the baseless stories they created in new ways to attack his personal life. The facts of the Prophet (sws)'s life are themselves proof of the falsehood of these stories. The following facts must always be kept in mind:

1. The Prophet (sws)'s early life was full of extremely pious and constructive work. This is why the Makkan society accorded him all the dignity and respect owed to a young man who was of a sound and highly moral character and who was trustworthy and reliable. During his 25 years, not a single stain can be found on his character. When he married at the age of 25, his wife had children and had been married twice before, but was known to be a woman of great piety and virtue. The Prophet (sws) spent his entire youth in her companionship and did not even think of a second marriage, although had he done so, it would have been a normal act according to Arab society. The memory of this serene married life was dear to the Prophet (sws) even after his wife had passed away. This is not the attitude of anyone who is given to frequent affairs or is overly sexed.

2. At the age of 50, when he realized the need for a second wife to take care of his household, he married someone of his own age, whose main attribute was her steadfastness of faith and desire to sacrifice everything for it. Her previous husband had passed away.

3. At the age of 54, he married a virgin. Her key qualities were that she was the daughter of his most trustworthy companion who had been with him in the most trying of circumstances, his childhood friend and an active personality in the society, who himself had desired to establish such a relationship with the Prophet (sws). The Prophet (sws) honoured this request of a companion to whom he was also grateful, at the same time acknowledging his services to their religion. Experience has shown that the efforts and services this esteemed wife carried out to further the Prophet (sws)'s cause and to make it popular among women cannot be compared with any other woman.

4. Muslims had suffered considerable loss of life during the Battle of Uhud. Taking care of widows and the orphaned children of martyrs emerged as a major problem in society. The Qur'an brought it to the attention of Muslims that men could marry two, three or four women to address this issue. The Prophet (sws) married three women one after the other, in accordance with this instruction. These women had been married to his close relatives and their husbands had been martyred in the Battle of Uhud. A major factor behind these marriages was to support them and their orphaned children and to set an example for other Muslims.

5. When the Prophet (sws) had completed the stipulation of a maximum of four wives after marrying the widows of martyred men, the incident of divorce to Zaynab bint Jahash (rta) by Zayd ibn Harithah (rta) happened. God made use of this incident for the correction of two wrong practices in society, so that the work of prophethood could be completed through the practical example of the Prophet (sws). One wrong practice was the status of adopted sons and the other was the marriage of his widowed or

divorced wife with his adopted father. Arabs used to treat adopted sons as their own and gave the status of a real daughter in law to the son's wife. The Qur'an declared this to be against nature and decided that when no relationship existed between an adopted son and his wife, and he divorced her, the adopted father could marry her and there was nothing wrong with this act. God instructed the Prophet (sws) to set an example himself to correct this societal issue and gave him permission to have more than four wives in order to pave the way for this marriage as well as marry others who would come to him as maid servants. Additionally, if a woman was desirous of marrying him and he himself wished to as well, he could do so.

6. Under this special exemption, the Prophet (sws) married Zaynab bint Jahash (rta), and after that, the daughters of the leaders of the Banu Mustaliq and the Banu Nadir, both of whom had come as captives during battles. They were first freed and then he married them. He also married Maymunah bint al-Harith (rta) at the age of 59. Maymunah (rta) became an important source of spreading Islamic teachings.

These details tell us that the entire life of the Prophet (sws) was spent in purity and piety. He spent the time until he was 50 years old with one wife, despite the fact that this period is one in which a man is most sexually active. During this time, he was blessed with prophethood and his entire attention was focused on fulfilling the responsibilities of his mission. He was busy in matters such that worldly activities were of secondary importance to him. Thus, even when he married, the benefits to his religion and nation remained a priority.

Responsibilities of the Noble Wives

The special feature of the lives of rulers and heads of states is that the entire world is open to them with all its attractions and opportunities. They take benefit of this as they wish. Their wives spend a luxurious life, having a multitude of possessions and a crowd of servants. They are drunk with power and float on air. However, the situation of prophets and messengers of God is entirely different. They never give any consideration to the world and focus their attention upon the life hereafter. Their life is defined by obedience to instructions of God and communication of His message to humans. The same reflection of their lives is necessary in the lives of their wives. This is the reason why the Qur'an has elaborated with such detail the responsibilities of the noble wives of the Prophet (sws). They were told that having accepted the companionship of the Prophet (sws), they should understand that:

a) If they desire the luxury, adornment and comfort of this world, they will not find these in the Prophet (sws)'s home. They should keep the same objective in mind which the Prophet (sws) had; ie. success in the Hereafter. Improving the standards of life is the approach adopted by world leaders, not of prophets. Therefore, they must be satisfied with a life of want and difficulties.

b) A messenger is the flag bearer of God consciousness, purity and high morals. The same grandeur and dignity needs to be reflected in his wives. In order to be worthy of his companionship, they must develop a sense of responsibility. They should stay at home and restrain themselves from showing off and having a public profile. They should keep a strict watch over their desires and what they say so that they neither create any difficulties for the Prophet (sws) through any action or word, nor demonstrate any character unworthy of his status and position.

c) The interests of his wives should be aligned with those of the Prophet (sws). They cannot build a life of their own away from his. God wants that there should not fall even a shadow of polytheism, hypocrisy or any moral weakness over the Prophet (sws)'s home or any of his family members. This home should be an example in terms of purity and piety.

d) The Messenger of God (sws) is himself a teacher who teaches the Qur'an, clarifies its instructions, opens the doors to its wisdom and purifies the character and morals of people. The same status is that of his wives. They should fulfill their responsibilities as teachers. Thus, they should pray with great attention; pay the zakah and obey all the instructions and orders from God and the Prophet (sws). The revelation that is communicated by the Prophet (sws) to them should be communicated in turn to the women of the ummah by the Prophet (sws)'s wives. They should give to them information about various issues and be the source of providing guidance received from the Prophet (sws).

e) God had made their role as teachers easy by bestowing upon them the status of the mothers of the faithful. Every person of faith could contact them in order to seek solutions to his problems just as a person could approach his own mother.

The requirement of this status was that no man would harbor immoral thoughts while interacting with them and even think of marrying any of them after the demise of the Prophet (sws). Every Muslim was to have the same feelings in his heart about the wives of the Prophet (sws) that an obedient son had about his real mother.

The noble wives fulfilled the responsibilities given to them by God in an excellent manner. They resigned themselves completely from worldly comforts and focused entirely upon success in the Hereafter. They remained satisfied with whatever was available to them in the way of survival at home and lived a life of abstinence. They were always ready to obey the instructions of religion. Whatever they heard from the Prophet in his personal life, or anything they observed, they shared it with their relatives or those who came to them to ask questions. The efforts which the noble wives made to light up the way of life are narrated in books of Ahadith and the proof is the massive number of narratives which the ummah has received through them.

It had been clarified to the noble wives that they were to keep the Prophet (sws) free to meet his religious obligation without encumbrance. If he was unable to give attention to them they were not to complain but be satisfied with however much time he could give them from his free time. Similarly, if the Prophet (sws) gave preference to some wives over others, they were not to be grieved because the

Prophet (sws) did everything with a religious objective in mind. The Qur'an had made it very clear that in case of marital responsibilities, the Prophet (sws) did not have the same moral and religious obligations which were imposed upon other husbands.

In this matter, the Prophet (sws)'s behaviour was such that he never gave any reason for complaint to any of his wives. He would go every day to each of their homes and ask about them. Then he would stay with the wife whose turn it was according to a defined schedule. He did not change this routine even during the period of his illness when he was close to death. When changing homes became difficult due to weakness and severity of his illness, he spent his last few days with 'A'ishah (rta) after permission from other wives. Whenever his own living conditions improved, he made sure that he shared this with his wives and gave them necessary provisions, such as grain and other necessities of life. The noble wives too fulfilled their obligations throughout their lives and kept the torch of religious teaching burning for the ummah.

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CHAPTER 52

Obligations and Responsibilities of the Prophet (sws)

If one casts an eye over the predictions of other prophets about Muhammad (sws) and his own 23 year long struggle, it is not difficult to understand his obligations and responsibilities. In spite of this, let alone among non Muslims, very little knowledge exists within Muslims themselves. This is understandable in the case of non-Muslims, in that if they were to accept the Prophet (sws) as the harbinger of the message from God, they would have to give a second thought to every deed and word of theirs. Thus, until and unless they prove flaws and mistakes in his character, they remain uncomfortable. But not finding the right understanding of the Prophet (sws)'s status among Muslims is no less than a tragedy.

A large group among Muslims believes that a prophet belongs to pious people of society. Therefore, the Prophet (sws) was a very pious person who was born 1400 years ago in Arabia, took up the purpose of social reforms according to his times and was highly successful in his efforts. The times today have progressed hugely from the past and the ideals and requirements of people have changed drastically. Hence, due to the Prophet (sws)'s piety, we should respect and honour him but practically, he has little to offer us.

Another group that believes that messengers of God are appointed to communicate messages from God to His servants is of the view that the Prophet (sws)'s status was the same as that of a postman. Whatever message he received from God, he communicated it onward to his followers. After this, he had fulfilled his obligations. Those who believe in him now are free to act in whichever way they wish, according to their circumstances.

A third group holds deep love and respect for the Prophet (sws). They consider him to have possessed spiritual powers. He was placed at such a high position of humanity that he was at the same level as that of God and decisions were taken in all matters according to his agreement. He still exists and operates in this world. Obviously, this group has neither an understanding of the status of a prophet and messenger nor is it appreciative of his true obligations. This group is full of its own vain hopes.

The group that supports Sufism declares the knowledge brought by the Prophet (sws) to be superficial knowledge and the Shariah to be the outer peel of a fruit. Instead, they believe that true knowledge is the inner one which is communicated from heart to heart and holds the same significance as that of the inner flesh of the fruit. This knowledge is called the *tariqah* and cannot be obtained without connecting oneself with another person, the *murshid* who is the custodian of the secrets of this particular *tariqah*. In the view of the Sufis, efforts made by the Prophet (sws) to spread knowledge of the Quran were meant only for common people. Its real knowledge was passed on to a few special people who in turn

communicated it to their chosen few in secret. As if the work for which the Prophet (sws) spent his entire life was only a mindless piece of effort of secondary importance.

The views of all four groups above are based on lack of awareness of the advent of the Qur'an, lack of knowledge of the struggles of the Prophet (sws), blind and deaf attachment to the person of the Prophet (sws), exaggeration about their love for him and misunderstanding and wrong perceptions about his position and responsibilities. When the foundations are wrong, how can a building erected on them be sound? Hence it seems necessary to clarify the obligations and responsibilities of the Prophet (sws).

Obligations of the Prophet (sws) according to his Status

When Abraham (sws) prayed for the coming of a great prophet from his progeny, he also named his responsibilities: i.e. recitation of verses, teaching of wisdom and purification of souls. The great personality who fulfilled these responsibilities to the full was that of Muhammad (sws), the Messenger of God only. The Qur'an is a collection of verses that were revealed to him and its status is the same as the book of Torah which was revealed to Moses (sws) and that of Inji#l which was sent upon Jesus (sws). All these books are heavenly ones, sent from God at various times to guide humans. The messengers they were revealed to were messengers within God's system of prophets, who were assigned the responsibility to communicate His message.

Recitation of the verses

Recitation of the verses means reading the verses that were revealed from God. It has been said in the Qur'an itself that before prophet hood, the Prophet (sws) was neither seen to be reciting verses nor writing them. Suddenly, after prophet hood, he was found to be aware of these verses and also communicating the same to other people.

The Prophet (sws) was bestowed with prophethood among the *ummis*, which means none other than Ishmaelites. Therefore, his real responsibility was to recite these verses in front of them, i.e. so that they could listen to them. It was his routine to recite the Qur'an to the elite in Makkah and to invite them to accept its message. Under the shadows of the walls of the Ka'bah, within the Mosque, he would recite the Qur'an so that its message would be heard by the Quraysh. Some people would enter into a debate with him and he would recite the verses to them so that they could understand its teachings. Some people expressed their desire to listen to the Qur'an and those who did not possess the courage to listen in front of others would wait for the time when the Prophet (sws) performed prayers close to the Ka'bah. These people would fulfill their wish by hiding behind the cover of the Ka'bah.

It had become essential for those who believed in the Prophet (sws) to recite the Qur'an and memorize it. That is why the faithful made the Dar al-Arqam their centre for gatherings and thus created a way to benefit from the Prophet (sws). They would read and teach the Qur'an, have discussions and correct

their actions and beliefs in the light of its wisdom. The group that was trained there proved to be a highly loyal one for Islam and became a support for the Prophet (sws) in his work of reciting the Qur'anic verses.

The Quraysh leaders were extremely afraid of the recitation of the Qur'an. They used to cover their ears with cloth. When Abu Bakr (rta) would recite the Qur'an in the courtyard of his house, some people would concentrate in their eagerness to listen to him. Concerned that these people might become influenced by Qur'anic teachings, the Quraysh allowed Abu Bakr (rta) to read the Qur'an only within the confines of his house.

The Quraysh also tried to stop the Prophet (sws) from spreading his message. He responded that he had been instructed to "continue to recite the Qur'an." Whoever was guided by this would only benefit himself. But even if the Quraysh leaders heard the Qur'an, they would ignore it, demonstrating their ignorance and when they accepted that they had heard it, they would declare it to be magic or a collection of stories from earlier times, refusing to accept it as the Word of God.

The same attitude was shown by the Jews of Madinah. When they heard the Qur'an, they denied it and raised various objections on it, although they recognized a heavenly book themselves and were aware of its teachings. Therefore, the Qur'an made it clear to them that when the sacred verses were being recited to them and God's Messenger was present among them, there was no cause for rejecting the Qur'an.

The Prophet (sws) also initiated the institution of Ashab al-Huffah in Madinah to fulfill this responsibility. Memorizers of the Qur'an taught those who came from outside Madinah there. Introducing a part of the Qur'an to be recited within the prayer also motivated every Muslim to memorize the Qur'an. The Prophet (sws) gave a push to this motivation when he said that the heart which did not contain a part of the Qur'an was like a destroyed home. The Prophet (sws) would recite the Qur'an frequently during Ramadan. The same practice has been adopted by Muslims in every part of the world and they consider memorizing it a matter of blessing. Their preparations for recitation during the Ramadan is a sight worth observing.

Teaching the Qur'an

With reference to prophets, one aspect of holy books is the sacred revelations and the book based on these. The Qur'an says: "This is a heavenly Book about which there is no doubt." The second aspect of the book is the law or *shari'ah*. For example, it is said: "in the law of God, relatives are closer to each other." Education means provision of knowledge to someone with great attention. This means that when reciting and teaching the Qur'an, it should be clarified in every possible manner; if anyone asks questions, they should be provided with answers; if they have any objections, these should be removed by addressing them properly; if there are any meanings associated with the verses that are not immediately obvious, these should be brought to attention and explained to the satisfaction of the addressees. The Prophet (sws) ensured all of these points when teaching the Qur'an. Many Ahadith

have quoted questions raised by the Bedouins and the answers provided by the Prophet (sws). Similarly, the Jews of Madinah sought many clarifications from him and he provided answers very patiently. Because the habit of asking questions may also put a person on the wrong path and he can put himself in difficulty by asking irrelevant questions, when some inappropriate questions were raised by some believers, the Qur'an stopped them and said that if they asked such questions while the Qur'an was being revealed, they ran the danger of making their faith difficult for themselves.

Heavenly revelations include a major part of *shari'ah* instructions. The basic *shari'ah* of the Jews was in the Torah, which was added to by their jurists. Many of Qur'anic instructions are found in the verses revealed during the Madinan period. This is also the basic *shari'ah*. Therefore, its explanation and elucidation was a requirement for the teaching of the Book and this was fulfilled by the Prophet (sws). He had been bestowed with a special light due to which his soul was vigilant. If, in any matter, he had not received any revelation, he would give instructions with the help of this light. In this respect, his personality was the source of differentiation between what was good and what was evil.

Fulfilling the responsibilities of teaching the Book, the Prophet (sws) determined the practical form of all forms of worship and terminology: wudu, prayer, *zakah*, *hajj*, circumambulation, sacrifice, *'umrah*, the permitted boundaries of the Haram etc and trained the *ummah* on these. Similarly, he practiced the instructions of the *shari'ah* that were mentioned in the Qur'an as a matter of principle only to demonstrate their detail to the *ummah* and ordered people to adopt the same. This called the Sunnah of the Prophet (sws): i.e. the way defined by the Prophet (sws) which he asked his *ummah* to adopt. In this manner, the religion of Islam is carved from a combination of the basic principles outlined in the Qur'an and their clarifications provided by the Prophet (sws). If anyone of these is considered to be unnecessary, the building of faith cannot remain standing.

The religion taught by the Prophet (sws) while fulfilling his responsibilities of teaching the Qur'an will remain the core of Islam until the end of the world. Anyone who accepts Islam but rejects ay part of it or avoids it will not remain a Muslim, even if he declares his deep love for the Prophet (sws).

Teaching of Wisdom

Wisdom (*hikmah*) means that maturity of rationality and knowledge which gives birth to true thought and true practice. Just as heavenly revelations include *shari'ah* instructions, so do they elucidate the true philosophy of life and the right approach to thinking in every essential matter. Anyone who accepts this guidance adopts the right approach to thinking about every problem in life and then takes action accordingly. Wisdom is a gift from God and the Prophet (sws) was made its teacher. With reference to this, he explained his own role as: "I am only a distributor; God is the One who has bestowed it." The way to train someone on wisdom is to train their intellect and build their character. To develop intellect, it is necessary to ensure that the person practices it regularly; that s/he is provided with the guidance to understand and develops the habit of thinking, deliberating and reflecting deeply. In this respect, the greatest treasure of wisdom is the Book of God which defines these things and advises humans on which of these are based on wisdom and which, when adopted, transform a person into a wise one. The basic

ingredients in this process are the attention to God which combines awe, love and humility. The second ingredient is an attitude of mercy towards others, behaviour based on kindness and generosity and wishing them well. In addition, the Qur'an has declared its basic instructions also to fall within the sphere of wisdom. The Prophet (sws) has explained the right way to implement these.

The Prophet (sws) trained people to reflect and think about the Qur'an and its teachings. He would ask his companions questions that would force them to think deeply and that would motivate them to seek guidance from the Qur'an. For example, once he asked the companions which tree was like a faithful person. People began to think about trees of the desert, but the Prophet (sws) said that the date palm was like a believer. The simile of *la ilaha illalah* in the Qur'an has been explained in terms of a very high, fruit laden tree with very deep roots that go deep into the ground and that gives fruit frequently by the grace of God. A believer believing firmly in this *kalimah* is an example of the tree and his actions and morals are of the highest order and beneficial. Thus, the comparison of a believer with a date palm tree is obvious.

The Prophet (sws) explained the wisdom behind many things by using similes. For instance, he explained the benefits of sitting in pious company by comparing it to going to a seller of perfumes and that of sitting in bad company to being close to the furnace of an iron monger. His style was such that when he used to go to the Mosque and saw some companions sitting together and discussing some religious issue, he would sit alongside and participate in the discussion. He would assist them in understanding that particular problem. Sometimes the companions asked a question of which they wanted to be aware of the wisdom as per the explanations in the Qur'an and the Prophet (sws) would provide them a summary which they would remember always and guide them in future. Once a person came and asked him to advise him about an act that would bring him close to Paradise and away from Hell. He said: "Worship God, do not associate anyone with Him, pray regularly, pay *zakah* and be kind to blood relations." One person asked him to give him some wisdom in two words which would help him to be saved in the Hereafter. The Prophet (sws) said: "Be witness to your belief in God and then be steadfast on it." Sometimes, the Prophet (sws) would give statements which reflected the wisdom of religion and were so beautiful and comprehensive that everyone remembered them. A man once asked him about the reality of religion. He answered: "Religion means wishing well." The man asked: "Wishing who well?" The Prophet (sws) answered: "Wishing God, His Prophet and all Muslims well."

Many companions trained by the Prophet (sws) were very wise men. When they took on the responsibility for the affairs of Muslims, their decisions clearly demonstrated the training they had received on wisdom. For example, when Abu Bakr (rta) announced during the period of his caliphate that he would fight anyone who refused to pay *zakah*until he had paid the full amount to the state treasury, other companions advised him that those people were willing to offer the prayer. Hence, he should show leniency and allow them not to pay *zakah*for the time being. Abu Bakr (rta) said that the Qur'an had talked about prayer and *zakah*together, so he would not differentiate between the two. The same response would be given to deniers of either.

Purification of Souls

The objective of all the above responsibilities of the Prophet (sws) was purification of souls, which is also the real purpose behind the prophethood of all messengers and their struggles. The actual goal of the struggle of all prophets is purification of every human soul and every society. It is essential for a person to achieve deliverance in the life Hereafter and to gain success, to purify her/himself. Without this, if s/he desires Paradise, it is a foolish wish. This is why purification is something to be desired ordinarily. Its knowledge has not been limited to a few people only, nor has it been kept a secret. The Prophet (sws) would train all of his companions and gave them a road map for their knowledge, moral and character building. He explained all details of moral and spiritual sicknesses and provided information about their treatment.

Purification means cleaning something; nurturing its growth and further developing it. Purification of the soul implies that any thoughts or wrong beliefs that may have taken root within the soul be uprooted and removed. Weaknesses and doubts within a person may thus be eliminated and evened out. s/he may be saved from desires of a mortal and sensuous nature and, by altering her/his tendencies, put her/him on the path to righteousness and God consciousness. The person may be made capable to be able to stand with what is good and help it to overcome evil in the struggle between the two.

Purification is a comprehensive and wide - ranging process. It encompasses each and every aspect of life: external or internal; practical or intellectual; moral or collective and political. It trains a human so that s/he they may act on the basis of true knowledge. One would perform deeds which would take one closer to one's Lord and enable one to fulfill one's obligations towards others. It teaches correction of matters and the position of one's relationships with clan, family, society and the nation at a correct and rational level. After emerging from this process, a human being becomes whole and prophets prepare such human beings on whom this world is dependant.

These were the basic responsibilities of the Prophet (sws), that he fulfilled to the utmost and established within the *ummah*. Other responsibilities, such as preaching of religion, warning and giving glad tidings sprout from these and are related more with the strategy used. The Muslim *ummah* adopted the way taught by the Prophet (sws) and kept it alive in every age. That is why the guidance he brought is evident, much as the light of the sun, to anyone who seeks it. The *ummah* has protected this treasure more than their own lives and even today, every seeker can receive benefit from this treasure. When the fact is kept in mind that the Prophet (sws) is the last prophet of God and the Qur'an is the last heavenly Book that shall remain until the Day of Judgement, and of which the *shari'ah* is embedded in the form of the Sunnah of the Prophet (sws) within the practice of the Muslim *ummah*, then the attitudes of the various groups of the *ummah*, as discussed above do not appear to be correct in any manner. They neither relate with the high status of the Prophet (sws) nor do they give the position that belongs rightly to the heavenly guidance within God's system.

(Translated by Nikhat Sattar)

CHAPTER 53

Rights of God's Messenger

Just as the Prophet (sws) had obligations as well as responsibilities towards his *ummah* according to his position, he also had rights which his addressees, the faithful and in general, the Muslim *ummah* were required to fulfill. Among these, some rights were clarified to the faithful of ancient times and promises taken from them that they would not hesitate to fulfill his rights when the last prophet came. The narrative of these promises was present among the People of the Book for centuries, and they were reminded of it at the time when the Prophet (sws) was bestowed prophethood. It would be better if we discuss this before taking up the general rights of the Prophet (sws).

Demands of the Narrative of rights of the Promised prophet among the People of the Book

Within the context of predictions of the prophets of the Israelites, it has been stated above that covenants had been taken from the Israelites from time to time that when a messenger possessing certain qualities came, they would believe in him and support him in every way. This promise has been specially mentioned in the Qur'an to awaken the People of the Book who were living during the time of the Prophet (sws). The personality for whose welcome they had been prepared for centuries had come as a mercy for the world, but their situation was that they were in a stupor of ignorance. The Qur'an said:

Behold! Allah took the covenant of the prophets, saying: "I give you a Book and Wisdom; then comes to you an apostle, confirming what is with you; do ye believe in him and render him help." Allah said: "Do ye agree, and take this my Covenant as binding on you?" They said: "We agree." He said: "Then bear witness, and I am with you among the witnesses." If any turn back after this, they are perverted transgressors. (3:81-82)

Verse 187 of Surah Al 'Imran also clarifies that the People of the Book had been bound by their promise that they would declare this promise openly to others and at no stage would they make any attempt to hide it. This would ensure that it got rooted within the memory of people and their commitment and loyalties to his rights as soon as the last prophet was known.

A few points become very clear from the above quoted verse. Firstly, that this promise was taken from various prophets one after the other from the people of the Book. This is why it is called "covenant of prophets". Secondly, the promise taken was related to a messenger to come in the future and many of his attributes were explained. It was instructed that only the messenger who possessed those attributes would be considered to be the objective of this covenant. Thirdly, this promise was related to belief in

that messenger and to providing him the support he would require to fulfill his responsibilities. This meant that when that great person gained prophethood, his status as a messenger of God was to be believed with full faith in the heart. The message which he presented would be taken as a message from God; he would be supported in spreading and communicating this message and be protected from his enemies. Fourthly, in every period of time, People of the Book reiterated their promise and made God their witness upon it.

Referring to this covenant, the Qur'an instructed the Prophet (sws) to invite the People of the Book to believe in him. If they did so, they would find blessings to come to the right path:

Say: "O people! I am sent unto you all, as the Messenger of Allah, to Whom belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth: there is no god but He: it is He That giveth both life and death. So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the Unlettered Prophet, who believeth in Allah and His words: follow him that (so) ye may be guided." (7:158)

It was also clarified that if any path of redemption remained for the People of the Book, it was in that they act upon this ancient covenant and believe in the Prophet (sws). They were to be with him in his struggles; devote their strength and capabilities to his support and backing and were to become an inviolable wall for him against his enemies. They were then not to live their lives according to their own desires but in the light of what had been sent down with him from heaven:

Those who follow the apostle, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own [scriptures], -- in the law and the Gospel; -- for he commands them what is just and forbids them what is evil; he allows them as lawful what is good [and pure] and prohibits them from what is bad [and impure]; He releases them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that are upon them. So it is those who believe in him, honour him, help him, and follow the light which is sent down with him, it is they who will prosper. (3:157)

People of the Book were also given the glad tidings of double reward by the mercy of God, if they believed in the Prophet (sws) after recognizing him, while retaining their belief in their own sacred books. One of these rewards was for remaining on the teaching they received from their prophets and the other for fulfilling their promise to believe in the Prophet (sws).

Thus, according to the narrative that existed among the People of the Book, the rights of the Prophet (sws) were as follows:

That he would be believed in with full and firm faith of the heart, i.e. he was the last link in the chain of prophets sent by God. The teaching he possessed was based on truth and the message from God which He had sent for the well being of humans. It was an obligation for every human being to accept it and make it a guiding light for his life. Ignoring it would have dangerous consequences that would bring a person as a criminal in front of God.

That the Prophet (sws) be protected against his enemies. This means that enemies and detractors would be punished and a wall of support would be erected for him.

That the Prophet (sws) be supported. Support means every kind of help, cooperation and agreement. This would mean that full cooperation would be offered in fulfilling the Prophet's responsibilities and no effort would be spared in spreading his message. If some people became active to stop him, People of the Book would become his right hand.

And that the Book which he brought be accepted as heavenly guidance and that it be used as the torch with which to light up one's path in life.

Although the promises made during previous times were very clear in their requirements, the Qur'an still made them explicit in order to ensure that the People of the Book living in the time of the Prophet (sws) would not be under any misunderstanding. In spite of this, they became proof of the parable of Jesus (sws) according to which when virgin brides were informed of the coming of their grooms, they remained awake throughout the night and kept their candles alight. Yet, when the time came for the groom to arrive, they blew out their candles and went to sleep. Even after the Prophet (sws), it is incumbent upon those who follow the prophets of the Israelites to believe in the guidance and religion brought by the Prophet (sws) and play their role in spreading it. It is only by doing so that they will be able to find the right path.

Now we will clarify to a great extent the general rights of the Prophet (sws) to which the Qur'an has referred.

Belief

Since man is the caliph of God in this world, He has established a system of prophethood and messengership in order to provide guidance for man's deeds. God provided His guidance in the form of sacred texts that were then explained by both the words and deeds of prophets and messengers. Then He declared the Prophet (sws) to be the best of all prophets and the sacred text which he brought to be the complete and preserved guidance. Therefore, it is not sufficient to believe that the Prophet (sws) was just one of all prophets. In contrast, belief in him requires that the Prophet (sws) be considered as an essential link for connection and relationship between God and humans. There must be total trust in him that the message which he brought is, in reality, the message from God, which if accepted by a human being can be a source of redemption for him. To ignore it would be equivalent to rebellion against God. To clarify this message, what the Prophet (sws) said or did is also an essential part of faith. If one turns one's eyes away from it, one is guilty of relinquishing a part of religion. The teachings of the Prophet (sws) are eternal and will remain permanent, from the need of which man can never be free. Unless man accepts this status of the Prophet (sws), he can never be successful before God. The guidance brought by earlier prophets of ancient times is no longer of any use. This is why the Prophet (sws) said: "If today, Moses (sws) comes to this world, he will not have any option but to become my follower. And if Jesus (sws) comes, instead of becoming the Imam of prayer, he would request someone from my *ummah* to lead the prayer."

Obedience

A messenger of God not only possesses verbal teaching, but also instructions and guidance, obeying which is necessary for anyone who believes in that messenger. This is why obedience of the Prophet (sws) is his right about which God has said Himself:

We sent not an apostle, but to be obeyed, in accordance with the will of Allah. (4:64)

In Surah Muhammad, verse 33, God has asked people to obey Him and the Prophet (sws). If they are not obeyed, just believing in them would be meaningless and apparently good deeds would be in vain.

Obedience requires that before taking any step in life, a person should first determine what guidance God and His Messenger have given about that matter. When it is clarified that a particular cause of action has been stated to be correct by the Book of God and the Sunnah of the Prophet (sws), no possible worldly benefit should be a barrier to adopt this course of action and neither the love of dear ones nor the enmity of enemies should stop him from taking the right step. He should be thoroughly satisfied and happy with whatever guidance he receives from the Book and Sunnah about his problems and not let any doubt or concern come within his heart against these.

The Qur'an did not accept the faith of those who pretended to believe in God and the Prophet (sws), promised that they would obey them and then rescinded on the same. (24:47). Similarly, it was also clarified that no faithful person had any right to act against the ruling of the Prophet (sws). Disobedience of the Prophet (sws) could easily throw him into a pit of ignorance and be the cause of his destruction. (33:36)

The Prophet (sws) also removed the concern of people when they said that they would not be able to receive guidance after he had passed away. He said that he was leaving two things with them. As long as they held on to these firmly, they would never be misguided. These were the Book of God and the Sunnah of His Messenger (Mawatta', *Kitab al-qadr*, chapter 1). In this way, the Prophet (sws) declared his Sunnah to be representative of his being. Because this Sunnah has been preserved as part of the practice of the Muslim *ummah*, as long as the world exists and as long as Muslims exist in the world, the same Sunnah is available to guide humankind.

Ittiba' (Following the Footsteps)

Ittiba' means following every footstep of someone. The effort is that one tries to do exactly what the person in front is doing. One tries to develop the same qualities in oneself because when God's messenger acts in a particular manner, it is the best way the deed can be carried out. This is why a messenger's deeds are a perfect example or *uswah-e hasanah*. The more a person of faith acts to be as close as possible to this deed, the better his deed and the more acceptable by God. The companions of the Prophet (sws) were in the habit of observing his each and every action, keeping it in mind and copying it and demonstrating it in front of those who were not in the presence of the Prophet (sws) earlier. This is the reason why innumerous acts and deeds of the Prophet (sws) have entered the practices of the *ummah* such that every person follows these by himself. Books of Ahadith contain

detailed explanations of the Prophet (sws)'s sleeping, waking, getting up, sitting down, eating, drinking and talking. The companions demonstrated to their friends how the Prophet (sws) carried out ablutions and took a bath. Everyone amongst them desired that he should mould his life in the example of that of the Prophet (sws)'s preferences by following him closely.

One follows another when one possesses deep respect for him. Since a messenger is a representative of God, by demonstrating one's love for him and, as a result, following in his footsteps, he shows his love for God directly. This, in itself makes him a beloved servant of God. The Qur'an said:

Say: "If ye do love Allah, Follow me: Allah will love you and forgive you your sins." (3:31)

This means that the way to show love for God also comes through emulating the Prophet (sws).

As stated above, the *ummah* has absorbed many of the preferred attitudes and behaviour of the Prophet (sws) within its practices. Hence, every person of faith can follow it and transform his life according to that of the Prophet (sws)'s. God will not accept his excuse that since he was not present during the times of the Prophet (sws), he remained deprived of his emulation.

Love

An important right of the Prophet (sws) is that he should be loved. During his lifetime, some Muslims claimed that they loved him, but harboured spite against him in their hearts. Similarly, the hypocrites would come to the mosque when he called them and apparently even obeyed the instructions that he gave, but all of this was mere drama. Their hearts did not support their actions and as soon as they could find an excuse, they would leave, without caring that this would cause the Prophet (sws) to be displeased. God did not accept the faith and obedience of such people. Thus, the faith and obedience which is not based on love is not to be trustworthy. The Prophet (sws) himself explained this as follows: "None amongst you would be a believer until I become for him more beloved than his children, his father and all other people."[1]

This statement of the Prophet (sws) means that love for him should dominate that for everyone else. Everything in the world can be given up for it, but it cannot be given up at any cost. Obviously, this love demands that the person neither ignores the teaching brought by the Prophet (sws) nor the ways to implement the same, i.e. the Sunnah. In case his desires are a barrier in this path, he should sacrifice his wishes and if his wives, children, parents or clans and tribes try to stop him, he should reject their demands. This reality was stated by the Prophet (sws) thus: "He who loves my Sunnah loves me and he who loves me would be with me in Paradise." (Tirmidhi)

One requirement of this love is that a person should always be praying to God for mercy for the Prophet (sws) and his safety. The reason is that every person of faith is grateful to the Prophet (sws) for communicating the message of God to the *ummah* with so much effort and for opening up the path to redemption for the faithful. Just as every good person remembers his parents and relatives in his prayers and beseeches God for forgiveness for them after they have passed away, so was loving him to

the extent of dying for him during his lifetime and protecting him from harm was the responsibility of every Muslim. Without any doubt, it is his right that people pray for his safety and mercy and for his levels in Paradise to be raised after his demise. The Prophet (sws) declared the person who does not pray for him when his name is taken to be a miser. This requirement of love for him has a special mention in the Qur'an. It was said:

Allah and His angels send blessings on the Prophet: O ye that believe! Send ye blessings on him, and salute him with all respect. (33:56)

Protection of the Mission

Just as the People of the Book were advised to become a support for the Prophet (sws), so was the Muslim *ummah* told to take up the responsibility to help in fulfilling the mission of the Prophet (sws). When the *ummah* was bestowed with the *qiblah* of Ibrahim (the *ka'bah*), it was clarified to them that after this, God was including them in accomplishment of the obligations of the Prophet (sws). He would be witness of God's religion for them and they would communicate this truth to other servants of God. It was not the responsibility of the Prophet (sws) alone to communicate the religion of truth to the rest of the world. It was said:

Thus, have We made of you an *ummah* justly balanced, that ye might be witnesses over the nations, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves. (2:143)

The manner in which the Prophet (sws) extended the sphere of communicating the religion stage by stage has been explained earlier. A stage was reached when his invitation extended beyond the Arabian Peninsula and introduced to Romans, Persians and the people of Abyssinia and many rulers had started to feel its strength. Wherever people accepted Islam, the companions went there to provide knowledge of the Qur'an and to teach the faith, thus fulfilling their responsibilities. After the Prophet's demise, the *ummah* was mobilized and fought with every force which resisted the spread of Islam. It took up the responsibilities of messengership and spent its energies in recitation of God's verses, education of the Book and its wisdom and purification of people. Hence we observe that while previous *ummah*s were neither able to maintain their own beliefs, nor protect their texts, nor stay steadfast on their worship, the Muslim *ummah* made its Book the light to the true path, memorized it, preserved its language and its knowledge and tried to transfer the sayings and actions of the Prophet (sws) in their actual form to subsequent generations. The worship routines of prayer, fasting and Hajj are still being performed exactly in the same way as they were during the time of the Prophet (sws). The understanding of true belief can be availed by anyone who seeks it while avoiding irreligious or perverted beliefs. The passion to spread the religion of truth and to fight against wrong beliefs ideologies and life systems is still present within the *ummah*, even though this passion may be found in a small number of people. However small the role of the *ummah* after the Prophet (sws) may be, it is not possible to ignore the fact that its services to retain the religion of truth in comparison with those of previous *ummah*s are far more worthy of praise.

More needs to be done today to accomplish the Prophet (sws)'s mission. The *ummah* is faced with the divisions of which the Qur'an had warned and instructed it to hold on tight to the rope of God. The

Prophet (sws) had said that Muslims should not let go of the Book of God and his Sunnah, otherwise guidance would be lost. If The Muslim *ummah* unites to hold on to the Book of God and the Sunnah and make arrangements to implement the same in practical life, there will be no reason for the helplessness it faces today. At present, Muslims live in all continents and speak different languages. They lack religious knowledge. There is no centre for them that can cater to their needs, address their problems and make available to them religious knowhow in their own languages. The need of the day is for Muslims to garner their resources and create a centre for themselves. They should use it to make decisions that are beneficial for themselves, create linkages with all Muslims of the world to become a strength and prove to the world that they are connected to their religion from the depths of their hearts and consider it a blessing to communicate the same to the rest of the people.

Reverence

Reverence of the Prophet (sws) means recognizing his great and noble status, giving him the respect appropriate to his elevated position and being grateful to him. Some people have the habit of giving their own selves extraordinary importance and thinking of the rest of the world as beneath them. They are unwilling to give consideration to the most noble and respected of people. In front of such people, they try to behave artfully, pretending to be great leaders. The requirement of holding the Prophet (sws) in veneration by a faithful person is to consider oneself the lowest of all in front of him and remain subdued, because he was the teacher and patron of everyone who possessed faith. He should always be careful in case he becomes guilty of something which may cause him to be disrespectful to the Prophet (sws) in any way whatsoever.

The Qur'an considered the attitude of disrespect towards the Prophet (sws) to be akin to lack of fear of God and gave strong injunctions to Muslims that they remain within their boundaries and not try to outreach themselves in getting ahead of the Prophet (sws). Similarly, when they talked to him, they were not to do so in an overbearing style but present their problems to him with respect. During this time, their voices were not be raised above that of the Prophet (sws)'s. It was said:

O Ye who believe! Put not yourselves forward before Allah and His Messenger. but fear Allah. for Allah is He Who hears and knows all things. O ye who believe! Raise not your voices above the voice of the Prophet, nor speak aloud to him in talk, as ye may speak aloud to one another, lest your deeds become vain and ye perceive not. (49:1-2)

It had become necessary to give this instruction to the companions because when the Islamic state established itself in Madinah after consecutive successes, many tribes considered it in their interest to express their loyalties to Madinah. Their leaders thought that since they had accepted to obey the Islamic government without fighting with it, they had done a favour to the Prophet (sws) by believing in him. They considered it their right that when they came to Madinah, the Prophet (sws) be overcome with gratitude and leave everything else aside to serve them and accept every advice or opinion which they expressed without any reservation. According to narratives, they would address the Prophet (sws) as "O' Muhammad" at a level of equality, instead of the established form of "O Messenger of God". When the Prophet (sws) came, they would present their problems or opinions in a voice louder than

that of the Prophet (sws). To correct these habits, they were told that when a person accepts faith, he does not do a favour to either God or His Prophet (sws). Rather, it is a favour upon him from God that he has been given the guidance to believe and come to the right path. Had God not been generous to him, he would have been lost in the darkness of denial and ultimately face the punishment which will be the fate of all those who deny.

A terrible consequence of the attitude of not valuing the Prophet (sws) has been described by the Qur'an in that such a person's good deeds go waste and, in his arrogance, he remains unaware of the horrible accident that has happened to him. When he comes before God on the Day of Judgement, he will find out that he has no good deed to call his own. In other words, disrespect to the Prophet (sws) is such a great sin that it overcomes all the good that a person may have done in his whole life and neutralizes it. This is the reason why people of faith never utter a single word that may be considered to be disrespectful. When they pray for mercy for the Prophet (sws) at his grave, they do so with great humility. If anyone recites in a loud voice, the guards stop him and advise him to read in a low tone. Even people sitting in the Masjid-i Nabawi keep their voices low.

It is totally wrong to say that putting one's own views above those of the Prophet (sws) was limited only to the life time of the Prophet (sws). The fact is that he is the seal of prophets. His education, his way of life and his Sunnah is the light to guide every man's life until the Day of Judgement. Every truly faithful person cannot consider him to be someone who has disappeared into the past, but feels his spirituality in the present too and establishes a connection of love with him. Thus, it is necessary today also that the Prophet (sws) be revered and venerated as his essential right; his teachings not be declared to be out of date and non aligned with needs of current times and one's good deeds not be destroyed by bringing the prophet (sws) to the same level and negating his noble status.

At present times, groups influenced by the West are determined to believe that religion is irrelevant and the systems proposed by it and instructions of the *shari'ah* are things of the past, thus wanting to break away from them. Such people are frustrated by the religion brought by the Prophet (sws) and consider the boundaries which it set to be barriers to their indecent independence and lives of comfort. Similarly, those who have set up systems of their own in parallel to those of true religion and wish to keep others confused in their labyrinths are not fulfilling any right of the Prophet (sws). They claim to be among the faithful apparently, but shall be exposed when they are presented in front of the One who knows whatever is hidden. It is only then that the truth of their claims shall emerge. For such people, the Qur'an says:

O Mankind! The Messenger hath come to you in truth from Allah. believe in him: It is best for you. But if ye reject Faith, to Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth: And Allah is All-knowing, All-wise. (4:170)

(*Translated by Nikhat Sattar*)

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1. Muslim, Kitab al-Iman, Chapter 16.

CHAPTER 53

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that messenger and to providing him the support he would require to fulfill his responsibilities. This meant that when that great person gained prophethood, his status as a messenger of God was to be believed with full faith in the heart. The message which he presented would be taken as a message from God; he would be supported in spreading and communicating this message and be protected from his enemies. Fourthly, in every period of time, People of the Book reiterated their promise and made God their witness upon it.

Referring to this covenant, the Qur'an instructed the Prophet (sws) to invite the People of the Book to believe in him. If they did so, they would find blessings to come to the right path:

Say: "O people! I am sent unto you all, as the Messenger of Allah, to Whom belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth: there is no god but He: it is He That giveth both life and death. So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the Unlettered Prophet, who believeth in Allah and His words: follow him that (so) ye may be guided." (7:158)

It was also clarified that if any path of redemption remained for the People of the Book, it was in that they act upon this ancient covenant and believe in the Prophet (sws). They were to be with him in his struggles; devote their strength and capabilities to his support and backing and were to become an inviolable wall for him against his enemies. They were then not to live their lives according to their own desires but in the light of what had been sent down with him from heaven:

Those who follow the apostle, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own [scriptures], -- in the law and the Gospel; -- for he commands them what is just and forbids them what is evil; he allows them as lawful what is good [and pure] and prohibits them from what is bad [and impure]; He releases them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that are upon them. So it is those who believe in him, honour him, help him, and follow the light which is sent down with him, it is they who will prosper. (3:157)

People of the Book were also given the glad tidings of double reward by the mercy of God, if they believed in the Prophet (sws) after recognizing him, while retaining their belief in their own sacred books. One of these rewards was for remaining on the teaching they received from their prophets and the other for fulfilling their promise to believe in the Prophet (sws).

Thus, according to the narrative that existed among the People of the Book, the rights of the Prophet (sws) were as follows:

That he would be believed in with full and firm faith of the heart, i.e. he was the last link in the chain of prophets sent by God. The teaching he possessed was based on truth and the message from God which He had sent for the well being of humans. It was an obligation for every human being to accept it and make it a guiding light for his life. Ignoring it would have dangerous consequences that would bring a person as a criminal in front of God.

That the Prophet (sws) be protected against his enemies. This means that enemies and detractors would be punished and a wall of support would be erected for him.

That the Prophet (sws) be supported. Support means every kind of help, cooperation and agreement. This would mean that full cooperation would be offered in fulfilling the Prophet's responsibilities and no effort would be spared in spreading his message. If some people became active to stop him, People of the Book would become his right hand.

And that the Book which he brought be accepted as heavenly guidance and that it be used as the torch with which to light up one's path in life.

Although the promises made during previous times were very clear in their requirements, the Qur'an still made them explicit in order to ensure that the People of the Book living in the time of the Prophet (sws) would not be under any misunderstanding. In spite of this, they became proof of the parable of Jesus (sws) according to which when virgin brides were informed of the coming of their grooms, they remained awake throughout the night and kept their candles alight. Yet, when the time came for the groom to arrive, they blew out their candles and went to sleep. Even after the Prophet (sws), it is incumbent upon those who follow the prophets of the Israelites to believe in the guidance and religion brought by the Prophet (sws) and play their role in spreading it. It is only by doing so that they will be able to find the right path.

Now we will clarify to a great extent the general rights of the Prophet (sws) to which the Qur'an has referred.

Belief

Since man is the caliph of God in this world, He has established a system of prophethood and messengership in order to provide guidance for man's deeds. God provided His guidance in the form of sacred texts that were then explained by both the words and deeds of prophets and messengers. Then He declared the Prophet (sws) to be the best of all prophets and the sacred text which he brought to be the complete and preserved guidance. Therefore, it is not sufficient to believe that the Prophet (sws) was just one of all prophets. In contrast, belief in him requires that the Prophet (sws) be considered as an essential link for connection and relationship between God and humans. There must be total trust in him that the message which he brought is, in reality, the message from God, which if accepted by a human being can be a source of redemption for him. To ignore it would be equivalent to rebellion against God. To clarify this message, what the Prophet (sws) said or did is also an essential part of faith. If one turns one's eyes away from it, one is guilty of relinquishing a part of religion. The teachings of the Prophet (sws) are eternal and will remain permanent, from the need of which man can never be free. Unless man accepts this status of the Prophet (sws), he can never be successful before God. The guidance brought by earlier prophets of ancient times is no longer of any use. This is why the Prophet (sws) said: "If today, Moses (sws) comes to this world, he will not have any option but to become my follower. And if Jesus (sws) comes, instead of becoming the Imam of prayer, he would request someone from my *ummah* to lead the prayer."

Obedience

A messenger of God not only possesses verbal teaching, but also instructions and guidance, obeying which is necessary for anyone who believes in that messenger. This is why obedience of the Prophet (sws) is his right about which God has said Himself:

We sent not an apostle, but to be obeyed, in accordance with the will of Allah. (4:64)

In Surah Muhammad, verse 33, God has asked people to obey Him and the Prophet (sws). If they are not obeyed, just believing in them would be meaningless and apparently good deeds would be in vain.

Obedience requires that before taking any step in life, a person should first determine what guidance God and His Messenger have given about that matter. When it is clarified that a particular cause of action has been stated to be correct by the Book of God and the Sunnah of the Prophet (sws), no possible worldly benefit should be a barrier to adopt this course of action and neither the love of dear ones nor the enmity of enemies should stop him from taking the right step. He should be thoroughly satisfied and happy with whatever guidance he receives from the Book and Sunnah about his problems and not let any doubt or concern come within his heart against these.

The Qur'an did not accept the faith of those who pretended to believe in God and the Prophet (sws), promised that they would obey them and then rescinded on the same. (24:47). Similarly, it was also clarified that no faithful person had any right to act against the ruling of the Prophet (sws). Disobedience of the Prophet (sws) could easily throw him into a pit of ignorance and be the cause of his destruction. (33:36)

The Prophet (sws) also removed the concern of people when they said that they would not be able to receive guidance after he had passed away. He said that he was leaving two things with them. As long as they held on to these firmly, they would never be misguided. These were the Book of God and the Sunnah of His Messenger (Mawatta', *Kitab al-qadr*, chapter 1). In this way, the Prophet (sws) declared his Sunnah to be representative of his being. Because this Sunnah has been preserved as part of the practice of the Muslim *ummah*, as long as the world exists and as long as Muslims exist in the world, the same Sunnah is available to guide humankind.

Ittiba' (Following the Footsteps)

Ittiba' means following every footstep of someone. The effort is that one tries to do exactly what the person in front is doing. One tries to develop the same qualities in oneself because when God's messenger acts in a particular manner, it is the best way the deed can be carried out. This is why a messenger's deeds are a perfect example or *uswah-e hasanah*. The more a person of faith acts to be as close as possible to this deed, the better his deed and the more acceptable by God. The companions of the Prophet (sws) were in the habit of observing his each and every action, keeping it in mind and copying it and demonstrating it in front of those who were not in the presence of the Prophet (sws) earlier. This is the reason why innumerous acts and deeds of the Prophet (sws) have entered the practices of the *ummah* such that every person follows these by himself. Books of Ahadith contain

detailed explanations of the Prophet (sws)'s sleeping, waking, getting up, sitting down, eating, drinking and talking. The companions demonstrated to their friends how the Prophet (sws) carried out ablutions and took a bath. Everyone amongst them desired that he should mould his life in the example of that of the Prophet (sws)'s preferences by following him closely.

One follows another when one possesses deep respect for him. Since a messenger is a representative of God, by demonstrating one's love for him and, as a result, following in his footsteps, he shows his love for God directly. This, in itself makes him a beloved servant of God. The Qur'an said:

Say: "If ye do love Allah, Follow me: Allah will love you and forgive you your sins." (3:31)

This means that the way to show love for God also comes through emulating the Prophet (sws).

As stated above, the *ummah* has absorbed many of the preferred attitudes and behaviour of the Prophet (sws) within its practices. Hence, every person of faith can follow it and transform his life according to that of the Prophet (sws)'s. God will not accept his excuse that since he was not present during the times of the Prophet (sws), he remained deprived of his emulation.

Love

An important right of the Prophet (sws) is that he should be loved. During his lifetime, some Muslims claimed that they loved him, but harboured spite against him in their hearts. Similarly, the hypocrites would come to the mosque when he called them and apparently even obeyed the instructions that he gave, but all of this was mere drama. Their hearts did not support their actions and as soon as they could find an excuse, they would leave, without caring that this would cause the Prophet (sws) to be displeased. God did not accept the faith and obedience of such people. Thus, the faith and obedience which is not based on love is not to be trustworthy. The Prophet (sws) himself explained this as follows: "None amongst you would be a believer until I become for him more beloved than his children, his father and all other people."[1]

This statement of the Prophet (sws) means that love for him should dominate that for everyone else. Everything in the world can be given up for it, but it cannot be given up at any cost. Obviously, this love demands that the person neither ignores the teaching brought by the Prophet (sws) nor the ways to implement the same, i.e. the Sunnah. In case his desires are a barrier in this path, he should sacrifice his wishes and if his wives, children, parents or clans and tribes try to stop him, he should reject their demands. This reality was stated by the Prophet (sws) thus: "He who loves my Sunnah loves me and he who loves me would be with me in Paradise." (Tirmidhi)

One requirement of this love is that a person should always be praying to God for mercy for the Prophet (sws) and his safety. The reason is that every person of faith is grateful to the Prophet (sws) for communicating the message of God to the *ummah* with so much effort and for opening up the path to redemption for the faithful. Just as every good person remembers his parents and relatives in his prayers and beseeches God for forgiveness for them after they have passed away, so was loving him to

the extent of dying for him during his lifetime and protecting him from harm was the responsibility of every Muslim. Without any doubt, it is his right that people pray for his safety and mercy and for his levels in Paradise to be raised after his demise. The Prophet (sws) declared the person who does not pray for him when his name is taken to be a miser. This requirement of love for him has a special mention in the Qur'an. It was said:

Allah and His angels send blessings on the Prophet: O ye that believe! Send ye blessings on him, and salute him with all respect. (33:56)

Protection of the Mission

Just as the People of the Book were advised to become a support for the Prophet (sws), so was the Muslim *ummah* told to take up the responsibility to help in fulfilling the mission of the Prophet (sws). When the *ummah* was bestowed with the *qiblah* of Ibrahim (the *ka'bah*), it was clarified to them that after this, God was including them in accomplishment of the obligations of the Prophet (sws). He would be witness of God's religion for them and they would communicate this truth to other servants of God. It was not the responsibility of the Prophet (sws) alone to communicate the religion of truth to the rest of the world. It was said:

Thus, have We made of you an *ummah* justly balanced, that ye might be witnesses over the nations, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves. (2:143)

The manner in which the Prophet (sws) extended the sphere of communicating the religion stage by stage has been explained earlier. A stage was reached when his invitation extended beyond the Arabian Peninsula and introduced to Romans, Persians and the people of Abyssinia and many rulers had started to feel its strength. Wherever people accepted Islam, the companions went there to provide knowledge of the Qur'an and to teach the faith, thus fulfilling their responsibilities. After the Prophet's demise, the *ummah* was mobilized and fought with every force which resisted the spread of Islam. It took up the responsibilities of messengership and spent its energies in recitation of God's verses, education of the Book and its wisdom and purification of people. Hence we observe that while previous *ummah*s were neither able to maintain their own beliefs, nor protect their texts, nor stay steadfast on their worship, the Muslim *ummah* made its Book the light to the true path, memorized it, preserved its language and its knowledge and tried to transfer the sayings and actions of the Prophet (sws) in their actual form to subsequent generations. The worship routines of prayer, fasting and Hajj are still being performed exactly in the same way as they were during the time of the Prophet (sws). The understanding of true belief can be availed by anyone who seeks it while avoiding irreligious or perverted beliefs. The passion to spread the religion of truth and to fight against wrong beliefs ideologies and life systems is still present within the *ummah*, even though this passion may be found in a small number of people. However small the role of the *ummah* after the Prophet (sws) may be, it is not possible to ignore the fact that its services to retain the religion of truth in comparison with those of previous *ummah*s are far more worthy of praise.

More needs to be done today to accomplish the Prophet (sws)'s mission. The *ummah* is faced with the divisions of which the Qur'an had warned and instructed it to hold on tight to the rope of God. The

Prophet (sws) had said that Muslims should not let go of the Book of God and his Sunnah, otherwise guidance would be lost. If The Muslim *ummah* unites to hold on to the Book of God and the Sunnah and make arrangements to implement the same in practical life, there will be no reason for the helplessness it faces today. At present, Muslims live in all continents and speak different languages. They lack religious knowledge. There is no centre for them that can cater to their needs, address their problems and make available to them religious knowhow in their own languages. The need of the day is for Muslims to garner their resources and create a centre for themselves. They should use it to make decisions that are beneficial for themselves, create linkages with all Muslims of the world to become a strength and prove to the world that they are connected to their religion from the depths of their hearts and consider it a blessing to communicate the same to the rest of the people.

Reverence

Reverence of the Prophet (sws) means recognizing his great and noble status, giving him the respect appropriate to his elevated position and being grateful to him. Some people have the habit of giving their own selves extraordinary importance and thinking of the rest of the world as beneath them. They are unwilling to give consideration to the most noble and respected of people. In front of such people, they try to behave artfully, pretending to be great leaders. The requirement of holding the Prophet (sws) in veneration by a faithful person is to consider oneself the lowest of all in front of him and remain subdued, because he was the teacher and patron of everyone who possessed faith. He should always be careful in case he becomes guilty of something which may cause him to be disrespectful to the Prophet (sws) in any way whatsoever.

The Qur'an considered the attitude of disrespect towards the Prophet (sws) to be akin to lack of fear of God and gave strong injunctions to Muslims that they remain within their boundaries and not try to outreach themselves in getting ahead of the Prophet (sws). Similarly, when they talked to him, they were not to do so in an overbearing style but present their problems to him with respect. During this time, their voices were not be raised above that of the Prophet (sws)'s. It was said:

O Ye who believe! Put not yourselves forward before Allah and His Messenger. but fear Allah. for Allah is He Who hears and knows all things. O ye who believe! Raise not your voices above the voice of the Prophet, nor speak aloud to him in talk, as ye may speak aloud to one another, lest your deeds become vain and ye perceive not. (49:1-2)

It had become necessary to give this instruction to the companions because when the Islamic state established itself in Madinah after consecutive successes, many tribes considered it in their interest to express their loyalties to Madinah. Their leaders thought that since they had accepted to obey the Islamic government without fighting with it, they had done a favour to the Prophet (sws) by believing in him. They considered it their right that when they came to Madinah, the Prophet (sws) be overcome with gratitude and leave everything else aside to serve them and accept every advice or opinion which they expressed without any reservation. According to narratives, they would address the Prophet (sws) as "O' Muhammad" at a level of equality, instead of the established form of "O Messenger of God". When the Prophet (sws) came, they would present their problems or opinions in a voice louder than

that of the Prophet (sws). To correct these habits, they were told that when a person accepts faith, he does not do a favour to either God or His Prophet (sws). Rather, it is a favour upon him from God that he has been given the guidance to believe and come to the right path. Had God not been generous to him, he would have been lost in the darkness of denial and ultimately face the punishment which will be the fate of all those who deny.

A terrible consequence of the attitude of not valuing the Prophet (sws) has been described by the Qur'an in that such a person's good deeds go waste and, in his arrogance, he remains unaware of the horrible accident that has happened to him. When he comes before God on the Day of Judgement, he will find out that he has no good deed to call his own. In other words, disrespect to the Prophet (sws) is such a great sin that it overcomes all the good that a person may have done in his whole life and neutralizes it. This is the reason why people of faith never utter a single word that may be considered to be disrespectful. When they pray for mercy for the Prophet (sws) at his grave, they do so with great humility. If anyone recites in a loud voice, the guards stop him and advise him to read in a low tone. Even people sitting in the Masjid-i Nabawi keep their voices low.

It is totally wrong to say that putting one's own views above those of the Prophet (sws) was limited only to the life time of the Prophet (sws). The fact is that he is the seal of prophets. His education, his way of life and his Sunnah is the light to guide every man's life until the Day of Judgement. Every truly faithful person cannot consider him to be someone who has disappeared into the past, but feels his spirituality in the present too and establishes a connection of love with him. Thus, it is necessary today also that the Prophet (sws) be revered and venerated as his essential right; his teachings not be declared to be out of date and non aligned with needs of current times and one's good deeds not be destroyed by bringing the prophet (sws) to the same level and negating his noble status.

At present times, groups influenced by the West are determined to believe that religion is irrelevant and the systems proposed by it and instructions of the *shari'ah* are things of the past, thus wanting to break away from them. Such people are frustrated by the religion brought by the Prophet (sws) and consider the boundaries which it set to be barriers to their indecent independence and lives of comfort. Similarly, those who have set up systems of their own in parallel to those of true religion and wish to keep others confused in their labyrinths are not fulfilling any right of the Prophet (sws). They claim to be among the faithful apparently, but shall be exposed when they are presented in front of the One who knows whatever is hidden. It is only then that the truth of their claims shall emerge. For such people, the Qur'an says:

O Mankind! The Messenger hath come to you in truth from Allah. believe in him: It is best for you. But if ye reject Faith, to Allah belong all things in the heavens and on earth: And Allah is All-knowing, All-wise. (4:170)

(*Translated by Nikhat Sattar*)

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1. Muslim, Kitab al-Iman, Chapter 16.

CHAPTER 54

CHAPTER 53

Exemplary Personality

When God sends a messenger, He also sends a book of guidance for him. The work of the messenger, as explained before, is to communicate this book to people and to act upon it himself. Even before becoming a messenger, he is the best example of morality and of impeccable character during his time. When he receives the teaching of revelation, he achieves an even higher level of excellence and presents a model of deed and word most beloved by God. This is the reason why people of faith are taught to make the practical example set by the Prophet (sws) to be their standard. This standard is called uswah hasana. The Quran, addressing the People of the Book, said that for everyone of them who had expectations of meeting his Lord and being accountable on the Day of Judgement, and remembered God often, the best example was that of the Prophet (sws), (33:31). Every person of faith should have the goal to mould his life along this perfect example, because this is what is pleasing to God.

The Prophet (sws)'s disposition, noble character, patience and perseverance, trust in God, steadfastness, honesty and penitence are obvious from the day and night routines of his blessed life. However, it seems necessary to mention a few Ahadith here to give our readers a glimpse, so that those desirous of drinking from this spring of purity find an instant guide. Otherwise, to describe the Prophet (sws)'s personality would take volumes.

During his Makkan days, the Prophet (sws) was busy in the struggle to spread the religion of truth and the deniers of Quraysh were using each and every legitimate and illegitimate method to resist him, when the Qur'an praised the Prophet's character to say: "And thou (standest) on an exalted standard of character." (68:4). He gave training of this exalted standard to all of his companions who accepted the faith and taught them to differentiate between good and bad. A few Ahadith are listed below:

1. It is narrated from Nawas ibn Sama'an (rta) that the Prophet (sws) said: "Good manners are akin to doing good. Sin is that which creates a prick in your heart and you wish it not to be known to others."

This saying of the Prophet (sws) provides a reference according to which every action can be judged; whether it is to be considered a matter to be rewarded by God or punished. The nature of sin and evil is such that it shakes the conscience of the doer and he wishes to keep it hidden from other's eyes. A person does not feel shy about good work and noble deeds because they represent his high moral character.

2. Abu Dhar Ghifari (rta) narrates that the Prophet (sws) said: “No one amongst you should consider even the smallest good deed to be insignificant. If he cannot do anything else, he should at least greet his brother with warmth.

3. It is narrated from Abu Hurayrah (rta) that a man asked the Prophet (sws): “O’ Messenger of God! Who is the best deserving of all people of my good character? He answered: “Your mother.” The man asked: “Who after her”? The Prophet (sws) answered: “Your mother.” The man asked: “After her?” The Prophet (sws) answered: “Your mother.” The man asked: “Who after her?” The Prophet (sws) answered: “Your father.”

4. Abu Hurayrah narrates that the Prophet (sws) said: “No son can repay the favours of his father. If he can, it is only by buying him to free him if he sees his father bound in slavery.”

5. ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘As stated that the Prophet said that the pleasure of God is in the pleasure of a father and His displeasure is in the father’s displeasure.

From these sayings of the Prophet (sws), one realizes that after the rights of God, the highest right belongs to the mother, followed by that of the father. But as compared to that of the father, the mother’s rights are three times as much. Nowadays people try to measure these rights in terms of material wealth, but the Qur’an refers to them in terms of the love of parents and their service and training which the child receives from them in his home.

6. Anas ibn Malik (rta) narrates that a man asked the Prophet (sws): “When would the Day of Judgement come?” The Prophet (sws) asked: “What preparations have you made for it?” He answered: “Nothing except that I have been loving God and His Messenger.” The Prophet (sws) answered: “You shall be amongst those you have been loving.”

This Hadith tells us that in the Hereafter, we shall be among those who we have loved in this world. The person who raised this question was aware of the fact that love for God and His Messenger is a part of faith. Hence, when he told the Prophet (sws) that this love was his most valued wealth, the Prophet (sws) gave him the glad tidings that he would be with him in the Hereafter.

7. It is narrated from Abu Hurayrah (rta) that the Prophet (sws) said: “Avoid jealousy. Jealousy consumes good deeds in the way that fire consumes wood.”

8. Ibn Mas‘ud (rta) narrates that it is a saying of the Prophet (sws) that any person with the slightest bit of arrogance in his heart will not go to Paradise. A man asked that a person likes to wear good clothes and shoes. The Prophet (sws) answered: “God is Himself beautiful and likes beauty. Arrogance is when a person is obstinate in front of truth and thinks of others as insignificant.”

9. It is narrated from Ibn Mas‘ud (rta) that the Prophet (sws) said: “When a person keeps saying the truth and keeps searching for truth, his name is written down as the truthful in front of God. Similarly, if a person keeps telling lies and keeps searching for lies, a time comes when his name is written down as a liar.”

Character is not demonstrated through a sudden attribute. The particular quality must become a habit of the person. If a person tells the truth occasionally, he does not become truthful. For this, it is necessary that the person never utters any lie; does not hesitate to sacrifice his benefit for the sake of truth. When the value of truth becomes so high that he cannot help but tell the truth, only then would he be considered a truthful person by God. The same example can be used for other good qualities as well. Similarly, when bad traits find home within a person, and he makes them part of his daily routine, he is declared to be a bad person by God.

10. Safwan ibn Sulaym (rta) narrates: "We asked: 'O Messenger of God! Can a mu'min be a coward?' The Prophet (sws) answered: 'Yes.' It was then asked: 'Can a mu'minn be a miser?' The prophet (sws) answered: 'Yes.' Then it was asked: 'Can a mu'min be a liar?' The Prophet (sws) answered: 'No.'"

Thus, a person of faith cannot be a liar. The reason for this is that the Muslim ummah has come into existence through giving evidence. A person who cannot fulfill this requirement refutes his own existence as a member of the ummah due to his wrong deeds:

11. Abu Hurayra (rta) narrates that the Prophet (sws) said that it is enough for a man to be a liar if he hears something and passes it on without confirmation.

12. It is narrated from 'A'ishah (rta) that the Prophet (sws) never took revenge for anything against his person. However, if anyone desecrated anything declared sacred by God, he would take revenge against him on behalf of God.

13. Sa'id al-Muqbari (rta) narrates that whenever the Prophet (sws) started to do something good, he would remain steadfast upon it and always continue to do it.

14. Umm Salamah (rta) narrates that the Prophet (sws) said that God likes the deeds that are done on a continuous basis, even though they may be less in number.

In other words, instead of going for some good deed all of a sudden in a passion, God likes humans to adopt good deeds on a constant basis, even if the deed is small. The reason is that the good that is carried out continuously becomes a source to develop one's character, whereas demonstrating it for a short time does not produce much effect on a person's character.

15. A'ishah (rta) says that the Prophet (sws) preferred to begin everything from the right side. He took special care of this while doing ablutions, combing his hair or wearing shoes. When he was in company and was to distribute something, he would begin from the right, even if there was a child sitting to his right and an elderly person to his left.

Differentiating between the right and left and connecting them with good and bad deeds establishes a reference in one's mind, which teaches a person to distinguish between good and evil.

16. Abu Sa'id al-Khudri (rta) said that the Messenger of God was more modest than a virgin wearing a shawl. If he did not like something, they would see his feelings reflected on his face.

17. ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas (rta) narrates that the Prophet (sws) was the most generous of all when doing good for others. During Ramadan, when Gabriel (rta) came to him to help him recite the Qur’an, he became more generous than the fastest of winds during these days.

The Prophet (sws) was extremely kind towards his ummah and very caring of its needs. He would identify the things which could potentially endanger the people of faith in the future. In this context, he used various ways to explain how certain sins were not insignificant, but very dangerous in terms of their impact. Thus, they were to be avoided totally. Consider some related Ahadith:

1. Abu Hurayrah (rta) says that the Prophet (sws) said: “Protect yourself from seven sins.” He was asked which ones were these. He answered: “Associating someone with God; using magic on someone or get it done; killing someone without a legal reason; usurping the wealth of an orphan; committing adultery; casting accusations on innocent, blameless women and running away from the battlefield during jihad.”

2. Abu Bakrah (rta) says that the Prophet (sws) said: “Should I not give you news of three biggest sins? They are: associating someone with God; ending relations with parents and giving false evidence or lying.” Abu Bakrah (rta) says that when he said this, he was lying down with his back resting against the wall. Then he sat up and repeated the last great sin so many times that we wished for him to become quiet.

3. ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr (rta) narrates that the Prophet (sws) said: “Four qualities, if found in anyone, make him a total hypocrite. If one of these is present in him, until he gets rid of it, he would retain an element of hypocrisy. The four qualities are: He embezzles when entrusted by someone to keep their wealth safe, when he talks, he lies, when he makes a promise, he breaks it, when he argues, he begins to abuse.”

4. It is narrated from Hudhayfah (rta) that the Prophet (sws) said: “By Him who holds my life in His Power, you must advise/instruct to do good and stop from evil. Otherwise, it is likely that due to negligence in this, God may impose punishment upon you. Then if you call Him, He may not listen to your prayer.”

The love and good wishes of the Prophet (sws) for his ummah are also proved by the following incident:

Anas (rta) said that an orphan girl lived with Umm Salaym (rta). One day when the Prophet (sws) saw her, he said: “You are that girl. How big you have grown. May God not extend your life.” Hearing this, the child went crying to Umm Salaym (rta). She asked: “Daughter, what has happened?” She answered that the Prophet (sws) has given her bad wishes for her life not to be extended. Hearing this, Umm Salaym took on her shawl and went to the Prophet (sws). The Prophet (sws) asked: “Umm Salaym, How is it that you are here?” She said: “O Prophet of God! You have cursed my child!” He asked: “What curse?” She answered: “The child says that you have cursed her not to have a long life.” The Prophet (sws) laughed and said: “Umm Salaym! Perhaps you are unaware of the condition I have placed in front

of God. My condition is: 'O God! I am a human being. Like other human beings, I also become happy and sometimes I become angry. If I ever curse anyone from my ummah, which s/he does not deserve, please convert this curse into a good prayer, purity and your proximity which you will grant her/him on the Day of Judgement.

One constant habit of the Prophet (sws) was that he was not fond of complex solutions. 'A'ishah (rta) says that whenever he was faced with an issue which had two aspects: a simple one and a complex one, he would always adopt the former. However, if there was any chance of one of these being connected with a sin, he would not go near it. He would also advise his companions to always adopt simple solutions in religion, not to make it difficult and not to create fear of religion within people. He would discourage the companions who tried to impose unnecessary conditions upon themselves for worship or in society. The Qur'an (9:128) praises this attribute: "That which causes hardship for you creates suffering for the Messenger."

A prominent attribute of the prophet (sws) was his softness in speaking and softness of heart. 'A'ishah (rta) was asked how he lived inside the house. She answered that when he was at home, he was very soft spoken, forgiving, helping in house chores and keeping away from any crude or immoral talk. He had never lifted a hand to any of his wives. Praising this quality, the Quran says: "It is part of the Mercy of Allah that thou dost deal gently with them Wert thou severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about thee," (3:159). Due to this quality, one group of the hypocrites stayed with him and was also treacherous. Ultimately, he was instructed to give up his soft attitude towards the hypocrites and become harsh to them.

A few Ahadith demonstrating his softness are given below:

1. It is narrated by 'A'ishah (rta) that the Prophet (sws) said that whatever possesses softness and malleability provides it beauty and when it is taken out of it, it makes it ugly and flawed.

2. 'A'ishah (rta) says that the Prophet (sws) said that God will treat people with softness and He likes the same from others. He bestows so much in reward for a habit of softness that He does not for harshness or anything other than a soft attitude.

3. It is narrated from Jarir (rta) that the Prophet (sws) said: "He who has been deprived of softness is deprived of all goodness."

The Prophet would constantly give advice to fulfill the rights of society. Here are two related Ahadith:

1. It is narrated from Anas (rta) that the Prophet (sws) said: "Help your brother, whether or not he is the oppressor or oppressed." One man asked: "O' Messenger of God! I can help someone if he is oppressed. But if he the oppressor how can I help him?" He answered: "Create a barrier to his oppression or stop him. This would mean that you are helping him."

2. Abu Hurayrah (rta) narrates that the Prophet (sws) said: “If anyone calls others towards the path of guidance, his reward shall be equal to the sum of that for all those people who follow him, but there would be no reduction in the reward of these people. If anyone is claimant for misguidance, all the sins of those who follow him would be upon his neck but there would be no reduction in the sins of these people.”

As far as the worship of the Prophet (sws), his harsh treatment of the disbelievers and his love and compassion for the believers is concerned, the Qur’an is witness to this itself. It was said:

Muhammad is the apostle of Allah. and those who are with him are strong against disbelievers, compassionate towards each other. Thou wilt see them bow and prostrate themselves [in prayer], seeking Grace from Allah and [His] Good Pleasure. On their faces are their marks, [being] the traces of their prostration. (48:29)

This tells us that the Prophet (sws) was a foe as strong, immovable, undefeatable and hard as a mountain for the disbelievers, but for the believers, he was extremely kind, compassionate, supportive, soft and flexible in all respects. His days and nights were spent in seeking the pleasure of his Lord and his connection with Him was strong and durable. Signs of prostration were visible on his face. The same attributes produced their effects in the lives of his companions who had been trained by him. Obviously, these qualities should be found in every person of faith who believes in him.

Various Ahadith and narratives contain details of the Prophet (sws)’s bravery and courage in the battlefield. He demonstrated his great leadership in the three main battles of Badr, Uhud and Ahzab. Many companions have narrated that he was the epitome of courage and they were forced to hide behind him when the enemy attacked savagely. When there was danger of attacks by groups of the disbelievers on Madinah, he would take rounds of the city alone and assured people that they would be safe: there was no danger.

His concentration during worship was higher than all his companions. If a man brave enough tried to emulate him, he would find it very difficult and the Prophet (sws) himself stopped him, saying that his relationship with his Lord was of a different nature. Other people would not be able to do the same. He prayed so much at night that his feet would become swollen. When he was asked that since he was such a favoured servant and messenger of God, why did he put himself to so much trouble, he would answer: “Shouldn’t I then be His grateful servant?”

We are not clear about our connection with the Prophet (sws) and neither is there an effort to understand his mission. People celebrate his birthday through the ʿĪd Milad al-Nabi and think that they have fulfilled their obligation for belonging to the ummah of the Prophet (sws). This is deceiving oneself. A previous chapter has covered the rights of the Prophet (sws) in depth and we have tried to present an overview of the kind of life he loved best. To prove that one is a devout and loyal Muslim, it is necessary to fulfill every one of the Prophet (sws)’s rights in the manner in which it should be fulfilled. The noble example set up by him should be emulated in our lives, our homes and our societies. It should be remembered that God judges our beliefs and deeds on the principles He has made for us. He will not see what we liked or did not like. He will not use our deeds as the reference point.

With the greatest of mercies of God Almighty and the blessings He has bestowed on me, this book has come to an end. I do not have the words to express my gratitude to my Lord. Without His support and help, an ignorant person like me would not have been able to pick up his pen to write a biography of this great Messenger. May God Almighty accept this humble effort.

(Translated by Nikhat Sattar)

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