

# INSPIRATION FROM THE LIFE OF MUHAMMAD

---

By Dr. Maher Hathout

Edited by Dr. Rahmi Mowjood

---

Muslim Reform Institute, Los Angeles, CA.

**[muslimreforminstitute.com](http://muslimreforminstitute.com)**

Copyright 2016

ISBN-13:978-1530301287

ISBN-10:1530301289

## CONTENTS

---

5	About the Author
8	Introduction
14	Editors Note
19	Pre-Islamic Arabia
39	The Meccan Period
62	Hijra to Medina/Badr
91	The Medina Years 3-6
115	The Medina Years 6-9
140	The Last Year
149	Epilogue
159	Glossary
163	References



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

---

For the past 40 years, Dr. Maher Hathout has served as a leading spokesperson for the American Muslim community, He was a retired physician best known for his tireless commitment to public service. He was an international figure who was highly regarded as a positive voice of Islam offering a unique and valuable perspective on national and international issues involving Muslims.

Born in Egypt in 1936, Dr. Maher Hathout has been an activist and a pioneer dedicated to the cause of freedom and Islam since his childhood. Raised in the footsteps of his older brother Dr. Hassan Hathout, Dr. Maher was active in the student campaign to oppose the British occupation and military dictatorship in Egypt and was subsequently imprisoned for a total of almost five years in Egypt's most brutal jails. Following his departure from Egypt in 1968, he relocated to Kuwait for a few years before he and his family decided to move to the United States.

In 1971, Dr. Hathout arrived in Buffalo, NY where he served as a cardiologist and became an active member of the local Muslim community. In 1978, he moved once again to Los Angeles, where his brother Dr. Hassan Hathout later joined him at the Islamic Center of Southern California [ICSC]. One of the most progressive mosques in the country -- the ICSC had a woman on its board of directors in 1952 -- the Islamic Center became a vehicle for a vision of Islam in America that is rooted in what Dr. Hathout called the definition of home: "Home is not where my grandparents are buried but where my grandchildren will be raised." Dedicated to teaching Islam through the lens of critical thinking - a central message of the Quran - Dr. Hathout has taught thousands of students and empowered countless American Muslims to embrace their American Muslim identity and work for the integration of Islam and Muslims into our nation's pluralism.

Rooted in that central idea, Dr. Hathout went on to work with the founders of the Center to launch a series of pioneering projects and organizations, including the first-ever co-ed Muslim Youth Group, the Islamic Information Service that produced a nationally televised weekly program on Islam, The Minaret magazine, the New Horizon School system, and the Muslim Public Affairs Council. At the same time, he was among the pioneers of interfaith engagement within the American Muslim community, helping found the Religious Coalition Against War in the Middle East with Rev. George Regas and Rabbi Leonard Beerman in 1991. He was also the first Muslim chairman of the Los Angeles Interfaith Council. For his tireless efforts in the cause of mutual understanding and pluralism, he has been recognized by the Los Angeles Human Relations Commission, the South Coast Interfaith Council and the Islamic Society of North America.

Since co-founding MPAC in 1988, Dr. Hathout has had the opportunity to meet with George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, Pope John Paul II and several other prominent world figures. In 2000, Dr. Hathout was the first American Muslim invited to deliver the invocation at the Democratic National Convention. Dr. Hathout has been invited to Capitol Hill and the State Department several times to address a variety of topics such as "Islam and U.S. Policy," "Islamic Democracy," "Emerging Trends in Islamic Movements," and "the Future of the Middle East." He has traveled to Australia, Egypt, Kuwait, Malaysia, Pakistan, and South Africa to lecture on Islam and Muslims.

He is also a Charter Member of the Pacific Council on International Policy, the western partner of the Council on Foreign Relations, served on the Board of Directors of the Interfaith Alliance, and was the Chair of the Islamic Center of Southern California and the Islamic Shura Council of Southern California.

Dr. Hathout has written extensively on Islam, human rights, democracy, Middle East politics, and Bosnia. He is the author of three books - "Jihad vs. Terrorism" (2002), "In Pursuit of Justice: The Jurisprudence of Human Rights in Islam" (2006), and "Islam 2.0: Conversations with New Muslim Generations" (2009).

Over the years, he has appeared frequently on major media outlets, including CNN, the BBC, Al-Jazeera, ABC, and Fox News. His op-eds

have appeared in such prominent newspapers as The Los Angeles Times, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and The Christian Science Monitor.

Dr. Hathout is survived by his wife, Ragaa, two children, Samer and Gasser, and four grandchildren.

## INTRODUCTION

---

***“Home is not where my grandparents are buried, but where my grandchildren will be raised.”***

***-- Dr. Maher Hathout***

Religious traditions are never as stationary as we expect them to be. Internal disagreement and external pressures are in fact evidence of institutions in motion, evolution of beliefs, and adaptation of practices to reflect current realities. In our current landscape of both unprecedented global migration and unfiltered communication, we are witnessing religious leaders, adherents, and their institutions trying to make sense of and adapt to this quickly changing world. And nowhere is this more apparent than with Islam and Muslims in America over the last few decades. And I suspect that no one person has been more influential in these conversations than Dr. Maher Hathout.

Dr. Hathout and I met on several occasions toward the end of his life, though he probably didn't even know my name. Our paths first crossed in 2010 at Claremont School of Theology, when I was working with a group of senior religious leaders to launch a new interreligious graduate school in Southern California. The seminary's president, Dr. Jerry Campbell, recruited Jihad Turk, the religious director of the Islamic Center of Southern California, to be a founding partner of the project, along with Rabbi Mel Gottlieb, President of the Academy for Jewish Religion, California. As the effort—which became Claremont Lincoln University—began to take shape, Turk invited Dr. Hathout to formally join the project as a founding member of the Board of Directors. It was during this exciting, fruitful period when I experienced the wisdom and wit of Dr. Hathout firsthand. In all of those meetings, he struck me as a quiet man, carefully taking in

all that he heard. As a result, when he did speak, most participants around those tables would take note and lean in to hear what he had to say, which usually belied what one would expect from a man of his generation and background.

During this same period, Dr. Hathout was helping launch Bayan Claremont, an Islamic graduate school also being established in Claremont. Bayan's mission was singular: to offer advanced and accredited graduate education to Muslims preparing for positions of religious leadership in the United States. The time had come for what some called "indigenous" Islamic education: religious instruction that produces learned leaders prepared to meet the needs of increasingly complex, multinational Muslim communities in the United States. No longer would aspiring Muslim leaders need to spend time studying overseas; Bayan Claremont would offer a Western alternative. The idea was simultaneously revolutionary and obvious, which is a good indicator that a great idea will take root and thrive. While Dr. Hathout was not the primary catalyst for either of these projects, the establishment of both Bayan Claremont and Claremont Lincoln University would not have been possible without the positive effects of decades of his leadership, collaboration, and influence in the Southern California Muslim and interfaith communities.

The more I've learned about Dr. Hathout, the more I understand these projects were natural progressions of his understanding of Islam in America. Beginning in the mid-1970s, he began building what would prove to be a foundation for distinctly American ways of Islamic thought, practice, identity and civic engagement. In his work organizing a co-educational Muslim youth group in the 1970s, and helping establish the Muslim Public Affairs Council in the 1980s, and working as a prominent leader in the Los Angeles interfaith community after the events of September 11, 2001, he was building foundations for subsequent generations of Muslims—immigrants and indigenous alike—to be respected, responsible, and adept citizens in the pluralistic, diverse, democratic society of the United States.

As the number of adherents to Islam continues to grow in the United States, the Muslim population is experiencing an historical phenomenon familiar in our "nation of immigrants." We know that Muslims lived on this continent from the earliest days of colonial American history. But passage of the 1965 Immigration and Nationalization Act allowed for increased

migration to the U.S. from beyond northern European nations, including increasingly significant numbers of immigrants from Muslim-majority nations. When the Egyptian-born Hathout moved from Kuwait to Buffalo, New York, in 1971 and then to Los Angeles a few years later, he was part of this significant and influential generation of immigrants. Being part of this groundswell of cultural transformation surely grounded his understanding of Islam as a truly global tradition and set his eyes toward the future of the faith in a radically different world than that of his birth. In the pages that follow, we see a clear philosophy emerge from Hathout's work that doubtless grows out of his own immigrant experience and subsequent understanding of how Islam adapts in order to thrive in the West.

To a non-Muslim, this series of lectures seems to contribute to the genre of Islamic writing known as *seera*, or interpretations of the life of the Prophet Muhammad. In retelling parts of this sacred story, Dr. Hathout explores aspects of the narrative that may not have been previously apparent to his listeners. Drawing on his own experience as an immigrant in a new land, Dr. Hathout tells the Prophet's history and the founding of the tradition as a story of relocation, persecution, and perseverance, including elements of adaptation, humility, and acceptance of others. In so doing, Dr. Hathout highlights two important insights that speak particularly to contemporary American Islam. The first is a sense that Islam can be a source of support for Muslims--both immigrant and indigenous alike-- as they embark on the often-difficult process of moving, establishing new lives in America, and finding acceptance in America as members of Islam. And the second is a historical foundation for Muslim communities living in the realities of a pluralistic, democratic society. Both of these observations represent opportunities for Muslims in America to draw on resources within their tradition to meet the contemporary and complex realities of the Western world.

Few of us are from families that were native to this nation. And while some clans have been in the U.S. longer than others, we largely share the realities of immigrant heritage—a sense of uprooting from elsewhere and relocating to new places. But with migration often comes hardship: economic struggles to support oneself and one's family; oppression, discrimination and ridicule from those in the majority culture; the challenge of deciphering cultural norms and taboos; and the daily tests of adapting culturally and religiously while maintaining core beliefs and practices. Unfortunately, these are also part of the American heritage—a fact to

which all subgroups across American history can readily attest. And each cultural group develops fresh interpretations of their religious traditions that provide meaning and support in the hardships of immigration. Another example is that of South Korean immigrants to the United States, where Christian churches have become a pillar of the Korean American community. Somewhere between 70 and 80 percent of Korean Americans identify as Christian, though only 30 percent of South Koreans identify as such. Ethnocentric churches, in addition to their primary purpose of providing spiritual and religious resources, have become important cultural hubs and resource centers. Likewise, African Americans, both before and following emancipation from slavery in the 1860s, developed distinct religious practices and churches, and drew on particular biblical traditions—such as the Hebrew narrative of Moses and the exodus from Egypt—as sources of support and hope as they fought decades upon decades of oppression. The Black Church served as the foundation for the Civil Rights Movement, which began major shifts toward racial equality and integration.

In these lectures, we find Dr. Hathout similarly reframing traditional understandings of tradition and institutions for Muslim immigrants and their communities by emphasizing aspects of the Prophet's life and times that might prove supportive and meaningful in those contexts. His description, for example, of the Prophet's migration from the hostile environs of Mecca to the more tolerant city of Medina is a retelling of this narrative that resonates for many new American Muslims. "[The Prophet] expressed his love for his home in Mecca," Dr. Hathout explains of the ancient migration, "but [he] asked God to make their new home as lovable to them as their previous one." In this sense, Dr. Hathout joins a chorus of immigrant leaders who have used their traditions as pillars of support as they became established in the U.S. If there's a genre of religious interpretation for immigrant communities, then Dr. Hathout's retelling of the founding of Islam fits squarely in that tradition.

The second insight is that the founding story of Islam is instructive for American Muslim communities as they become established and institutionalized into the fabric of their local communities and broader civic contexts. As the world's second largest religious tradition, Islamic theologies, institutions and practices have largely developed in Muslim-majority nations. Dr. Hathout understands that transferring Islam into highly diverse and pluralistic cultures might benefit from fresh, unexpected

perspectives on the Islamic teachings and their implications for Muslim communities in the non-Muslim world. This uprooting of the faith also separates the religious tradition from the civic structures of Muslim-majority nations, which may require reconsiderations of what was once considered core tenets and practices in other civic contexts. In recounting the *seera*, Dr. Hathout provides precisely the historical and interpretive frameworks that allow American Muslims to be faithful and fruitful in a liberal western democracy—in relation to personal devotion but also in the acceptance of religious diversity and cultural difference. He emphasizes, for example, that Muslims coexisted with Christians and Jews in Medina and extended hospitality to both. Dr. Hathout does not gloss over the violence of this period and the Prophet's role therein, though he does attempt to differentiate the historical norms of the day and the role of Islamic belief in these episodes. I am not a religious historian and will leave this debate to those more qualified than me. But Dr. Hathout's inclusion of examples of religious co-existence, hospitality and humility signals the importance that he places on understanding the historical place of pluralism in the tradition. This is especially cogent considering First Amendment principles in the United States that allow for the existence and thriving of Muslim American communities alongside other religious traditions. Dr. Hathout also makes sure his listeners see examples where Western values align with Islamic history, especially related to the role of women in the faith and society. He makes a point to surface the positive roles that women play in this early narrative, as well as articulating the differences between the tenets of the faith and the culture in which they emerged. We get the impression that Dr. Hathout understands that without more nuanced and revealing understandings, the tradition risks being deemed irrelevant in a Western world of difference and engagement.

In these lectures, Dr. Hathout provides a foundation to engage younger generations with understandings of the faith that are not as foreign to the American context. This is not a radical re-imagining of the faith, nor a revisionist history of the Prophet's biography. Rather, Hathout's lectures emphasize aspects of the story that are already in the text and enables his audience to understand how the texts relate to the current context and are meaningful for subsequent generations. Dr. Hathout himself says "[The] purpose of this volume was always to show snapshots of the Prophet, pictures of a life that we may be glossing over or missing, but remain relevant more so today than ever before." And indeed this work has set the stage for such a future that includes a relevant, robust and thoroughly American approach to Islam.

There are aspects of Dr. Hathout's account that some will doubtless find objectionable, for one reason or another. No one will likely agree with *all* the assertions and their implications in these lectures. I know that *I* do not agree with all his conclusions, and I suspect others will take issue with specific passages and their inferences as well. Some will think his interpretations of the Prophet's life are radically liberal, and others will say that his perspectives are simplistic and not progressive enough. Still others doubtless will question Dr. Hathout's motives and sincerity as a Muslim. Though he was a scholar, Dr. Hathout was not an academic, and these lectures do not carry the precision of an academic treatise. Instead, these lectures were intended as religious instruction for believers facing certain struggles in new cultural contexts. They are inspirational, challenging, and aim to provide foundations for new ways of thinking and acting. So I am hopeful that readers will approach these lectures with the humility and respect that Dr. Hathout preaches.

I'm not sure who first referred to Dr. Hathout as the "Father of the American Muslim Identity," but judging from these lectures he has done much to deserve that title. He makes an earnest effort to recast the Prophet's story as one that is relevant for the contemporary contexts of American life. These writings are confirmation that Islam in America is on the move, and that it has been for several decades. We are fortunate that the editor and Dr. Hathout's family have preserved these lectures as a snapshot of a catalyst that helped the tradition adapt and thrive in the American context.

Jon Hooten, Ph.D.

*Former administrator at*

*Claremont School of Theology and Claremont Lincoln University*

*Los Alamos, Calif.*

## EDITORS NOTE

---

Peace be upon you.

This book is an adaption of a series of lectures that Dr. Hathout gave some years ago. The intention was to provide a concise appreciation of the life of the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, peace be upon him [PBUH], discussed and dissected through the lens and wisdom of Dr. Maher Hathout. It was meant to provide access to unheralded stories and instances during the Prophet's life—stories that are relevant to our current lives in a new, different era. Additionally, alongside this Dr. Hathout incorporates many Quranic revelations that accompanied the Prophet during the inception and evolution of Islam. As a class it proved to be very successful and informative, and at the request of Dr. Hathout, this narrative is now present on these pages.

There are many books devoted to studying this extraordinary life. They can encompass many volumes, as well it should--the life of Muhammad [PBUH] was not a simple one. It was one that changed the course of mankind, and thus it is due a great level of discourse and introspection.

Even the greatest of Islamic scholars—past and present—have felt that there is so much to absorb when examining the life of the Prophet that a lifetime is still not long enough to do it justice. This is, of course, the individual where volumes upon volumes have been devoted to documenting his example. The *hadith* are essentially the documentation of nearly everything that Muhammad [PBUH] commented on, spoke about, reflected upon and instructed us on, to serve as an example to all those that came after him. How thorough, therefore, can a biography of his life be? Probably not thorough enough.

This therefore is an attempt to capture some highlights of his life--glimpses

and inspiration that can serve as a springboard for further reading, discussion, and hopefully, enlightenment. It may inspire the reader to eventually seek out a greater understanding of who Muhammad [PBUH] was and what he accomplished in his lifetime. It is truly the tip of a very large iceberg—but enough to make one take notice of Islam’s humble beginnings.

An effort has been made to avoid discussing in length many areas of the Prophet’s life that are very well known. Instead, based on the vast knowledge of the subject possessed by Dr. Hathout, less appreciated details of these events are presented here, in an attempt to not only illuminate the various facets of Muhammad and the life around him, but to also bring these examples into a modern context, to allow us, the present-day reader, to glean tidbits of information that we would otherwise gloss over. Such was the genius of Dr. Maher. For example, while the Divine presence was always in touch with the Prophet, Muhammad was also a meticulous planner, and much time is spent detailing his strategy in leaving Mecca on the *Hijra*, or journey, to Medina. It was not left to divine providence as many are led to believe. The true facts of the life of Muhammad [PBUH] will help reveal that his life was one of varied talents and skills, which were innate to him and which augmented the role chosen for him by God.

In dealing with these highlights, we see Muhammad [PBUH] evolve into the figure we know him to be, but in contexts that we may not have known existed. We also get a glimpse of how his actions were influenced by God, as many relevant Quranic passages are also included, to show the context accompanying each revelation. Included are those that involve the early years in Mecca when Islam was gaining its footing, to the prosperous but sometimes contentious years of Medina, where Islam was forging a society. Through it all, the direction that the Prophet received from God is reflected upon, to give the reader a glimpse into the life of this giant among men, and to help us better understand the Quran itself, the ultimate source of guidance for Muslims.

So much of learning comes from taking small steps. It is often easy to start a journey like this with something straightforward and concise. This is the intention of this book--to be the first in what will hopefully be a long line of educational materials towards understanding and knowing Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam [PBUH].

As this book goes through its final stages of publication, Dr. Maher

Hathout himself weighs heavily on my mind. His absence from this world is palpable, but his life's work remains alive in these pages. I have read this text many, many times during the editing and transcription process, and now more than ever, I hear Dr. Maher's voice. This text has its origins, its very inception, in the mind of Dr. Hathout. It remains an unparalleled exposition of the life of our beloved Prophet, but it is recounted from the lens of a different camera—one that has created the picture of the American Muslim identity. For those of us that knew Dr. Maher—either briefly or intimately—his life, his essence, is alive in these pages. Here we will find Dr. Hathout challenging us to think critically, and to see a man who despite all the challenges he faced, never lost hope, never lost his passion, and never lost his faith in God.

And with that also lives Dr. Maher's most famous edict—to get to work. As we absorb these lessons, it is abundantly clear that he internalized and lived the urgency of work that our Prophet embodied. It literally jumps off the page, and one can see where Dr. Maher derived his own drive. The sense of purpose that he reflects upon as he reveres Muhammad [PBUH] is extraordinary, and he often narrates with such intimacy the thoughts and feelings of our Prophet, I often wonder if Dr. Hathout himself was there during the early times of Islam. His innate sense of understanding the human condition, in all of its wonder and frailty, comes across so vividly that it is as if we are there ourselves—such was the greatness that Dr. Maher possessed in transporting us into the heart of Islam.

Great pains have been taken to preserve Dr. Maher's original speech, intonation and rhythm wherever possible in transcribing this from a series of classes into a book. At times it may read choppy, not like a book—this was by design, to preserve the cadence of Dr. Maher's delivery. The content, knowledge, interpretation and understanding derived from it should be attributed to Dr. Hathout alone—and the accuracy and research of his facts should be without reproach. I have served merely as an editor and transcriber of facts that have been interpreted by a far greater mind than my own.

For those of us who sat with Dr. Maher over the years, learning the Quran verse by verse, he would always have multiple translations with him. This was to allow his students to understand the nuances and subtleties of the Arabic language, as seen through each translator of the Quran. For the sake of simplicity, at the request of the Hathout family, the Mohammad Assad translation of the Quran has been used wherever verses of the Quran are presented throughout this text. However, Dr. Hathout always

encouraged us perennial students to have different translations at our disposal whenever studying the Quran, and I would venture that this edict remains firm in all of our minds.

Additionally, often throughout the lecture series, Dr. Maher would present conversations between Muhammad [PBUH] and various people. It is understood that these conversations were not recalled verbatim, but were paraphrased by Dr. Maher in order to get the point across.

I would like to recognize the pioneers of the Muslim community here in Los Angeles, without whom many of us would continue to be in the dark when it comes to understanding Islam. They are Dr. Maher Hathout's peers and equals, and I presume that all of them are having spirited discussions in Heaven these days. These gentlemen are Dr. Fathi Osman and Dr. Hassan Hathout, Dr. Maher's remarkable brother.

This book has gone through many iterations and editions. I would like to thank all who spent time reading it and giving me comments, edits, notes and suggestions. Additionally, many thanks to the Muslim Public Affairs Council and the Islamic Center of Southern California, for championing Dr. Maher's intellectual property, for the world to share in his knowledge. A special thank you to Tarik Trad for the cover art and jacket design and Dana Asad for her comprehensive editing and beautiful typesetting.

This has been a long and extensive journey of my own, and an honor, to prepare this book on Dr. Maher Hathout's behalf. I would be remiss if I didn't thank my wife for her ongoing support, and my parents, for inculcating in me an ongoing desire for knowledge.

When I last spoke with Dr. Maher, he told me, "The book is yours. Make it your own." I am truly grateful to the Hathout family for their patience and for entrusting the legacy of their father, grandfather and husband to me for all these years. Special thanks to Dr. Ragaa Hathout and Samer Hathout, for continuing to shepherd this project, and for being my conscience in completing this task. May God bless you, and your family, for sharing your loved one with all of us.

This is not my book, nor is it yours. I would humbly suggest that it is humanity's book, to enrich our lives, and the lives of others, in order to bring us closer to the Almighty. It is an extension of the enrichment that many of us received by learning from Dr. Hathout—and now it is available for all.

I am eternally grateful to God that I have been given this opportunity to present Dr. Hathout to all of you in this way. May your journey with this book be as fruitful as my own was.

May God bless Dr. Maher Hathout and keep him in the highest of heavens, in the company of our beloved Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him.

May God guide us on the straight path always as we put into action the wisdom in these pages.

*--Dr. Muhammad Rahmi Mowjood*

*December 9, 2015*

## PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIA

---

### In the Name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

No legacy is more deserving, more inspiring, than the legacy of Prophet Muhammad [PBUH]<sup>1</sup>. There is a uniqueness about his life that will never be duplicated. Through the test of time, his life continues to offer an abundance of wealth, knowledge, guidance and inspiration. His life is a model which is emulated by many. As such, his life cannot be covered in one simple book—to do so would be remiss, as so much would be lost just by virtue of lack of space on the page. However, we can cover certain highlights, highlights that we can, and must, correlate to our own daily lives in contemporary society. One of the pitfalls is to study any event, or any history, separate from the context in which it took place. To study history detached from the time, place and culture within which it happened leaves us with a history we cannot relate to or even understand. Therefore, as this journey begins on these pages, we must first look at the time, place, and culture within which Islam emerged and where the Prophet was born.

While the stage before Islam is very vague, we can try to understand what was going on and how Arabia looked at that time. This vagueness is due to the fact that in pre-Islamic Arabia, there was no central authority, no central government, no writing or documentation. We are dependent here on an oral tradition, mainly involved with poetry and recitation. Thus,

1 It is tradition to follow mention of the Prophet's name with "Peace Be Upon Him", oftentimes shortened to "PBUH." During these lectures, Dr. Hathout did not make it a habit to say this each time he mentioned "Muhammad" or "The Prophet." For those in attendance, and those who have heard the subsequent audiotapes, it is evident that Dr. Hathout's respect for the Prophet Muhammad [PBUH] is unbounded. However, in order to preserve the authenticity of his lectures, this demarcation will not be marked throughout this text.

the challenges are great to find direct history within these limited means of transmission.

At this time, the greater Arabian Peninsula was divided into five areas—Thuhama, Al-Hijaz, Nabd, Al-Yemen, and Al-Aroot. Thuhama was close to the Red Sea. Al-Hijaz was in the middle, encompassing the mountains and valleys, and contains Mecca and Medina. Nabd is actually the surrounding desert. Al-Yemen was the cultured area and Al-Aroot is the area near the Gulf, now known as Bahrain. What is very clear from this topography is the scarcity of water, particularly in the middle area of Al-Hijaz. Water was very scarce, and for people to pursue a living, they would go searching for it, looking and waiting to see where the rain would fall. It was a very mobile, nomadic life. Life was challenging—the terrain was rough, the weather harsh, and survival was dependent on herding, trading, and also warfare. The society fought and took from each other, often without discretion, and this was the way of life in Arabia at that time.

Given the nomadic nature of life in the desert, it is easy to understand that literacy was not widespread. This is not to say that the inhabitants of the area were not wise or uneducated; rather it reinforces the paucity of complex ideas that is often noted in an illiterate society. There are no long archetypal stories, no literature derived from an accumulation of knowledge. What we do see is a mirror to their way of life—intense, passionate recitations of poetry that served as recordings of history, idealizations of life, and adoration of tribe. These were simple pronunciations, not complex thoughts.

Given this lack of fluid literacy, it is no wonder that the political structure of the landscape was also rough and unchecked. There were kingdoms, but not in the fashion we are familiar with in the modern age. Kingdoms were ruled by proxy, as was the case when the Persian or Roman empires would install rulers or “kings” but who had no centralized power. It was the tribes themselves that truly controlled the societal and economic infrastructure of the land. The rules of the tribe—almost all understood despite not being written—ruled the land.

Tribal society was predicated on competition—competition for water, competition for the spoils of war, and competition for the adoration that came from poetry. This led to a hierarchical structure within the tribe,

which reduced women to a very narrow role. Women in most instances were seen as a liability—they could not fight, and they often needed to be protected due to the typical aggressiveness of tribes. In fact, losing one's women to another tribe was considered a great shame. They were reduced to possessions, to property. They existed to produce children, hopefully boys, to maintain the tribe's strength. This is not to say that women did not have some influence. At times, when a woman gained a certain level of prominence, either through her children or trade, she would become very influential, even bestowing her own name to her children. This, however, was more the exception than the rule.

It is then easy to assume that the institution of marriage was drastically different than how it is defined today. Marriage was often a loose bond between a woman and several men, which at the time was considered normal for both sexes. Once pregnant, a woman would choose who the father was—there was no competition in this regard, as it was up to her. Thus, the family unit was formed after-the-fact. The idea of lineage was very important to the tribes of Arabia, and due to the very random manner of determining this, it proved to be a very sticky issue, which spilled into the Islamic era as well. While lineage was important, it was often a woman who determined who the so-called father of her children would be. And this put into question the lineage of many rulers during the Islamic era. Some were openly challenged about their ancestry, while others freely conceded that they did not know their own background. This created a paradox where women were concerned. On the one hand, they were minimized in value by the men of the time; however, conversely, they were valued in that they were the only ones who possessed a line of reference with regards to lineage. A ruler may not know who his true father was, but he would definitely know who his mother was, and because of this, many people were named after their mothers, not their fathers.

Unfortunately, despite this supposed value, women were still treated as possessions, which led many of them to be involved with prostitution, a prevalent practice in Arabia. It was a widely accepted practice, similar to the modern age's call girl yellow page ads. Interestingly enough, many known residences of prostitutes were identified by a certain lamp hanging outside their dwellings, which harkens to the current red light districts of today.

Laws did not dominate the structure of society in tribal Arabia. There

was a code of conduct that was kept between tribes, but this was loose at best, and the accepted norm of behavior was markedly different pre-Islam. This is seen in the accepted norms of prostitution, but also in other practices, such as discrimination and slavery. Both were accepted as part of life—slaves were often used for work, for war, and for sexual favors. Logically, people were often discriminated against, often treated less than animals. One would find owners of sheep and cattle to be adamant that their animals drink from clean water, thereby polluting the supply for those deemed less worthy. These practices of discrimination were part of the culture of the land, and were not given a second thought prior to Islam.

As is often the case in history, societies that rule by force, out of sheer will, often have a poor communication structure. Literature is not a strong point, but recitation, the spoken word, lyricism and the reliance on archetypal storytelling conveys the history of a people in more ways than literacy or texts. This is seen in Nordic culture and other competitive-based societies. Similarly, pre-Arabia relied on poetry as a form of expression, to convey passion, to retaliate, and to subjugate. Poetry served as more than art, as it is often referred to as the index of the Arabs—it is the resource wherein lays the history, culture, and standards of their society.

Poetry was employed at that time in the same fashion as media is used today. It was often combative—a tribe with a great poet was a feared tribe, lest he compose something that would be well heard throughout the region, disparaging another tribe. Whether it was true or false, if a composition and recitation of poetry was good, it often became truth. This served to the advantage of tribes with good poets, allowing for appeasement or control. Like the modern age, perception was reality, and anything could be used against a tribe, in order to gain an advantage. While it may have been preferable to bloodshed, the wounds from poetry often lasted longer in the minds of people.

Thus, as those who could fight were held in a high position in society, so too were poets. When someone displayed unusual poetic ability, this was celebrated as an achievement for the tribe. Competitions were held amongst poets, with tribal honor often at stake. It is in this arena that we see the prominence of Mecca taking shape, as the city often hosted these competitions. Winners would have their poetry transcribed and hung on the Kaaba. Thus, as people from far and wide traveled to Mecca to see

and memorize the poetry hanging at the Kaaba to bring back to their tribes, they also brought with them commerce and trade. And as others traveled to Mecca to participate in the poetry competitions, they too brought their wares to trade and barter.

But more than this, the status of poetry in this society plays a major role in the ascent of Islam during the time of the Prophet. Poetry was often used against Muhammad to minimize his influence on people, to belittle him through words. This was the best and most effective method initially used by his detractors when they tried to minimize his influence. When this did not work, Muhammad was then accused of being a poet, making up the Quranic texts that were revealed to him. This is a true reflection of the power of the Quran, as it was viewed even by the disbelievers of the time as powerful poetry, which could not be duplicated by the best poets from any tribe. It was the only effective media the tribes had at their disposal to deal with Muhammad and his message—outside of outright warfare.

Into this hodgepodge of culture and society, Islam took root. Muhammad was born on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of Rabbi Al-Awal, or on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April, 571. It was in this year that a significant event took place in Arabia, marking it as the “Year of the Elephant.” In an attempt to take over Mecca, Abraha of Abyssinia (present-day Ethiopia) marched on the city with an army of elephants, intent on capitalizing on the trade and commerce that made the area so prosperous. As remarked in the Quran, a divine intervention took place preventing his march, turning him back<sup>2</sup>. Of course, the relief of the Meccans was palpable, none more so than the keeper of the Kaaba, who just happened to be the Prophet’s grandfather.

The childhood of Prophet Muhammad is significant in that he did and he did not have a typical upbringing. He was born to Amina bint Wahbe and Abdullah Ibn Abd-al Mutalib. Both came from a very elite lineage, the tribe of Quraysh, but were without significant resources or wealth. In fact, they were considered to be poor. In short summary, before the Prophet could imprint upon his parents, his father died while he was still in his mother’s womb. He was raised in the desert, as was typical of the time, to allow him to grow and develop in an environment conducive for producing healthy children. But, not long after returning to his mother,

2 This is recorded in Surah Fil (105), or The Elephant.

she passed away on a journey to visit family in Medina. He was then cared for by his grandfather, who eventually passed away, whereupon he became the ward of his uncle, Abu Talib.

What is typical is that despite the poverty he was born into, he benefited from the custom of the time, which was to be raised, from nursing to very early childhood, in the freedom of the desert. This made him like many of his peers. However, atypically, he systematically lost his parents, and other expected guardians, and this made him unlike his peers. This makes it very clear to state that not one person can lay claim to raising the Prophet. He was raised by a community, but mainly he was alone, and this growth out of solitude molded him to the man the world would eventually come to know.

He spent his early years herding sheep, which was common among the poorer people of the day. This did not minimize the importance of this job, as it required responsibility, assertiveness and attentiveness. But he was often alone, devoid of significant direct human influence, ripe for divine intervention, to be molded as God willed. It is, in retrospect, a very special upbringing. Despite this, in later years the Prophet often emphasized his humble roots, stating that he was just another human being, borne from the womb of a poor woman of Quraysh.

In his early twenties, some early characteristics of Prophet Muhammad begin to take shape. He participated in what is now known as *Harb al-Fujar*, or the War of the Outrageous. The details of this conflict are of no consequence, but what is significant is that Muhammad fought on the side of his tribe, Quraysh. He was not isolated from the affairs of his people—he went and supported his tribe during this conflict. The cessation of activities in this conflict led to the Treaty of Virtue. This treaty was attended to by all the chiefs of the tribes in the area of Mecca. It was decided in this treaty that the weak would always be protected whilst in Mecca. Visitors, passersby, and the poor were easy targets, as they had no tribe to protect them. Through this treaty, a pledge was made by all area chiefs to stand and protect the weak and tribe-less while in Mecca. It was recognized that by doing this they would avoid unnecessary bloodshed.

This protected and guaranteed the most basic of human rights, and the Prophet referred to this later in life. He apparently said, "I attended a

treaty in this place, which to me is more important than all the wealth on this earth, and if I am called to such a treaty now, I would not hesitate to participate.” At this time, he was referring to this treaty as a Prophet of God, so the impact of these words had far reaching consequences. Protecting the weak and the oppressed is of utmost importance, and as Muslims, this should always take precedence over all things. Any agreement for human rights and virtue should be supported and adhered to, as it is following in the footsteps of Prophet Muhammad.

Later in life comes another significant event, that showcases the Prophet’s standing in society, well before he was bestowed the honor of Prophethood by God. The incident revolved around the reconstruction of the Kaaba, the structure built by Abraham and his son Ishmael. After consultation with a Roman architect, (as the Arabs lived in tents and therefore had no significant knowledge regarding the architecture behind such a structure,) the chiefs of the various tribes started rebuilding the Kaaba, stone by stone. As it was considered an honor to participate in this endeavor, the chiefs were noted to shoulder the burden themselves of carrying the stones on their backs. As time progressed, the resources that sustained this rebuilding effort started to diminish. It became necessary to build a smaller structure compared to the original building built by Abraham. As this became a reality, the question of who would place the black stone, a remnant from the original Kaaba, into this smaller structure became a more relevant point. It became a great point of contention amongst all involved, to the point that verbal threats of who was most worthy of this honor became physical threats, and violence seemed a foregone conclusion.

A participant in these proceedings was Umayya Ibn Hakam, who proposed at the time that an arbitrator be appointed, someone all would agree upon, to negotiate an acceptable solution to this problem. This caused much trepidation among all involved, as settling on who this person should be proved challenging once again. Everyone wanted someone from his own tribe to be the arbitrator. Once again, Umayya stepped in, and proposed that at that moment, all present would make their way around the Kaaba, and accept that the arbitrator will be the first person to walk into the environs of the Kaaba. All agreed to this.

As the Prophet entered, everyone there exhaled a sigh of relief. This was the one person they felt was trustworthy. At the age of 35, Muhammad

had earned this accolade from his community, based on his character. "Here comes the trustworthy," it was reported to have been said about Muhammad when he entered. From this point on, he arbitrated a solution, where a cloth was brought forth, and the black stone was placed in the center. A member from each tribe picked up an edge of the cloth, and with all involved, the stone was lifted and brought to the Kaaba, with Muhammad lifting it into place for its final resting place, where it remains today.

What can we glean from this story? Long before he preached monotheism to idol worshippers, before he preached compassion to the compassionless, before he preached love to those who hated, before he preached respect for women to those who treated them as possessions, the Prophet had established unbelievable credibility and trust based on his merit as a human being. Society knew him to be credible, so no one argued when he became the arbitrator. As Muslims in the modern world, the story poses a great learning opportunity—our words, our efforts, and our passion will carry more weight when we are respected as people first. To be trustworthy and to be credible in society will allow our stature to be elevated, and will allow our words to carry more weight.

Muhammad's character became distinct at an early age. From his mid-twenties, he established himself within Meccan society as a trustworthy individual. This led him to work in transportation of goods and in trade. While he himself was not wealthy enough to invest in the caravans of goods, he was trusted enough by the businessmen of the time to ensure safe passage of their goods, and Muhammad in turn earned a small fee. There were businessmen, and then there was Khadija bin-Tuhwaylid, a wealthy businesswoman in Mecca, who was very respected. As was mentioned earlier, those women in Mecca who attained to a certain stature through trade, poetry or wealth were held in high regard, and Khadija was one such individual. In Muhammad she saw someone she could trust, and she would reap great benefit from the care he gave her caravans. He impressed her, beyond his role as a guardian of her good, and she eventually fell very much in love with him, asking for his hand in marriage. She was 40-45, and Muhammad was 25. This difference in age was just that, as the two of them cared for each other very much. Muhammad remained enamored of Khadija long after her death, so much so that it inspired jealousy in his later wives. To him, Khadija was like no other. Their marriage was empowering, enriching and fulfilling to both, and their love

and support for each other greatly influenced Islam's early years.

In many respects, Muhammad lived like all others in his community. He engaged in business, he was married and he was part of the greater society. From this perspective, he was like everyone else—and yet, he was not. He distanced himself from much of the norms of society, and in many respects he was aloof. He was not an idol worshipper. Even though it would be years until he received his divine calling, he searched for something to define his existence beyond the idols housed in the Kaaba. He was also generous—generous despite having very little before his marriage, and even more generous with the wealth that came from his marriage to Khadija.

Beyond this, he was unlike all the other members of his tribe because he felt there was more to life than what made the Quraysh content. Muhammad did not partake in the various pleasantries of the time—drinking, poetry recitations, and general revelry. He often took to seclusion, moving away from social activities that occupied the time of his peers. Much like Abraham, he was spiritually and philosophically hungry, and this led him to spend more time alone than with others. He was searching for something, and in his solitude, he communicated to some effect with God. This solitude was not complete though, as he was often noted to donate his food and provisions to passersby. This too, it seems, was part of his spiritual quest—solitary prayer, but generosity in spirit. He would repose himself to the cave of Hira, often during Ramadan, relishing the quiet and the stillness of the desert, to communicate with the one God, the God that Abraham himself searched for centuries before. The knowledge of monotheism was not alien to Muhammad, as living around Mecca were Christians and Jews. In fact, there was even a sect of people known as the Hanifs, who rejected idolatry, and focused their beliefs on the monotheistic principles set forth by Abraham.

Even the Arabs of the time knew about a singular Creator. When asked who created all around them, they would respond "Allah." Yet, they justified their idol worship by saying that it brought them closer to God. They were intermediaries to God for them, and the Kaaba was full of these idols, to the point that the Meccans eventually worshipped their idols and forgot about God entirely.

Muhammad did not want any part of this--He knew one true Creator existed, without an intermediary. It was a fact in his mind, reaffirmed by the faith of many around him. In his search for God, he found solace and peace in his direction in life, and he did not miss the Meccan lifestyle rife with excess and entertainment. His spiritual appetite was filled by his steady diet of solitude, prayer, and self-reconciliation. This search that filled his heart and mind was sufficient nourishment for his soul.

And so he spent his time, until one Ramadan, during the last 10 days, when his life and human history would change forever. It was 13 years before the Hijra, and Muhammad was in the cave of Hira, as was his tendency during Ramadan, a holy month even before Islam. On this day, he received the first revelation from God. It started as a voice. The voice then became a being that appeared in front of his astonished eyes. This presence was palpable to Muhammad, and we know that this was the Angel Gabriel, relaying the first revelation from God to Muhammad, answering his search for communication with the true Creator.

The Angel Gabriel asked Muhammad to "read" or "recite," to which Muhammad replied he could not. He was asked three times, and after each request, it is reported that Muhammad was hugged or squeezed each time, very strongly. Whether this was an actual physical change or an emotional shift that occurred within Muhammad, possibly to prepare for the divine revelation is not clear, but something of this nature did occur to him, and it apparently was very exhausting. Then Gabriel told him:

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ (١) خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ (٢) اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ (٣)  
الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ (٤) عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ (٥)

96.1 READ in the name of thy Sustainer, who has created

96.2 created man out of a germ cell!

96.3 Read - for thy Sustainer is the Most Bountiful One

96.4 who has taught [man] the use of the pen

96.5 taught man what he did not know!

Given that Arabia at this time was an illiterate society, one without

complexity of thought or accumulation of sophisticated knowledge, the fact that the first verses from God to his vicegerent on earth are extolling him to read and to write is very momentous. A civilization comes to being through culture, resources, behaviors, industry and innovation of thought. Before Islam, this cannot be said about Arabia—there was an Arabian existence, but no civilization. This is due to the fact that there was no reliance on the pen. The pen enables ideas and thoughts. It forces people to read. And it creates legacies—death does not bring about the cessation of one's voice or thoughts, like it would in poetry. This evolution was occurring throughout Egypt, Persia and India, but not in Arabia at the time. Arabia was truly a blank slate, ready for a new chapter of human history to be written, literally and figuratively, and as Muhammad himself was not impacted directly by a human being during his upbringing, so to was Islam, which was not impacted by a civilization pre-existing in Arabia itself.

This is a profound parallel, as God Almighty meant to produce something so pure and so divine and so unique, to be a model, to be emulated until the Last Day. The legacy of Muhammad and of early Islam is not of the accomplishments and achievements, but rather the model that was left behind, the example in the memory of humanity that can be referred to, a divine, pure model that cannot be reproduced by other human beings. Had Islam, for example, been born in Egypt, it would have been affected by the Pharaohs and the civilization already imbedded there. Had it landed in Rome, it would have had the same problem that Christianity had in Rome. The concept of the trinity was born in Rome, which is totally alien to the Christian nature. This first revelation plants a very early seed in the evolution of Islamic civilization and Islam's scientific revolution, which is the importance of knowledge. This is important for us to ponder upon. The scientific revolution after the Renaissance in Europe happened against religion. Religion was isolated and separated to allow the Renaissance to flourish. The Islamic scientific revolution, the Islamic Renaissance, however, happened because of the religion. These are two different approaches to a phenomenon, but if Muslims are not aware of this difference, it will be all-too-easy for the *ummah*, the present day Muslims, to isolate religion to be scientific, which is the Christian model. Muslims should rejoice in the fact that we can be scientific because we are religious.

Muhammad was clearly shaken by these events. Despite his years of

spiritual searching and seclusion, the reality of revelation left him shivering and disturbed. He wrapped himself in a cloak and went home to his wife, Khadija, and relayed the events to her. This interaction is significant—the idea of possession and hauntings, the concept of *jinn*, was not foreign to Arabian society of the time, and it would have been easy for Khadija to pass this event off as such. How would Muhammad be seen if this got out that he was possessed? However, she supported him, comforted him, and told him not to worry, that she would take him to see a wise relative of hers. She was confident in the character of her husband, and the fact that someone like her husband—someone who was kind to relatives, generous to the poor, supportive of the weak, welcoming to guests, and an advocate for justice—would not be forsaken by God.

Muhammad went with Khadija to see her cousin, Waraqa Ibn-Naufel. Waraqa was a learned man, well versed in the Bible. Upon hearing Muhammad's description of what happened, Waraqa gave an interesting response—"I hope I am alive when your people persecute you and drive you out." This made Muhammad wonder why would this occur—he was loved by his people, and his character was well known throughout. Waraqa continued by telling him that he has witnessed truth, and that no one possesses the knowledge he now has without being persecuted. His statement to Muhammad echoes a desire not to see him suffer, but to witness the revelation of truth and the birth of a new era. He told Muhammad that he was a messenger of God. And so it is that Muhammad realizes the enormity of these events, but not without his wife. Khadija becomes his first supporter, and thereby the first Muslim in Islam's history after Muhammad.

In the ensuing days, Muhammad told few others about what had transpired. While what had happened was still reverberating within him, the events of the following days and weeks became more significant. Muhammad was expecting more revelations, more communications—but there was silence. He spent countless time in the desert alone, searching and yearning for more knowledge, and nothing happened. He began to doubt himself, and the enormity of these events. He wondered if this was a trick of his imagination, or if he was deserving of such a gift. If he had done something wrong, what was it? If he did not, then why did it stop?

In many circles, this period of time between the first two revelations is called the lag period. It was a time of agony for Muhammad, as he waited

for his next communication from God Almighty. The length of time here is in question, as some people feel it was from 40 days to up to 3 years, depending on the sources. What is known is that it was long enough for Muhammad to have doubts. And it stayed this way until the second revelation finally arrived, from Sura Mudathir. After the first revelation, Muhammad was so taken aback that he was shivering and scared, and needed to wrap a cloak around his person to stay warm. This also has symbolic meaning as well, as the act of wrapping himself can mean to be kept alone, that he did not want to be with others. And thus the second revelation unfolded to him:

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُدَّثِّرُ (١) قُمْ فَأَنْذِرْ (٢)

74.1 O THOU [in thy solitude] enfolded!

74.2 Arise and warn!

Addressing the Prophet here as “O thou wrapped up,” in reference to the Prophet covering himself after the first revelation. Then the next verse brings an order, to “Arise and deliver thy warning!” This is an order to Muhammad, now the Messenger and Prophet of God.

If you look at the first revelation, it was addressing the Prophet and it gave him certain seeds. It did not give him orders to do anything but to read. Now, in the second revelation, there is a job to be done--get up and start warning people, start revealing the message as the Messenger of God. Continuing with the revelation:

وَرَبِّكَ فَكَبِّرْ (٣) وَتَبَايَكَ فَطَهِّرْ (٤) وَالرُّجْزَ فَاهْجُرْ (٥) وَلَا تَمُنْ بِتَسْتَكْبِرُ (٦) وَلِرَبِّكَ فَاصْبِرْ (٧)

74.3 And thy Sustainer's greatness glorify!

74.4 And thine inner self purify!

74.5 And all defilement shun!

74.6 And do not through giving seek thyself to gain,

74.7 but unto thy Sustainer turn in patience.

This revelation now moves into preliminary instructions for Muhammad, outlined line by line:

“And thy Lord do thou magnify!” Glorify your Lord the one true Creator and no one else.

“And thy garments keep free from stain.” This means stay clean, both physically and spiritually. It is not only cleaning your clothes, but prepare yourself, on the outside by your appearance, and on the inside with your character, for the job you must do.

“And all abomination shun!” Do not ever use harsh or bad language.

“Nor expect, in giving, any increase (for thyself)!” Don’t give to people expecting things in return. And from this comes the edict that Muhammad would follow until his death. When his wife told him why don’t you go to sleep, he told her “The time for sleeping is over.” Muhammad is well aware of the task at hand, so when you give, don’t expect a return.

“But, for thy Lord’s (Cause), be patient and constant!” In other words, get yourself ready and focus. Start your job, and expect persecution, and when this happens, be patient and resilient. This is exactly what Waraqa told him to expect, and maybe what Waraqa wanted himself to witness, to see Muhammad flourish in such difficult circumstances.

And thus Muhammad began his first steps in propagating Islam. He approached those closest to him, avoiding a public display regarding this message from God. His choice of adherents is noticeable, though, as these people readily accepted his message—Khadija of course, who as a female was the first Muslim, (and we will see later on, another female becomes the first martyr of Islam); Ali Ibn Abu Talib, who was living with the Prophet; and Zayd Ibn Harraseth, a liberated slave by Muhammad, who continued to live with him as his servant.

Another adherent was Saad Ibn Abi-Waqaas. When he heard of the Prophet’s revelation, he believed in its message and became a Muslim. This was leaked to his mother, and she refused to accept her son’s new faith. She tried to persecute him to get him to leave Muhammad’s message.

She was a tough, domineering matriarch, and in order to shame him into going back to their ancestral traditions of idolatry, she went on a hunger strike. This was considered a great indignity to Saad, as a young man of Arabia, to have his mother go without food. When Saad approached the Prophet with this, the following verse was revealed:

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حُسْنًا وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ لِتُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٨)

*29.8 Now [among the best of righteous deeds which] We have enjoined upon man [is] goodness towards his parents; yet [even so,] should they endeavor to make thee ascribe divinity, side by side with Me, to something which thy mind cannot accept [as divine], obey them not: [for] it is unto Me that you all must return, whereupon I shall make you [truly] understand [the right and wrong of] all that you were doing [in life].*

Upon hearing this, Saad Ibn Abi-Waqaas reportedly went to his mother and told her, "O mother, I swear by God, that if you had a thousand souls (lives) and you lost them one after another, I would not change my mind about this religion." His mother ended her self-imposed fast after hearing this, and Saad continued to be one of the earliest followers of Islam.

Other early followers show the diversity that Islam attracted, and the plurality of people surrounding the Prophet. Suhaib was a poor man, who came from Rome and was bought and sold in Arabia. Others came from Persia. Some, like Abu Zaar El Ghafari, influenced entire tribes to convert to Islam after hearing about Muhammad and listening to his message. While many of these conversions purely added to the growing number of Muslims, some provided subtle strategic benchmarks of protection. As Abu Zaar El Ghafari converted to Islam, his tribe of Ghaffar converted, and their location helped protect the Muslim caravans, thereby providing protection to the growing trade and commerce of the community. These were people from different areas, with different backgrounds, colors, origins and ethnic habits, coalescing around the message of Islam.

This burgeoning group initially met at a humble home of a believer, Al-Arqam. Upon becoming a Muslim, he donated his house to Muhammad

to meet with the first Muslims. It is here where Islam started to take root. This very early nucleus of Muslims had a crash course, so-to-speak, at the hands of the Prophet. This was Islam's first school, known as "Dar ul-Arqam." As the Prophet received revelations, he would teach them here in this abode.

They started very meagerly. The only person of note was Abu Bakr who held a high position in Meccan society. He already operated from a position of respect, as he was known within his tribe to be a man of wisdom and wealth. His presence amongst the believers was very important because he was always with the Prophet. From day one, he remained close to the Prophet, as he had immense respect and admiration for Muhammad. His conversion was never in doubt, for once he heard what Muhammad had to say, he believed him—he knew Muhammad would not lie.

This initial group of believers was very small in number. A narration by Zayd recalls, "At a time, there were only five of us around the Prophet." In Dar ul-Arqam, they grew to thirty believers, which included family and servants. This was a very nascent, embryonic stage for the Ummah. The teachings from Dar ul-Arqam helped carry them through the early trials and tribulations of Islam, and ensured that Islam would spread later on.

Books can be written about these early years of Islam. Suffice to say, pre-Islamic Arabia was a world of law based on tribalism and pride. In this wasteland of a desert the Prophet made an everlasting impression. His early life was highlighted by loneliness—from being raised in the desert, outside of Mecca, to coming home to minimal adult influence in his early years. From this, his personality and individuality was formed in his youth and adolescence, to one who was capable of earning the trust of those around him. His actions allowed him to acquire the title that so many knew him by, "Al Amin," the Trustworthy. It was this title that allowed him to achieve a level of positive notoriety, as noted in his arbitration regarding the building of the Kaaba. He matured and entered in marriage with Khadija, which affected him in his search for meaning. He was wise beyond his years by the time he received his first revelation, which allowed him to process, understand and enact the directives therein from God Almighty. He later suffered as the stream of revelations ceased, but once the revelations resumed again, hope returned within him to proclaim his mission as the Messenger of God, to warn people, to be patient and perseverant. And this led to a small but loyal and growing following of

believers, with whom he could start molding Islam in Dar ul-Arqam. They were the first students of Islam, and they had the best of all teachers, who then received the order from God to go public with the calling to Islam:

فَأُصِدِّعْ بِمَا تُوْمَرُ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (٩٤)

*15.94 Hence, proclaim openly all that thou hast been bidden [to say], and leave alone all those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God*

It was a watershed moment. The Prophet and his early followers were coming out of the shadows, into the light of God to show others the way. The verse says to “Obey the orders given to you, and never mind those that associate deities with God.” So he went to a public meeting place, a mountain known as As-Safa (which is presently visited regularly during Hajj) and called all the surrounding tribes to meet for an important statement. And people came—because it was Muhammad. He had built up equity within the community—he was respected, and if he had something important to say, people wanted to hear it. Those who were there were anxious to know what Muhammad had to say, as he had never made such a call before.

When ready, the Prophet first asked a question.

“If I tell you that there are horses, troops behind this mountain about to attack you, would you believe me?”

The response was overwhelming yes—the community never knew Muhammad to be a liar. The Prophet did not start by stating that he never lies. His people verbally confirmed this, which shows an inherent trust and belief in him. They confirmed his credibility. He continued then by saying, “The one who is in front of the people, leading the people, would never lie to his family.” This is a statement of solidarity based on blood—all of you are my family, and I never lie to my family. Then he continued:

“I swear by God, that there is no deity but Him, and I am the messenger of God, to you in particular, and to all people in general.”

This is the first public message about Islam. It is universal, but specific. It is directed particularly to those present, but also to the people-at-large. He continues with his own words:

“I swear by God that you will die like you go to sleep. You will be resurrected like you awake. You will be accountable for what you do. You will be rewarded--good for good, bad for bad. It is either Paradise forever, or Hell forever.”

And this is how the public was introduced to Islam. It was clear, condensed and concise, devoid of confusion. No one could doubt the Prophet—they just verbally affirmed their trust in him. They just declared that they knew he never lies. So how did they respond?

Mecca was an established, prosperous society. Those who benefited from this prosperity saw this as a threat. Human beings are human beings, and establishments matter. They provide security and maintain the status quo. This message put this at risk. However, the Meccans present struggled with this reality because there was an element of truth here that they could not deny—Muhammad always spoke the truth, was always logical, reasonable and forthright. Some people stayed to listen, although there were only a few. These were the downtrodden of society, who saw the benefit of this message. Others were stunned and bewildered. Some walked away, and some started the process of denying the truth and ridiculing Muhammad. Abu Jahle proclaimed to Muhammad, “How ridiculous you are. You called us all here, just to tell us that?” What started rather dismissively on this day would evolve into increasing levels of hostility and hate towards Muhammad, his followers and Islam, in an ongoing effort to contain and refute this message.

It started simply, as the Prophet’s detractors tried to weaken his foundation by stating that he was threatening their time-honored family traditions. The revelation came in response:

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَإِلَى الرَّسُولِ قَالُوا حَسْبُنَا مَا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا  
أَوَّلُو كَانُوا أَبَاؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ (١٠٤)

5.104 For when they are told, "Come unto that which God has

bestowed from on high, and unto the Apostle" - they answer, "Enough for us is that which we found our forefathers believing in and doing." Why, even though their forefathers knew nothing, and were devoid of all guidance?

When this was not effective, they proclaimed that the Prophet and this message was an affront to their gods. And again the Quran responded:

قُلْ مَنْ رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ قُلِ اللَّهُ قُلْ أَفَاتَّخَذْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ  
لِأَنْفُسِهِمْ نَفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْبَصِيرُ أَمْ هَلْ تَسْتَوِي الظُّلُمَاتُ  
وَالنُّورُ ۗ أَمْ جَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ خَلَقُوا كَخَلْقِهِ فَتَشَابَهَ الْخَلْقُ عَلَيْهِمْ قُلِ اللَّهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ  
شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ (١٦)

13.16 Say: "Who is the Sustainer of the heavens and the earth?" Say: "[It is] God." Say: "[Why,] then, do you take for your protectors, instead of Him, such as have it not within their power to bring benefit to, or avert harm from, themselves?" Say: "Can the blind and the seeing be deemed equal? - or can the depths of darkness and the light be deemed equal?" Or do they [really] believe that there are, side by side with God, other divine powers that have created the like of what He creates, so that this act of creation appears to them to be similar [to His]? Say: "God is the Creator of all things; and He is the One who holds absolute sway over all that exists."

And it continued in this fashion. The Prophet was accused of bringing up tales from the past; he was accused of fabricating all of the revelations and message himself. And this continued for a period, and the revelation continued to refute and disprove all of their arguments. And it came from all sides, as the Meccan elite tried to find a way to bring Muhammad and his divisive message down. Eventually, poets were brought in to compose vicious diatribes against him. They offered Muhammad the position of King of Arabia thinking he was after prestige. This was a meaningless title, as Arabia was a lawless land. However, they tried to corrupt the Prophet with the lure of power. And his uncle was sent to deliver this message. And upon receipt of this message, the Prophet cried. It is one of the few

times in his recorded history, (which is very thorough) where the Prophet cried significantly—because he was in agony that these people around him, the people he called his family, did not have an inkling of the truth. And he responded famously to his uncle by saying:

“If they put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left hand to desert the message, I will not. I will keep working for it and will prevail.”

Nothing was able to sway Muhammad. He was a man of dignity and integrity, and the Meccans knew this. It was because of this that they feared this message and this man. It was because of this that they knew that Muhammad would never stop. No enticement, no amount of money or offerings of power would do. None of the trappings of this world that would work on any other man would work on him. So they turned to the only thing they could think of to stop the message—persecution.

## THE MECCAN PERIOD

---

The threat of Muhammad's message was real.

While many dismissed him, the elite of Mecca knew better. Nothing they had tried was successful in dissuading the Prophet. Bribery. Power. Wealth. None of this mattered to Muhammad—yet it mattered greatly to the Meccans at the time, and if this could not sway him, then they would resort to harsher methods. Physical and verbal abuse would begin in earnest against Muhammad and his meager followers. Torture, in all of its various forms, would no longer be the exception, but the norm.

There were those among the Meccans who were particularly skilled in the arts of torture and humiliation. The Quran labels them as "*al muhstazioon*" or those who look down on the religion. Their acts were despicable enough that history remembers them for how they treated Muhammad and the early Muslims. The incidents are numerous and gruesome. Abu Gahl Amr Ibn Hesham Ibn Al Maghera of the Quraysh once instructed a slave of his to dump the entrails and intestines on top of Prophet Muhammad while he was praying at the Kaaba. What made this indignity even worse was that the small contingent of Muslims at the time were paralyzed with fear, and did not rush to the Prophet's aid at the time. They were humiliated, they were helpless.

There were regular acts of public humiliation and constant threats to life and limb. Once a man choked Muhammad so intensely his face became red and his eyes began to bulge from his face. Not until Abu Bakr came to the Prophet's defense, yelling to the attacker, "Are you killing a man because he says my Lord is God?" was he finally released.

At times Muhammad thought that he would stand his ground and use social convention to his advantage. Meccan society at the time was built around protocols of behavior, one of which was to never insult a host. When invited to a home, not eating from the food served to you was considered a significant sign of disrespect. The Prophet knew this, and he used this strategy when invited to the home of his neighbor, Ukbah Ibn Muaad, who was known to be against the Prophet and his followers. The Prophet had planned to never eat in his home until Ukbah recited the *shahada* and converted to Islam, and this is what occurred when the Prophet was invited to his home for a meal, in the presence of many of the Meccan leaders. This strategy embarrassed Ukbah, and to save his honor, he recited the *shahada*. Afterwards, he was shamed by his friends, chiding him for what he did to pander to the Prophet, in order to preserve his honor. He was charged to publicly humiliate Muhammad the next time he saw him, to renounce him and his faith. When Ukbah next saw the Prophet, he stepped on Muhammad's neck, spat on his face, slapped him and renounced Islam.

Despite all this, Muhammad did not live in hiding. He did not stay in an ivory tower as the Prophet of God, expecting followers to come to him. He lived amongst his people, and consequently, he was subject to both physical and mental torture. His name was smeared, his reputation and honor sullied. He was accused of being a liar, a charlatan. He was dismissed and reviled. Despite all of this, he survived. He showed an extraordinary amount of stamina and endurance to keep his faith strong.

There was great concern among the Arabs. Their efforts to derail Muhammad and his message were ineffective—people were still listening to the Prophet. They focused on discrediting Muhammad by saying that this message he was spreading was divisive. It was tearing families apart—how could it be good, they reasoned? As soon as the message of Islam entered a home, the family becomes fractured—the son becomes Muslim but the parents do not; the parents become Muslim but the children do not. They went further, branding Muhammad as nothing but a magician, bewitching people with tricks in order to make them believe his message. This strategy led to an incident documented in the Quran, where the Meccans approached a wise elder named, Al Walid Ibn Mugheera, considered to be a sage amongst them. He was charged with going to Muhammad to see what could be done to rid themselves of him. After visiting with Muhammad and listening to him recite the Quran,

he was confused and returned with a very different disposition. He said, "what I heard was like poetry, but it was not. It was bearing rich fruit, but different." This admission of his led the Meccans to decry and tease Al Walid as being bewitched by Muhammad, that he allowed himself to come under the magician's spell. After undergoing more and more of this by the Meccans, Al Walid became convinced that Muhammad was a magician, because the words recited by him were like nothing he had ever heard. This is a testament in favor of the Quran, not against it. This struggle of Al Walid's was documented in the Quran:

ثُمَّ نَظَرَ (٢١) ثُمَّ عَبَسَ وَبَسَرَ (٢٢) ثُمَّ أَدْبَرَ وَاسْتَكْبَرَ (٢٣) فَقَالَ إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ  
يُؤْتَرُ (٢٤) إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا قَوْلُ الْبَشَرِ (٢٥) سَأُصْلِيهِ سَقَرَ (٢٦)

74.21 and then he looks [around for new arguments],

74.22 and then he frowns and glares,

74.23 and in the end he turns his back [on Our message], and  
glories in his arrogance,

74.24 and says, "All this is mere spellbinding eloquence handed  
down [from olden times]!

74.25 This is nothing but the word of mortal man!"

74.26 [Hence], I shall cause him to endure hell-fire [in the life to  
come]!

74.26 [Hence], I shall cause him to endure hell-fire [in the life to come]! In this sea of turbulence an outpost of light came to Muhammad and the followers. While it did not stem the tide of hate directed against them, it was a landmark occurrence whose ripples were felt far and wide for a long time. Hamza's conversion to Islam gave the early followers hope that there was protection to be had. Even though they were the same age, Hamza was the Prophet's uncle, and he was known to be a brave fighter, a loud, brash man. It is told that while walking, a young girl teased him by saying that his bravery was false, as he could not stop the persecution inflicted onto his nephew. This upset Hamza, and he went to a member of Quraysh, Abu Jahal, telling him how dare he ridicule Muhammad. Hamza saw that there was no fear in this man, so he followed by saying "How dare you insult a man whom I follow." And just like that, Hamza converted to Islam, in part to protect his nephew from unyielding persecution. While

this was a major victory, it did not curb the tide of hate directed towards the Muslims. In fact, it seemed to increase, especially against the weak.

Many believers were specifically targeted again and again. One, well known to many Muslims, was Bilal, an African slave from Abyssinia<sup>3</sup> owned by a member of the Quraysh known as Obay Ibn Khalaf. Bilal's acceptance of Islam infuriated Obay. He would tie a rope around Bilal's neck, and drag him through the desert like an animal. He would lay Bilal on the scorching desert sand and place boulders on his chest, beating and ridiculing him, trying to get him to denounce Muhammad and proclaim his allegiance to the idols of Arabia. Despite being under significant duress, Bilal responded simply and eloquently, replying, "One and unique, one and unique to God." These episodes occurred regularly, and one day Abu Bakr saw this torture and proclaimed to Obay "Wouldn't you fear God by what you are doing to this person?" Obay's response was "You (the Muslims and Muhammad) are the ones responsible, and you are the ones putting him in this trouble. If you want to save him, free him." At this point Abu Bakr immediately freed Bilal by buying him from Obay Ibn Khalaf. Bilal became a free man for the time, because his declaration of "One and unique." This is addressed in the Quran in Sura Lail, with the first part of this verse addressing Umay, and the second part addressing Abu Bakr:

فَأَنْذَرْتُكُمْ نَارًا تَلَظَّى (١٤) لَا يَصْلَاهَا إِلَّا الْأَشْقَى (١٥) الَّذِي كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّى (١٦)  
وَسَيُجَنَّبُهَا الْأَتْقَى (١٧) الَّذِي يُؤْتِي مَالَهُ يَتَزَكَّى (١٨) وَمَا لِأَحَدٍ عِنْدَهُ مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ  
تُجْزَى (١٩) إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِ الْأَعْلَى (٢٠) وَلَسَوْفَ يَرْضَى (٢١)

92.14 and so I warn you of the raging fire –

92.15 [the fire] which none shall have to endure but that most hapless wretch

92.16 who gives the lie to the truth and turns away [from it].

92.17 For, distant from it shall remain he who is truly conscious of God:

92.18 he that spends his possessions [on others] so that he might

3 Abyssinia is now present day Ethiopia

grow in purity

92.19 not as payment for favors received

92.20 but only out of a longing for the countenance of his Sustainer,  
the All Highest:

92.21 and such, indeed, shall in time be well pleased

The family of Ammar Ibn Yasser provides another example of how the early followers of Islam suffered. This family was burned and severely tortured for all to see. It was extremely disheartening for the believers to see such calamities and to be powerless to protect them. The Prophet, upon seeing the suffering of this family, said, "Be patient, family of Yasser, we will meet in the heavens." The matriarch of this family, Umma Ammar Ibn Yasser, was so stubborn in her belief that she refused to acknowledge her torturers, and she eventually died under torture, thus becoming the first martyr in Islam. This is another important footnote to the inception of Islam—the first believer was a woman (Khadija) and the first bloodshed for Islam was also from a woman. However, the family of Yasser continues to provide an example for present day Muslims, as the torture and death of their patriarch, Ammar Ibn Yasser, was also notable. As this family was wealthy, his torture was prolonged and intense. He was asked to deny Islam, and in order to alleviate his suffering, he complied, prompting people to say that Ammar Ibn Yasser was a *kafir* or unbeliever. However the Prophet responded, "Ammar is full of faith, from the top of his head to the bottom of his foot." And subsequently, God Almighty revealed in Sura Nahl with regards to this event:

مَنْ كَفَرَ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِهِ إِلَّا مَنْ أُكْرِهَ وَقَلْبُهُ مُطْمَئِنٌّ بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَكِنْ مَنْ شَرَحَ  
بِالْكُفْرِ صَدْرًا فَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (١٠٦)

16.106 As for anyone who denies God after having once attained to faith - and this, to be sure, does not apply to one who does it under duress, the while his heart remains true to his faith, but [only, to] him who willingly opens up his heart to a denial of the truth -: upon all such [falls] God's condemnation, and tremendous suffering awaits them:

Ammar was a simple man, who would have gone through history unremembered if not for this incident. He is now recorded in the Quran for eternity. This verse reiterates the Prophet's declaration—as long as a person believes in God in their heart, a forced denial of God is not an issue. The issue lies with those whose hearts openly deny the truth—it is these people who deserve the wrath of God. The Quran continued to address those under torture as recorded in Surah Ankaboot:

الم (١) أَحْسِبَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يُتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا آمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ (٢) وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا الَّذِينَ  
 مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْكَاذِبِينَ (٣)

29.1 A.L.M.

29.2 *DO MEN THINK* that on their [mere] saying, “We have attained to faith”, they will be left to themselves, and will not be put to a test

29.3 *Yea, indeed, We did test those who lived before them; and so, [too, shall be tested the people now living: and] most certainly will God mark out those who prove themselves true, and most certainly will He mark out those who are lying.*

All of the believers were subject to persecution—status and wealth protected no one. Abu Bakr himself was tortured, and his life was made difficult enough that he decided to leave Mecca for Abyssinia, in order to find a place where he could worship God in peace. He arrived at a port named Bark Al Ghamad, looking to travel across the Red Sea. Here he met Ibn Al Tohma, a chief of a local tribe, and he inquired as to where Abu Bakr was going. He was dumbfounded upon hearing that Abu Bakr was expelled from his home because of his beliefs, and that he was in search of a place to worship God peacefully. How could a man of his stature, with Abu Bakr's wealth and status, be treated in such a fashion—he did not deserve this. When he realized that Abu Bakr was serious about leaving Mecca, he entreated him to return under his protection. Ibn Al Tohma was not a Muslim, but he was offering Abu Bakr his protection, which was a custom of the time. This would ensure that Abu Bakr would be safe in Mecca. And upon arriving back in Mecca, Ibn Al Tohma proclaimed for all to hear, “You leave Abu Bakr to worship his creator the way he likes—He is under my protection.” This meant that Abu Bakr was under the protection of Ibn Al Tohma and his entire tribe. Ibn Al Tohma was asked,

“Is this declaration being made as a protector or as a follower?” Ibn Al Tohma replied “As a protector,” and so Abu Bakr was able to return home under the protection of a non-believer.

However, Ibn Al Tohma was told by the Meccans that this protection would be acceptable under one condition. The Meccans wanted Abu Bakr to worship in his home, but to worship quietly. Abu Bakr was known to cry while reciting the Quran in his home, out of humility and devotion. This was something the people of the time were not used to—a grown man crying. This was not their expectation of how a man should behave. This act of worship was enough to get people to stop outside of his home and listen to his recitations. This was a problem to those bent against Islam. They stated “He recites the Quran in such a way that he does not need to go to the people—they come to him via his recitations.” Ibn Al Tohma was asked to address this with Abu Bakr. Upon discussing these terms for his ongoing protection, Abu Bakr stated, “We then must break our agreement: I have a better agreement with God.”

In the end, persecution was counter-productive. No one changed their mind and left Islam. It may have prevented people from accepting Islam at that time, but it did not reduce the number of believers.

The Quraysh continued to apply pressure to the Prophet in all different manners. There was a man in Mecca known as Ukba Ibn Rabi'ah Al Akshami. He came from the Bani Abd Manaf family, which was the family of the Prophet. He was a man of great respect, and he went to Muhammad on behalf of the Quraysh, in an effort to convince Muhammad to stop spreading Islam. It was a diplomatic negotiation in his mind. He felt that Muhammad would accept whatever was offered. He started by saying “O the son of my brother” which was a very common approach of the Arabs when trying to be friendly. He continued:

“You are one of the best among us, your family is one of the best in Arabia, and you have brought something horrendous. You have divided the society and have divided its people. You have ridiculed their minds and belittled their Gods. You have ignored our religion and you give no heed to our ancestors. In spite of all that you have done, I will offer you certain things. You think about it and maybe you will accept some of them. If you want money, we will collect from all around you and you

will become the richest one of us. If you want prestige, we will make you *Sayiddna*, our Master, and your title will be the Master of Arabia and we will defer all decisions to you. If you want to be king, we will make you a king. If you are sick and the unseen beings, jinn, are haunting you and you cannot help it, we will seek all the healers of Arabia and give them all the money they need until they cure you.”

This was nothing new. His statement reeked of desperation, but was delivered with a smooth tongue. The Quraysh had offered this before, but they were hoping that a second attempt by someone different would sway the Prophet. The Prophet listened and respectfully asked him if he was finished. He then said it was time for him to listen. The Prophet responded to this attempt to sway him by reciting verses from Sura Fusilath:

حم (١) تَنْزِيلٌ مِّنَ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ (٢) كِتَابٌ فُصِّلَتْ آيَاتُهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ (٣) بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا فَأَعْرَضَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ (٤) وَقَالُوا قُلُوبُنَا فِي أَكِنَّةٍ مِّمَّا تَدْعُونَا إِلَيْهِ وَفِي آذَانِنَا وَقْرٌ وَمِن بَيْنِنَا وَبَيْنِكَ حِجَابٌ فَاعْمَلْ إِنَّا نَحْنُ غَافِلُونَ (٥) قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ اللَّهُ وَاحِدٌ فَاسْتَقِيمُوا إِلَيْهِ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ ۗ وَوَيْلٌ لِّلْمُشْرِكِينَ (٦) الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ (٧) إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُونٍ (٨) ﴿٩﴾ قُلْ أَتُنتَكُم لَتَكْفُرُونَ بِالَّذِي خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ وَتَجْعَلُونَ لَهُ أَنْدَادًا ۗ ذَٰلِكَ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٩) وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِي مِّن فَوْقِهَا وَبَارَكَ فِيهَا وَقَدَّرَ فِيهَا أَقْوَاتَهَا فِي أَرْبَعَةِ أَيَّامٍ سَوَاءً لِّلسَّائِلِينَ (١٠) ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ وَهِيَ دُخَانٌ فَقَالَ لَهَا وَلِلْأَرْضِ ائْتِيَا طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا قَالَتَا أَتَيْنَا طَائِعِينَ (١١) فَفَضَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ وَأَوْحَىٰ فِي كُلِّ سَمَاءٍ أَمْرَهَا ۗ وَزَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحَ وَحِفْظًا ۗ ذَٰلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ (١٢) فَإِنِ اعْرَضُوا فَقُلْ أَنذَرْتُكُمْ صَاعِقَةً مِّثْلَ صَاعِقَةِ عَادٍ وَثَمُودَ (١٣) إِذْ جَاءَتْهُمْ الرُّسُلُ مِن بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ ۗ قَالُوا لَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّنَا لَأَنْزَلَ مَلَائِكَةً فَأِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهِ كَافِرُونَ (١٤)

41.1 Ha Mim:

41.2 HE BESTOWAL from on high [of this revelation] issues from the Most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace:

41.3 a divine writ, the messages whereof have been clearly spelled out as a discourse in the Arabic tongue<sup>2</sup> for people of [innate] knowledge,

41.4 to be a herald of glad tidings as well as a warning. And yet, [whenever this divine writ is offered to men,] most of them turn away, so that they cannot hear its message)

41.5 and so they say, [as it were:] "Our hearts are veiled from whatever thou callest us to, [O Muhammad,] and in our ears is deafness, and between us and thee is a barrier. Do, then, [whatever thou wilt, whereas,] behold, we shall do [as we have always done]!"

41.6 Say thou, [O Prophet:] "I am but a mortal like you. It has been revealed to me that your God is the One God: go, then, straight towards Him and seek His forgiveness!" And woe unto those who ascribe divinity to aught beside Him

41.7 and] those who do not spend in charity: for it is they, they who [thus] deny the truth of the life to come

41.8 [But,] verily, they who have attained to faith and do good works shall have a reward unending!

41.9 SAY: "Would you indeed deny Him who has created the earth in two aeons? And do you claim that there is any power that could rival Him, the Sustainer of all the worlds?"

41.10 For He [it is who, after creating the earth,] placed firm mountains on it, [towering] above its surface, and bestowed [so many] blessings on it, and equitably apportioned its means of subsistence to all who would seek it: [and all this He created] in four aeons.

41.11 And He [it is who] applied His design to the skies, which were [yet but] smoke; and He [it is who] said to them and to the earth, "Come [into being], both of you, willingly or unwillingly!" - to which both responded, "We do come in obedience."

41.12 And He [it is who] decreed that they become seven heavens in two aeons, and imparted unto each heaven its function. And We adorned the skies nearest to the earth with lights, and made them secure: such is the ordaining of the Almighty, the All-Knowing.

41.13 BUT IF they turn away, say: "I warn you of [the coming of] a thunderbolt of punishment like the thunderbolt [that fell upon the tribes] of 'Ad and Thamud!"

41.14 Lo! There came unto them [God's] apostles, speaking of what lay open before them and what was [still] beyond their ken, [and calling unto them,] "Worship none but God!" They answered: "If our Sustainer had willed [us to believe in what you say], He would have sent down angels [as His message-bearers] As it is, behold, we deny that there is any truth in what you [claim to] have been sent with!"

The power of the Quran was all that was needed for Ukba to understand that he was dealing with something beyond the reach of his worldly offer. He actually asked the Prophet to stop reciting, as he could no longer handle hearing the recitation. He returned to the Quraysh, stating, "I heard something that I have never heard before in my life and I swear by God this is not poetry, this is not magic. People of Quraysh, leave this man alone. Leave him to take his message to the rest of Arabia. If he prevails, then at least one of you will have led Arabia to glory." Ukba forgot about his status, forgot about his place in society, the power of the recitation resonating within him. However, it was not what the Quraysh expected, and as their hearts were closed to this, they attributed this event and Ukba's reaction to magic, saying, "Muhammad has applied his black magic to you as well." It was the only way they could explain how the Prophet could sway so many people to Islam.

So rather than accept the message, the Quraysh offered to combine all religions into one, to share the religions together. "You worship what we worship, and we worship what you worship." And in response to this, the Quran revealed in [the first five verses of] Surah Kafiroon:

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ (١) لَا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ (٢) وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ (٣) وَلَا  
 أَنَا عَابِدٌ مَّا عَبَدْتُمْ (٤) وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ (٥)

109.1 SAY: "O you who deny the truth!

109.2 "I do not worship that which you worship,

109.3 and neither do you worship that which I worship!

109.4 "And I will not worship that which you have [ever] worshipped,

109.5 and neither will you [ever] worship that which I worship.

Complete separation is inherent here. It is decisive and plain from these verses. There is no compromise on the issue of Islam being separate from idolatry, and that sharing is not acceptable. When this became clear, the Quraysh then tried to partially accept some of the message of Islam, asking if the Prophet would delete certain portions from the revealed verses of the Quran that they found insulting. The response to this came from God Almighty, as it starts with "Go and tell them" or "Say," as this is the response from the Heavens in Sura Youness:

وَإِذَا تُلِيٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ ۖ قَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا إِنَّمَا يَبْرَأْنَ غَيْرِ هَذَا أَوْ  
 بَدَّلَهُ ۗ قُلْ مَا يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ أُبَدِّلَهُ مِنْ تَلْقَاءِ نَفْسِي ۗ إِنِّي أَتَّبِعُ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ ۗ إِنِّي  
 أَخَافُ إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابٌ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ (١٥)

10.15 AND [thus it is:] whenever Our messages are conveyed unto them in all their clarity, those who do not believe that they are destined to meet Us [are wont to] say, "Bring us a discourse other than this, or alter this one. Say [O Prophet]: "It is not conceivable that I should alter it of my own volition; I only follow what is revealed to me. Behold, I would dread, were I [thus] to rebel against my Sustainer, the suffering [which would befall me] on that awesome Day [of Judgment]!"

There was no room for compromise. Any attempts to negotiate with the Prophet proved fruitless. However, the Prophet never stopped trying to bring them into Islam. Despite how he was treated by them, despite the attempts on his life, the Prophet was never harsh with them and never prayed for their destruction. He was always looking for ways for them to see the truth.

Once, an opportunity arose for Muhammad to do just this. The chiefs of Quraysh were willing to sit and listen to Muhammad. It was an amicable meeting, and Muhammad noted this could be a historic, civil exchange. There was hope for progress and a possible breakthrough to the hearts of the Quraysh—the same people who counted multiple members as family to the Prophet. As this meeting was progressing, led by the Prophet, a blind believer known as Abdullah Ibn Um Maktoum came to the Prophet and interrupted him, asking Muhammad during the meeting "Give me some of the knowledge that God has given you." This was an

inopportune time for this, and the Prophet ignored him a couple of times, but he persisted, asking, "Give me some of the knowledge that God has given you." Finally, the Prophet frowned and turned away from him. Of course, Abdullah did not see this as he was blind; however, the camera of the Quran did not let this go and it was recorded in the pages of history, admonishing the Prophet in Sura Abasa:

عَبَسَ وَتَوَلَّى (١) أَنْ جَاءَهُ الْأَعْمَى (٢) وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّهُ يَزَّكَّى (٣) أَوْ يَذَّكَّرُ فَتَنْفَعَهُ  
الذِّكْرَى (٤) أَمَّا مَنْ اسْتَغْنَى (٥) فَأَنْتَ لَهُ تَصَدَّى (٦) وَمَا عَلَيْكَ إِلَّا يَزَّكَّى (٧)  
وَأَمَّا مَنْ جَاءَكَ يَسْعَى (٨) وَهُوَ يَخْشَى (٩) فَأَنْتَ عَنْهُ تَلَهَّى (١٠) كَلَّا إِنَّهَا تَذْكِرَةٌ  
(١١) فَمَنْ شَاءَ ذَكَرْهُ (١٢)

*80.1 HE FROWNED and turned away*

*80.2 because the blind man approached him!*

*80.3 Yet for all thou didst know, [O Muhammad,] he might perhaps have grown in purity,*

*80.4 or have been reminded [of the truth], and helped by this reminder.*

*80.5 Now as for him who believes him self to be self-sufficient*

*80.6 to him didst thou give thy whole attention,*

*80.7 although thou art not accountable for his failure to attain to purity*

*80.8 but as for him who came unto thee full of eagerness*

*80.9 and in awe [of God]*

*80.10 him didst thou disregard!*

*80.11 NAY, VERILY, these [messages] are but a reminder:*

*80.12 and so, whoever is willing may remember Him*

This incident served as a reminder to the Prophet. In this instance, he was so focused on those who were turning away from his message, he forgot about those who were actively turning towards him. The potential that this blind man may elevate himself from his discussions with the Prophet was made clear to him. The Quran reminds Muhammad that those who

have accepted his message deserve his utmost attention, and those who have denied him should take their own initiative when the truth is placed in front of them. The Prophet had to remember where his priorities should always be—with those who came to him of their own accord, striving in faith, yearning to be knowledgeable of God. From this point on, every time this blind man approached Muhammad, the Prophet would say, “Welcome to the man for whom God admonished me.”

After a while, it became apparent to the Prophet that he and his people would not be able to survive given the conditions around them. He put together a group of people to go Abyssinia, which was headed by a Christian emperor. Muhammad had established the relationship between Islam and Christianity early on, and he knew that the leader of Abyssinia would not obstruct the freedom of his people. The group consisted of ten people, one of who was the Prophet’s daughter.

As this expedition took shape, another light of hope entered the lives of the believers, involving Omar Ibn Al Khattab. Omar had the reputation of being tough, hard, and cruel towards the believers. He was in strong opposition towards the Muslims. One day, he found a husband and wife trying to leave Arabia. When asked why they were leaving, the wife responded that they could not worship God the way they wanted to. Upon hearing this, Omar quietly replied, “God be with you.” This took them back, and when the wife told her husband what Omar said, he responded, “Do you think Omar will become a Muslim? If the donkey of Khattab becomes a Muslim, Omar will not.” This was the prevailing opinion about Omar amongst the believers—that he would fight Islam to the death. But there was an undercurrent of softness to Omar that was unknown to most. His façade of toughness was belied by instances of sensitivity, including the rumor that when Omar buried his infant daughter alive<sup>4</sup>, his own daughter apparently stroked his beard as she died in the ground, and that Omar thought of this often. Possibly with regret, possibly with remorse—but this was just a rumor.

However, this sensitivity is what caused his eventual conversion. Upon hearing that his own sister and her husband converted to Islam, he hunted them down and slapped her across her face, drawing blood. This caused

4 In Pre Islamic Arabia, it was a widely held practice to bury infant daughters alive, as sons were preferred.

him to pause, not expecting to see blood, and he immediately settled down and became empathetic. He asked them what they were doing, and she told them they were reciting verses from God. When he asked to see it—it was possibly written on a piece of parchment or leather—his sister demanded that he cleanse himself before reading it. This was not rooted in practice or jurisprudence. This was rooted in her demand that he respect their beliefs by treating these words honorably. Omar, who could have easily killed them both for standing up to him, complied, and read the following verses from Sura Taha:

طه (١) مَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَى (٢) إِلَّا تَذَكُّرَةً لِمَنْ يَخْشَى (٣) تَنْزِيلًا مِمَّنْ  
خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ وَالسَّمَاوَاتِ الْعُلَى (٤)

20.1 Ta-Ha.

20.2 *We did not bestow the Qur'an on thee from on high to make thee unhappy,*

20.3 *but only as an exhortation to all who stand in awe [of God]:*

20.4 *a revelation from Him who has created the earth and the high heavens*

Upon reading this, there was an instantaneous conversion in Omar. He immediately sought out the Prophet and declared his faith in Islam. The news spread quickly, that Omar had changed, and a group was immediately formed amongst the Quraysh to kill him. Once again though, a non-Muslim stood up and granted his protection to Omar, taunting the crowd by saying, "What are you waiting for?" They were waiting for Omar, to which he responded, "none of you can touch him."

This was a significant moment for the young group of believers. Omar's conversion sent shockwaves through the community, and it was a palpable breath of fresh air to the demoralized believers. He was a bold and verbal man. Later on, when preparing to immigrate to Medina, while others stealthily made their way out of the city, Omar announced for all to hear, "I am taking this road to Medina. Whoever wants their mother to lose a son, or their children to be orphaned, then come after me."

This moment galvanized the believers. Their pending journey to Abyssinia was put on hold, as those who started out returned back to Mecca, as

their fortunes looked brighter now that Omar was on their side. This however was not the case as conditions were essentially unchanged. It is at this point that a rumor began to spread, that those who returned did so because the Prophet struck a deal with the Quraysh and unbelievers. It stems from when the Prophet recited the following verses from Sura Najm:

أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ اللَّاتَ وَالْعُزَّىٰ (١٩) وَمَنَاةَ الثَّالِثَةَ الْأُخْرَىٰ (٢٠) أَلَكُمُ الذَّكَرُ وَلَهُ الْأُنثَىٰ (٢١)  
 تِلْكَ إِذًا قِسْمَةٌ ضِيزَىٰ (٢٢) إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا أَسْمَاءٌ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنْتُمْ وَأَبَاؤُكُمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا  
 مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَمَا تَهْوَى الْأَنْفُسُ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ الْهُدَىٰ (٢٣)  
 53.19 HAVE YOU, then, ever considered [what you are worshipping  
 in] Al-Lat and Al-'Uzza,

53.20 as well as [in] Manat, the third and last [of this triad]?

53.21 Why - for yourselves [you would choose only] male offspring,  
 whereas to Him [you assign] female:

53.22 that, lo and behold, is an unfair division!

53.23 These [allegedly divine beings] are nothing but empty names which you have invented - you and your forefathers - [and] for which God has bestowed no warrant from on high. They [who worship them] follow nothing but surmise and their own wishful thinking - although right guidance has now indeed come unto them from their Sustainer.

The claim is that when these idols were named, the Prophet made statements to glorify them, which is an impossible claim and which has been stated to be untrue by various modern-day authorities of Islam. However, these claims that maybe the Prophet made such statements, or possibly even Satan, persists, and has become the foundation for much slander against Muhammad.

Even with Omar on their side, the persecution of the Muslims continued, and life became more and more challenging. The Quraysh began to apply a different tactic at this time—sanctions. They forced the Prophet's family out of Mecca into the surrounding valley. They entered treaties with surrounding tribes instructing them not to buy or sell with the Prophet's

clan. They prevented people from marrying into their family, and they did not supply them with food. A document listing all of these sanctions was hung on the Kabaa, for all to see, a united resolution against Muhammad. Muhammad and his people became persona non grata—no one was to associate with the Prophet's tribe, the believers--all of them. They were outcasts, and they literally starved, some of them to death, at the hands of these sanctions.

The journey to Abyssinia became a necessity again, and the Prophet ordered for them to travel to seek the protection of the ruler there. The Quraysh tried to prevent this, entreating the Emperor of Abyssinia to extradite the Muslims back to Mecca. However, the Emperor refused to send the Muslims back, and he allowed them to stay in his lands, free to worship as they pleased.

However, the remaining Muslims in Mecca continued to suffer under the weight of the sanctions against them. This lasted for three long years. Eventually, these sanctions were lifted, as it was said that some of the Quraysh felt guilty that they were prospering while their brethren were suffering in the valley around Mecca. And while the Prophet and the believers were eventually allowed back into Mecca, the persecution against them continued unabated.

Through all this, Muhammad continued to spread the message of Islam as the Messenger of God. The Prophet never gave up hope, and there were instances where things worked. A group of Christians came to Mecca from Najraan. They had met the Muslims residing in Abyssinia, who spoke highly of Muhammad, and they decided to find out for themselves who the Prophet was. About twenty men met with Muhammad, and after speaking with him, they announced that they were Muslims. They were chastised almost immediately by Abu Jahal, who said, "I have never seen people more stupid than you. Your people sent you to investigate and you turn back converted." Their response to him was "Peace be upon you, we do not want to dispute with you. You follow what you believe, we follow what we choose to believe." This was documented in Surah Qasas:

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ هُمْ بِهِ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٥٢) وَإِذَا يُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِهِ إِنَّهُ  
الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مُسْلِمِينَ (٥٣) أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْتَوْنَ أَجْرَهُمْ مَرَّتَيْنِ بِمَا صَبَرُوا

وَيَدْرُءُونَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ (٥٤) وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا اللَّغْوَ أَعْرَضُوا عَنْهُ  
وَقَالُوا لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ لَا نَبْتَغِي الْجَاهِلِينَ (٥٥)

28.52 As for those unto whom We have vouchsafed revelation  
aforetime-they [are bound to] believe in this one [as well];

28.53 and when ever it is [clearly] conveyed unto them, they [are  
bound to] profess, "We have come to believe in it, for, behold, it is  
the truth from our Sustainer - and, verily, even before this have we  
surrendered ourselves unto Him!"

28.54 These it is that shall receive a twofold reward for having  
been patient in adversity, and having repelled evil with good,  
and having spent on others out of what We provided for them as  
sustenance,

28.55 and, whenever they heard frivolous talk, having turned away  
from it and said: "Unto us shall be accounted our deeds, and unto  
you, your deeds Peace be upon you - [but] we do not seek out  
such as are ignorant [of the meaning of right and wrong]."

This verse shows that Islam has two meanings—the specific Islam, and the attitudinal Islam, which refers to those who submit to the Creator. These verses refer to the Christians and the Jews, those who received the revelations before Islam, and that they are bound to believe when the verses are recited to them, because they recognize the truth from their Lord.

Despite their best efforts, Muhammad and his followers remained a threat to Quraysh and the establishment. No amount of torture or sanctions dissuaded them, so the Quraysh eventually made the decision to be more drastic with their intentions towards Muhammad. Options included replacing him man for man with another tribe; the other was to kick him out of Mecca permanently. Their last resort was assassination.

But the Prophet, while enduring the sanctions, had already started to lose those around him to forces well beyond his control. His wife Khadija died before the emigration to Medina. She was his greatest friend, the first believer in Islam, and his financial, physical and spiritual support. She was the mother of all of his children, except one. (And it is important to note

that all of the Prophet's children died, except Fatima.)

Soon after Khadija's passing, the Prophet's uncle Abu Talib also died. He was the one who stood by the Prophet, and protected him to the point of great persistence and stubbornness, so much so that no one could touch Muhammad while he remained alive. He never became a Muslim, despite the Prophet's entreaties to say the shahada. He protected his nephew out of dignity and prestige, and his refusal to convert to Islam was rooted in the same. He said, "I will not betray my people because I am afraid. I will maintain my tradition until I die," and in this event the Quran revealed the following to the Prophet in Sura Al Qasas:

إِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ (٥٦)

*28.56 VERILY, thou canst not guide aright everyone whom thou lovest: but it is God who guides him that wills [to be guided]; and He is fully aware of all who would let themselves be guided.*

In the Prophet's sorrow on the passing of his uncle, God is telling him in this verse that He knows best. Only God knows best those who receive guidance.

The Prophet was now in a weakened position. He was exposed emotionally, physically and spiritually. During this time, he would often travel frequently outside of Mecca to try and bring people to Islam. During one of these sojourns, he traveled to At Taif, an oasis of gardens and orchards just southeast of Mecca. The Prophet was hopeful as the people of At Taif were connected to the Prophet through his mother. He was rebuked, however, almost immediately. They insulted him and told him to leave. When the Prophet asked them to keep his visit to them confidential, as it could jeopardize his already weak standing with the Quraysh, they refused. The children of the city stoned him mercilessly, until the Prophet and his companion Zayd were bleeding profusely. They sought refuge under a tree in an orchard, and he prayed to God:

"O God! I complain to you about my weakness, about how weak and trivial I am in the eyes of people. You are the best of all Compassionates and the Merciful, you are the Lord of the oppressed, and you are my Lord.

To whom are you going to leave me; however, if you are not angry with me, nothing will matter.”

The Prophet remained here with Zayd for a period, and he was seen by some people who felt sorry for him and sent him some grapes through a servant named Addas. The Prophet was appreciative, and before eating said “In the name of God, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful.” Addas had never heard this before, and when the Prophet asked what his religion was, he said I am a Christian from an area in present-day Iraq. A dialogue was started between the two, and Addas eventually converted to Islam. Later on, he would lead the conversion of his people to Islam. Despite the humiliation that the Prophet went through in At Taif, a door of hope remained for the continued spread of Islam.

Soon after this occurrence, a revelation came to the Prophet that if he so desired, the people of At Taif would be punished as they were fulfilling the criteria of those who brought on themselves the wrath of God. The Prophet responded to this by saying, “I ask God just to guide them because they are ignorant.” But the Prophet could not return to Mecca after this excursion, as the news had spread to the Quraysh as to what happened. He was ridiculed and cornered. He needed the protection of someone to enter Mecca safely. He sent for Al Mutam Ibn Oday, who was not a Muslim, but a respected man. He responded to the Prophet gallantly. He and all of his children gathered their weapons and met Muhammad outside of the city, escorting him into Mecca with a grand show of protection. When asked if he was acting as a believer or a protector, he replied, “I am a protector” and Muhammad was left alone.

While back in Mecca, the Prophet received another delegation, led by El Tufael Ibn Amre El Dosse, from the tribe of Doos. This was the tribe from which Abu Huraira came from. Abu Huraira became very attached to the Prophet later on, and some of the traditions of the Prophet came from him. El Tufael was a great poet, and when he listened to the Qur’an he knew that this was more than poetry, and he became a Muslim. He went back to his people, and many of them converted to Islam and visited with the Prophet in Medina.

It was toward the end of this period that the *Israa and Miraj*, or Night Journey, took place. In many respects, it was something that provided

succor and support to the Prophet, as this was a difficult stretch of time for him in all aspects. There are some significant aspects of this event that bears mentioning. *Israa* means that the Prophet journeyed from Mecca to Al Aqsa in Jerusalem, unifying the faith of Abraham. He then ascended to the realms not experienced by human beings. The debate goes on as to whether this was a spiritual journey or an actual physical one; whether his body and soul traveled together; whether his soul went alone, or whether it was just all a dream. What is confirmed is that during this journey, the five daily prayers of Islam were ordained to Muhammad. All other pillars of Islam came from revelation, but the ordination of the daily prayer was given directly to the Prophet. This is why the Prophet would say, "The prayer is a symbol, and it gives you a chance to ascend, to communicate with God." This is the essence of this trip, and it makes his ascension all the more relevant, in whatever form it took.

Muhammad was now surviving on a weakened foundation. He was humiliated at At Taif. His protection had gone with the passing of his uncle. His support had gone with the passing of his wife. And now, amongst all of this, he proclaimed, "I went to Jerusalem last night, I ascended to the heavens, and I came back." The Quraysh rejoiced, as this seemed to confirm what they were saying all along about Muhammad, that he spoke nonsense. This sentiment became so prevalent that Muhammad's wife asked him to stay home, and not to go out to face the ridicule he would experience. But the Prophet was emboldened after his journey to the heavens. He was in the presence of the Almighty, and had been close to the reality of God. He no longer cared about what people said. However, this proved to be too much for some believers, as some reverted back to being unbelievers. It was not the torture, the sanctions or the persecution that made some people revert from Islam, but the embarrassment from Muhammad's recollection of his journey, that made some recant their commitment to the faith.

This did not dissuade the Prophet to continue to call Arabs to Islam. He waited for gatherings—celebrations, market days, poetry competitions, and pilgrimages—to go and handpick people from different areas and offer them Islam. Some were harsh to him, some ignored him. Some who converted this way were from Medina. Those from Medina were in dire straits, as Medina was going through a long civil war between two tribes, Al Aws and Khazraj. It was threatening the survival of the city, and it was splitting the communities. The Jews of Medina had split their allegiances

between the two tribes, and were selling weapons to both sides. Some from Al Aws tried to forge an alliance with the Quraysh, in order to gain an advantage. The Prophet, however, offered them something different:

“I have something better to offer you. I offer you to believe in The All Mighty God who controls everything. I offer you to live with good manners, and to trust Him and to believe in this Quran.”

There were differing reactions to this proposal—some felt it was good, while others rejected it outright. Though it was not widely accepted, it left an impression on them all, and it was agreed upon that they would meet with the Prophet again the following year.

This was a strategic move. Mecca and Medina could not have been more different. Mecca was an established city—it was a religious capital as well as a trade capital. It was a seat of power in Arabia, and those in charge wanted to maintain their status quo. Medina, on the other hand, was a rural city of farmers, beset by a civil war that was threatening to tear them apart. They were looking to change their status quo, and they were looking for an external solution to their internal problems. To add insult to injury, the people of Medina were constantly being ridiculed by the Jews amongst them. The Jews of Medina boasted that their faith had all of the messengers, a holy book, and that they were educated, while the rest in Medina were ignorant and without guidance. The Medinites were ripe for their own messenger from the Arab world.

An agreement was reached to meet the Prophet in secret during their next trip to Mecca. This was called Al Aqaba Al Ula. They met in a remote place to reach this agreement. Members from both tribes met with the Prophet, and they made a pledge with him. They agreed to never give partners to God, that they would never steal, commit adultery or kill their progeny. They would not do anything immoral or illegal, and that they would not disobey the Prophet when he orders them to do something agreed upon as good.

This outlined a very high standard of behavior that was expected of them and eventually the people of Medina. Fulfillment of these terms would lead to Paradise; betrayal of this agreement would leave them to God’s will—to be punished or to be forgiven. The Prophet selected Mu’sab Ibn

Omair and Abdallah Ibn Um Maktoum, the blind man, who by this time had memorized all of the revelations at that point, to go to Medina and start to lay the groundwork for Islam.

But this was not easy, as there was suspicion and opposition due to ignorance amongst those in Medina. Mu'sab had an interaction with one of the more prominent men of Medina, Usayad Ibn Khudir. He was the cousin of Sa'ad Ibn Muaz, who was the head of the tribe Al Aws. Sa'ad reportedly told Usayad, "See those two men there?", "They came here to brainwash our weak people. Go kick them out." (He was referring to Mu'sab and an acquaintance.) Usayad approached Mu'sab, threatening him and demanding that they leave in the same arrogant fashion as in Mecca. Mu'sab asked him to listen to what he had to say—if he didn't like it, they would leave. Usayad agreed, and listened to Mu'sab recite the Quran and speak about Islam. He was moved because he felt this was the truth. He went to his cousin Sa'ad, who said he looked different. Usayad responded, "They told me something I cannot overlook, and I have to share it with you." They both became Muslims, and eventually, their tribe followed. And the breakthrough of Islam in Medina had begun.

The following year, the delegation from Medina that met with Muhammad numbered seventy-five, sixty from the tribe of Al Khazraj and the remaining from Al Aws. They met at night at Al Aqaba, the site of their initial treaty with Muhammad. The Prophet was accompanied to this meeting with his uncle Al Abbas Ibn Abd Al Motalib, who was not a Muslim, but who wanted to ensure the safety of his nephew. Upon meeting the contingent from Medina, he said:

"I heard that you are coming to support my nephew, and probably to invite him to your home. Let me say that he lived with us safely and with dignity throughout these years. If you are not sure that you can offer him the same, please leave him alone."

They responded to this by stating their allegiance to Muhammad and Islam. The Prophet started to teach them, and took agreements and pledges from them, known as *al bayya*, but he added a new facet—that they protect him as they protect their own homes. It was at this meeting that Muhammad ratified and solidified the organization that would go back to Medina, as they were now excited at the prospect of a new leader

in Medina, and a new future for them devoid of war.

A new chapter was afoot at this time. For Medina, their city was now in the hands of someone who they believed would bring them peace and prosperity. For the Prophet, it was an opportunity to spread the message of Islam without persecution, to create an ideal society based on the values set forth by the Almighty, and to prosper. It was a breath of hope that was long overdue.

## HIJRA TO MEDINA/BADR

---

A safe haven had finally been unearthed, and even though it was far from Mecca, it provided the Prophet and his followers a place to grow, flourish and spread Islam to whoever was willing to listen. After the agreements with Medina were set, the Prophet ordered believers in Mecca to secretly start migrating to Medina. Slowly they started to leave, and over time, only a very few remained in Mecca. Some were unable to leave because they were so destitute they could not afford to travel, and in the end, only Suhayb, Zayd, Ali, Abu Bakr and the Prophet remained. For the first time since Abyssinia, the believers were separated from the Prophet. Those in Medina were there without the leadership of Muhammad, while in Mecca, only a few Muslims now endured.

It was only a matter of time before the Meccans realized what was going on. The number of believers were shrinking, and they became aware of the reality that Muhammad was moving out. A group of Meccans met at a place called Dar al Nadwa, to discuss the options at hand to deal with Muhammad. Should they leave him alone? Should they kill him outright? The idea of killing Muhammad had the most weight, but the main obstacle to this was not lack of morality in killing a defenseless human being, but rather the retribution they would have to deal with from the Prophet's family for spilling his blood. In the end, a cold and calculated solution to this problem was derived—a member from each tribe would be selected, and in unison, they would collectively strike and kill Muhammad. The blame, therefore, would be spread amongst many, making it impossible for the Prophet's family to exact any revenge. In effect, they would have to target every major tribe in Mecca and Arabia, something they could not realistically do.

However, the Prophet had his own communication network, and he

was aware of this plot on his life. He knew it was time for him to leave Mecca, but after all that he had gone through—the persecution, torture, humiliation and near-starvation—he was not about to leave the details of his departure to Medina to chance. It is often recounted that upon unearthing the plot against his life, Muhammad hastily departed, leaving Ali in his bed to take his place, allowing the Prophet to find refuge in a cave where a spider’s web and bird’s nest protected him from the pursuing Quraysh. This gives the impression that this journey was improvised, and this is far from the truth. He meticulously planned his departure down to the last detail. It was not a spontaneous decision, but one fraught with preparation, thought and introspection—he hired a desert guide knowledgeable of the different areas of the desert; he enlisted Abu Bakr’s son to collect intel and information; he had two healthy camels packed and ready to go once his departure was set, and he had located areas to hide as he traveled.

When it came time to leave, the Prophet initially camped in a cave for three days, waiting for his guide. While there, Abu Bakr’s son Abdallah would gather information and meet with the Prophet late at night at the cave, departing only in the morning so as not to arouse suspicion. Abu Bakr’s daughter Asma delivered food and provisions. The Prophet knew that once his departure was uncovered, the Quraysh would send their best desert trackers after him, so he had arranged for Amir Ibn Fuhaira to pass his herd of sheep and cattle over his and Abu Bakr’s tracks effectively erasing their footprints on the desert sand. It is important to note that the success of this plan relied on the skills and trust of some who were not Muslims. The Prophet’s desert guide, Abdullah Ibn Uraykut, and Amir Ibn Fuhaira were both non-Muslims, but were trusted by him for their professionalism and honor. It is apparent that this plan was not impromptu at all. In fact, even the Prophet’s traveling companion Abu Bakr did not know all of the details regarding the departure, not even knowing the time of their departure.

But what of the assassination plot against Muhammad? Popular retelling of this story has the Prophet putting Ali in his bed, with the attackers setting on the bed ready to strike, only to realize that Ali, and not Muhammad, was there. This is uncharacteristic of Muhammad. The idea of a group of people storming into someone’s home at the time was unheard of, even in Pre-Islamic Arabia. Indeed, this idea was raised as a possibility in getting rid of Muhammad long before this, and the Prophet’s enemy Abu Jahal

reportedly said, "Since when do we storm homes of people while there may be women there?" So this was a scenario that Muhammad knew would not occur. Instead, as he quietly slipped out of his home, he had Ali stay in his bed, because he knew that the assassins had surrounded his home, and were periodically looking through the holes in the walls, to see if the Prophet was sleeping there. While the Prophet had already left, the body of Ali in the Prophet's bed convinced the plotters that Muhammad was still in Mecca. It was not until days later when Ali calmly walked out of the Prophet's house did the assassins realize they were deceived, and that the Prophet had long departed.

The story of the spider and birds nest is not confirmed in the books of Seera (history of Muhammad.) The Prophet and Abu Bakr were together in the cave, well aware that the Quraysh were tracking them. The Quraysh actually approached the cave, but they did not look in, as they did not think anyone was there. In fact, Abu Bakr was trembling and crying, scared that after all of their planning and preparation they would be discovered. The Prophet told him, "What do you think of two people who have God as their third? Do not be sad, God is with us." This event is recounted in the Quran, in Sura Taubah:

إِلَّا تَنْصُرُوهُ فَقَدْ نَصَرَهُ اللَّهُ إِذْ أَخْرَجَهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ثَانِيًا إِذْ هُمَا فِي الْغَارِ إِذْ يَقُولُ لِصَاحِبِهِ لَا تَحْزَنْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَنَا فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَيَّدَهُ بِجُنُودٍ لَمْ تَرَوْهَا وَجَعَلَ كَلِمَةَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا السُّفْلَىٰ ۗ وَكَلِمَةُ اللَّهِ هِيَ الْعُلْيَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (٤٠)

9:40 *If you do not succor the Apostle, then [know that God will do so—just as] God succored him at the time when those who were bent on denying the truth drove him away, [and he was but] one of two: when these two were [hiding] in the cave, [and] the Apostle said to his companion, "Grieve not: verily, God is with us." And thereupon God bestowed upon him from on high His (gift of) inner peace, and brought utterly low the cause of those who were bent on denying the truth, whereas the cause of God remained supreme: for God is almighty, wise.*

While the journey to Medina was clearly one of human planning and derivation, Divine support and peace was always with them. Another similar incident also occurred while the Prophet and Abu Bakr were

traveling. The Quraysh were incensed that Muhammad had eluded their grasp, and a reward was offered for his capture, dead or alive. At one point during their journey, the Prophet and Abu Bakr were spotted by a man named Suraqa. Suraqa followed them both, but each time he got close to the Prophet and his companion, he fell off his horse. This happened twice, and the third time when he finally got close to them, Muhammad was reading the Quran. When Muhammad turned and spoke to Suraqa, whatever he spoke was powerful, because Suraqa immediately became a Muslim. Suraqa then turned back to Mecca and completely misled the Quraysh as to the Prophet's whereabouts, leading them away from the Prophet's path to Medina.

This marks the beginning of the Medinite period, as the Prophet arrived in Medina around the 20<sup>th</sup> of September 622 AD. He was on the outskirts of Medina at an area called Quba, where he built the first mosque in the history of Islam. The Prophet was met here by some of the believers--those who came from Mecca, and the supporters from Medina known as the *Ansar*. They all prayed together at this mosque, for the first time, without fear.

This group then moved towards Medina, with the *Ansar* surrounding Muhammad and Abu Bakr, unsheathing their swords around them as a symbol of protection. The people of Medina had come out in droves, singing songs to welcome the Prophet, but many of them had never seen him before. Long before Muhammad left Mecca, he had dispatched Mu'sab Ibn Umair to Medina, who was preaching Islam to those there, many of whom converted without ever having met Muhammad. So now, some were confused—who was actually Muhammad in this triumphant group of travelers? Some mistook Abu Bakr for the Prophet. This fact is important because of the way Islam spreads to this day. It spread in Medina, as it does to this day, not because of the charismatic character of the Prophet, but because of the central message of the faith.

It was Friday, and the Prophet came down from his camel and conducted the first Jumaa prayer in the history of Islam. Jumaa prayer was established here in Medina and has been observed continuously ever since. At this first prayer, the Prophet told his people to be aware of the Day of Judgment, and to be aware of the consequences of taking a path away from God.

Afterwards, as was the custom of the time, people invited the Prophet to stay with them. It was a spirited time, as people were vying for the honor to host the leader of Islam. So as not to disrespect and dishonor anyone, the Prophet said, "Leave this camel, it is destined"—meaning that he would let his camel decide where he would stay. Wherever the camel would finally settle down, that's where the Prophet would stay. His camel eventually stopped in front of the house of Abu Ayoub Ansari, whose actual name was Khalid Ibn Zeid. Upon arriving here, the Prophet prayed, "O God, make me occupy a blessed area, you are the best one who gives blessings."

The Prophet's arrival was a blessed, joyous and festive time. The Muslim community was finally whole, as his presence in Medina finally solidified his footing as the community's leader. Food came to Abu Ayoub's home from all the surrounding tribes, and the Prophet was courted and cared for continuously. But this generosity was not reserved for just Muhammad—the poorest of believers who traveled to Medina were hosted and cared for. The people of Medina fought for this honor—to feed, care and befriend them. This was the development of the brotherhood and sisterhood in Islam, the building of a fraternal community. This was called the period of *Mua'kha*, or making brothers/sisters.

But this period was marked with some obstacles initially. Like many others, the Prophet had to leave some of his family behind in Mecca. He was able to move all of them to Medina with great difficulty, except his daughter Zaynab, whose husband Abu Al Asey Ibn Al Rabiah was an unbeliever and refused to allow her to leave.

Additionally, the climate of Medina was markedly different than Mecca's, and many of the believers who emigrated were beset with illness and fever during their initial stay there. The Prophet provided emotional and psychological comfort to them, because he knew that many of them missed their homes in Mecca. The Prophet would pray to God to allow them to love Medina as they used to love Mecca. He expressed his love for his home in Mecca, but asked God to make their new home as lovable to them as their previous one.

The Prophet proceeded to form the institutions that would frame and support the community. He moved to build his own mosque. This

was a very simple structure, a wall with a roof of sand. It became the headquarters of the Islamic movement, and its site continues to be visited today, as it is part of one of the most visited mosques of the world. From this humble abode, Muhammad formed and instituted the Constitution of Medina, a code of conduct, ethics and bylaws that applied to all in Medina, regardless of race, religion or creed. Medina was a pluralistic society, and Islam was the first religion to accept pluralism, maintaining the due rights of people of other faiths. Each group was addressed with its own paragraph, and the Prophet started each paragraph with the phrase, "They are like us. They have the same rights, the same duties," (whereupon he details the specific duties), "they will not fight us, they will not kill any of us, and they will not join anyone or have alliances with anyone who is at war with us." He then outlined all the groups of the time, some of whom were unbelievers. The Constitution of Medina was the first document of its kind in history acknowledging the rights of people from different faiths. It is a landmark event not just for Muslims, but also for mankind.

Prayer was also established in Medina, particularly the specifics of group prayer. The issue was raised as to how to gather people to pray. Suggestions and ideas were taken by all—some suggested that a banner should be raised at the appointed time, but this would be missed by those asleep; another suggestion was to light a fire, but doing so five times a day would be cumbersome. The ringing of a bell was suggested, but this was the custom of the Christians at the time, as was the blowing of a horn for the Jews. In the end, someone suggested why not just call people to prayer, which was thought to be the best of all ideas. However, there was no fixed format, and initially someone would just go amongst the people, calling them to pray. This was unstructured and not formal enough. At this time, the man assigned to do this had a dream, where someone came to him and instructed him what to say to call people to pray. He approached the Prophet and told him the phrases of the *adhaan* as it came to him in his dream, and the Prophet agreed. He pronounced the *adhaan*, at which point Omar came running and said, "I saw a dream mentioning those very words." It was then confirmed that this was the established method to call people to pray and the *adhaan*, or the call to prayer, as we know it today was born. It eventually fell to Bilal, the African slave who converted to Islam and refused to recant under torture, to recite the *adhaan*, due to the beauty of his voice. It was a pleasing way to be reminded of prayer, something that persists today and should not be discounted.

Islam was starting to take shape in Medina on all fronts. The community was accepted. The institutions of faith were erected, and the influence of Muhammad was widely felt as he built strong relationships with all the groups in Medina. Among them were two groups whom bear mentioning now, who had a significant impact on Islam in Medina.

The first group comprised most of the Jews in and around Medina. They were concentrated in the areas of Bani Qaynuqa, Qurayzah and Al Nudier. Prior to the arrival of Islam in Medina, they were the leaders of the area—they were literate, and represented the people of the book, the lineage of Abraham. The difficult situation in Medina prior to the Prophet's arrival was a reflection of their leadership, and it's what prompted various people to reach out to Muhammad to help stabilize their society. Once the Prophet arrived, the leaders of these tribes found their positions slip away, and many assumed a negative position towards Muhammad, which would cause issues for all in the ensuing years. The Jews were no longer the only educated group in the area, and they were no longer viewed as the chosen people in the community. There was direct animosity towards the Prophet and Islam from many of the Jewish faith in and around Medina, despite the various levels of respect and protection afforded to them from the Constitution of Medina. It reflects an animosity towards Islam that has recurred in waves throughout history.

The other group that affected the Muslim community in Medina was the Hypocrites. This group reflected a behavior—hypocrisy—that was foreign to the Muslims in Mecca. In Mecca, you were either a Muslim, who was tortured and persecuted and exiled, or you were part of the establishment who were not Muslim. There was no reason to pretend in Mecca. However, Medina presented a different set of circumstances. Islam was looked to be a guiding force and Muhammad was the accepted leader of the area. Muslims were now the educated in society, and they were setting the standard for all others to follow. They were on the forefront in the community with regards to education, leadership, and even personal hygiene. It was easy to see how those who were Muslim were part of an elevated part of society, and there were those who wanted to be a part of that, without committing to Islam. The head of this group was Abdallah Ibn Obey Ibn Sallol, who was actually nominated as the leader of Medina before the arrival of the Prophet. He was, understandably, not happy with the new leadership in Medina. He was, however, not about to deny himself the benefits of believing in Islam on the surface, although

he denied it in his heart.

These groups are reflected upon in the Quran. Specifically, the Jews and their claim of being the chosen people of God while all else are incorrect in their beliefs, is addressed, in Sura Baqara with regards to the Children of Israel:

قُلْ إِنْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَالِصَةً مِّنْ دُونِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوْا الْمَوْتَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٩٤) وَلَنْ يَتَمَنَّوَهُ أَبَدًا بِمَا قَدَّمْتُمْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ (٩٥)

2.94 Say: "If an afterlife with God is to be for you alone, to the exclusion of all other people, then you should long for death - if what you say is true!"

2.95 But never will they long for it, because [they are aware] of what their hands have sent ahead in this world: and God has full knowledge of evildoers.

The essence of these verses is simple—if you truly believe that you are the only ones chosen by God, the only ones loved by God, then go to Him—ask Him to take you to him in death. But this will never be done, as the people who proclaim this are keen to stay alive because they are aware of their wrongs, and that God knows those among them who do wrong.

Similarly, the Quran addresses the Hypocrites in many areas. In Sura Baqara they are described as pretenders, but they are only deceiving themselves:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَبِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَمَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ (٨) يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَمَا يُخَادِعُونَ إِلَّا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ (٩) فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَرَضًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ (١٠)

2.8 And there are people who say, "We do believe in God and the Last Day," the while they do not [really] believe.

2.9 They would deceive God and those who have attained to faith-

*the while they deceive none but themselves, and perceive it not.*

*2.10 In their hearts is disease, and so God lets their disease increase; and grievous suffering awaits them because of their persistent lying.*

Islam was now established in Medina. The Muslims were no longer persecuted as they were in Mecca, where they relied on patience, perseverance, tribal protection and whatever rule of law there existed in society. However, this was not necessary in Medina as there was a structure, a code of behavior and ethics, and a protocol for protection of the people there. It was a reality that ran society, and it required defending if threatened. In this year, the Quran ordered the Prophet to be ready to fight in order to protect Islam. In Sura Hajj:

أَذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَاتَلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ظَلَمُوا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ (٣٩) الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا  
مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَقُولُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ  
لَهَدَمَتِ صَوَامِعُ وَبِيَعٌ وَصَلَوَاتٌ وَمَسَاجِدٌ يُذَكَّرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا وَلَيَنْصُرَنَّ اللَّهُ  
مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ (٤٠)

22.39 PERMISSION [to fight] is given to those against whom war is being wrongfully waged- and, verily, God has indeed the power to succor them -:

22.40 those who have been driven from their homelands against all right for no other reason than their saying, "Our Sustainer is God!" For, if God had not enabled people to defend themselves against one another, [all] monasteries and churches and synagogues and mosques - in [all of] which God's name is abundantly extolled - would surely have been destroyed [ere now]. And God will most certainly succor him who succors His cause: for, verily, God is most powerful, almighty,

Permission to fight is granted to those driven from their homes, to be directed against their aggressors only. Further protocols regarding the defense of Islam are given later in the Sura Baqara:

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ (١٩٠)

2.190 AND FIGHT in God's cause against those who wage war against you, but do not commit aggression - for, verily, God does not love aggressors.

The ensuing verse sets forth the rules of engagement:

وَأَقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ تَقِفْتُمُوهُمْ وَأَخْرِجُوهُمْ مِّنْ حَيْثُ أَخْرَجُوكُم ۗ وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ ۗ وَلَا تُقَاتِلُوهُمْ عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ حَتَّىٰ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِيهِ ۗ فَإِن قَاتَلُوكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوهُمْ ۗ كَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ (١٩١)

2.191 And slay them wherever you may come upon them, and drive them away from wherever they drove you away - for oppression is even worse than killing. And fight not against them near the Inviolable House of Worship unless they fight against you there first; but if they fight against you, slay them: such shall be the recompense of those who deny the truth.

These verses are often cited against Muslims, where they are taken out of context to say that the Quran says to wantonly kill the unbelievers. This is not what the Quran is saying here at all—it is clearly stating to fight only those who fight you, and not to start conflicts just because people believe differently than you. It is also clear that when you engage in combat, fight well enough to retrieve what was taken from you and to do your best to win your battle. This is only one of many meanings behind the word *jihad*, and it is a definition that should not be denied. There is, however, only one definition that refers to military confrontation, and only then within certain laws, regulations and circumstances.

However people will continue to state that the Quran tells Muslims to “fight the unbelievers all together”—but will not quote the rest of the verse, which says “as they fight you all together” and that “God is with those who show restraint.” From Surah Taubah:

إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ  
وَالْأَرْضَ مِنْهَا أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرْمٌ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ ۚ فَلَا تَظْلِمُوا فِيهِنَّ أَنْفُسَكُمْ ۗ  
وَقَاتِلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ كَافَّةً كَمَا يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ كَافَّةً ۚ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ (٣٦)

9.36 BEHOLD, the number of months, in the sight of God, is twelve months, [laid down] in God's decree on the day when He created the heavens and the earth; [and] out of these, four are sacred: this is the ever-true law [of God]. Do not, then, sin against yourselves with regard to these [months]. And fight against those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God, all together - just as they fight against you, [O believers,] all together<sup>55</sup> - and know that God is with those who are conscious of Him.

These verses are relevant because Islam has a base now in Medina. A base to prosper and flourish, and this reality was not lost on the enemies of the faith. It was also now under threat from multiple parties, and not just from Mecca. The Quraysh had made alliances with many of the unbelievers of Arabia, so the above quoted order from the Quran gives the Muslims the ability to fight those who gather against them in aggression and violence. From Sura Mumtahanah:

لَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوهُمْ  
وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ (٨)

60.8 As for such [of the unbelievers] as do not fight against you on account of [your] faith, and neither drive you forth from your homelands, God does not forbid you to show them kindness and to behave towards them with full equity: for, verily, God loves those who act equitably.

This verse is often ignored when trying to paint Islam in a violent light. While earlier verses do give permission to fight aggressors and to defend the faith, this verse clearly states that those who do not fight you because of your faith or to try to drive you from your homes are to be dealt with kindness and justice. Kindness and compassion precedes justice. There is no emphasis on rampant killing of unbelievers as is often stated by the slanderers of Islam. Coupled with the earlier verses mentioned where it

states that God loves those who show restraint, it is clear that fighting and aggression by the Muslims was never dictated to be widespread or unrestrained.

As time went on in Medina, the society of Muslims started to take shape. What we as Muslims in the present tense take for granted, this nascent group had no direction whatsoever. It was in these early years that certain rituals and practices became enshrined in the consciousness of the Muslim community. The direction of the prayer was confirmed in the second year of the Hijra. Upon arriving in Medina, the Muslim community had been praying towards Jerusalem. This was a fact that did not sit well with the Arabs, as it took the focus away from Mecca. The Prophet was aware of this, and did not want to appease the unbelievers of the Quraysh by praying to Mecca while idols still inhabited the Kaaba. However, in Surah Baqara that year it was revealed:

قَدْ نَرَى تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِي السَّمَاءِ فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضَاهَا فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ (١٤٤)

*2.144 We have seen thee [O Prophet] often turn thy face towards heaven [for guidance]: and now We shall indeed make thee turn in prayer in a direction which will fulfill thy desire. Turn, then, thy face towards the Inviolable House of Worship; and wherever you all may be, turn your faces towards it [in prayer]. And, verily, those who have been vouchsafed revelation aforetime know well that this [commandment] comes in truth from their Sustainer; and God is not unaware of what they do.*

Jerusalem was an appropriate alternative given its historical significance—after all, it was the site of the Prophet’s night journey some years prior. It represents the home of the Prophets, the progeny of Abraham. But from the Islamic perspective, the monotheistic mandates had been altered. For the Jews of the time, their religion became more about their race, their nation, than of their faith. Christians proclaimed Jesus was the son of God, which tampered with the understanding of monotheism in its purest form. The source of pure monotheism came from Abraham, who built the

Kaaba for the expressed purpose of worshipping one God alone. It only follows then that the last revelation, Islam, would restore the Kaaba to its rightful state as the focal point of monotheistic worship as evidenced in Islam. Thus the Kaaba became the new *qibla* or direction for prayer.

That same year fasting during the month of Ramadan was ordained. It was during this month that the Quran was revealed, as it is so mentioned in Sura Baqara:

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ ۚ فَمَن  
 شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ ۖ وَمَن كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ۗ يُرِيدُ  
 اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاكُم  
 وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (١٨٥)

2.185 It was the month of Ramadan in which the Qur'an was [first] bestowed from on high as a guidance unto man and a self-evident proof of that guidance, and as the standard by which to discern the true from the false. Hence, whoever of you lives to see this month shall fast throughout it; but he that is ill, or on a journey, [shall fast instead for the same] number of other days. God wills that you shall have ease, and does not will you to suffer hardship; but [He desires] that you complete the number [of days required], and that you extol God for His having guided you aright, and that you render your thanks [unto Him].

The Prophet used to fast at least three days of every month, and many people followed him in this tradition. Now the community would be fasting every Ramadan for the entire lunar cycle of the month, and with this, they would focus on worshipping God, as mentioned in the verse.

The celebration at the end of Ramadan, known as Eid ul Fitr, became a regular occurrence, to mark the end of such a spiritually empowering month. Along with the regular charity that he performed, the Prophet increased his charity and generosity while he was fasting. This also became a requirement, as a second ordinance of charity came into being—Zakat ul-Fitr—or the paying of charity at or towards the end of Ramadan.

The first ordinance of charity also occurred this year, known as Zakat ul-Mal. This codified the importance of giving, emphasizing the rights of the poor and the general welfare of society at large. As this group of believers evolved into a society, it was important for them to maintain and provide services to the community. This was an ongoing charity, meant to take care of members of the community who would have otherwise been forgotten or ignored. These groups were outlined in the following verse from the Quran in Surah Taubah:

إِنَّمَا الصَّدَقَاتُ لِلْفُقَرَاءِ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْعَامِلِينَ عَلَيْهَا وَالْمُؤَلَّفَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ  
وَالْغَارِمِينَ وَفِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ ۗ فَرِيضَةً مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (٦٠)

*9.60 The offerings given for the sake of God are [meant] only for the poor and the needy, and those who are in charge thereof, and those whose hearts are to be won over, and for the freeing of human beings from bondage, and [for] those who are overburdened with debts, and [for every struggle] in God's cause, and [for] the wayfarer: [this is] an ordinance from God - and God is all-knowing, wise.*

Charity is a due right, as important as prayer and as fasting, as God ordains it, as stated in the Quran. When examined with greater scrutiny, this verse can be applied to a modern context with great clarity. Let us look specifically at each category mentioned.

1. The poor. In today's world, those below the poverty level reside in this category. It applies to all nations of the world, and can be easily determined.
2. The needy. This defines those in our society who cannot earn, and are dependent on others for their livelihood.
3. Those employed to administer funds. This is a description of those whose job it is to collect funds from the society-at-large.
4. Those whose hearts have been reconciled to the truth. This can be interpreted to mean those in society working to help people understand Islam, to minimize the animosity of those bent against Islam. Organizations that attract people to Islam come under this definition, as well as those who defend and protect the well being of

the community.

5. Those in bondage. While the concept of slavery from this time period has changed, it still exists in various forms in modern society. Slavery of the hegemony, of certain countries over others, or the enslavement of people by occupation, gender, age, dictatorship or by poverty are all examples of modern slavery.
6. Those in debt. Simply put, those in the community who are overwhelmed with debt, bankruptcy or foreclosure.
7. In the cause of God. Known as *fee sabeel lillah*, this is for anything that promotes the cause of God. For example, the building of an Islamic school or institution, here or abroad, that will help establish Islamic values and work will meet this definition.

While this verse was revealed so many years ago, in a small but slowly thriving desert community of early Muslims, its applications are far reaching, and the importance of charity in Islam cannot be overstressed.

The community was growing. They were establishing law and order that helped all people in Medina, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The presence of Muslims was beneficial, and their numbers grew, because people saw how Muslims conducted themselves, and it was attractive. Muhammad and Islam continued to be hated by the Quraysh, and from afar, they continued to devise ways to harass and threaten the Muslim community. They started to engage in guerilla warfare, where skirmishes would occur around the outskirts of Medina. This harassment was meant to provoke the Muslims, but the Prophet would not allow his people to be so easily moved. As time went on, and as the Muslims grew in number, these encounters increased.

The first major battle in the history of Islam soon occurred, known as the Battle of Badr, or the Ghazwat Badr al-Qubra. At Badr were watering holes, where many caravans passed through to replenish their water supplies as they continued on their trade route. The power of the Quraysh resided in their trade, and their ability to attract that trade to their city center. While many caravans came to Mecca, many caravans originated and left Mecca under the direction of the Quraysh. It was one of these caravans that the Prophet decided to target.

This was not a random act. The Muslims did not arrive in Medina laden

with their belongings and goods. They were driven out of Mecca, and many left with nothing but the clothes on their backs, in fear of their lives. For most, all of their possessions and goods were left behind in Mecca, and the Quraysh seized these goods and sold them for their benefit. The Prophet knew this, and in order to reclaim what was rightfully theirs, he planned on recapturing their property by targeting a caravan. However, the Quraysh got wind of this plan—there were many spies in Medina that kept the enemies of Islam in the loop—and they changed the course of their caravan. When the Prophet arrived at the anticipated route, the caravan was not there.

This, however, did not sit well with the Quraysh. They still viewed Muhammad and his followers as little more than a stubborn nuisance, and yet here he was, attempting to attack a caravan of the great Quraysh. It was an affront to their status that they could not ignore, so they decided to gather arms and show Muhammad that they were a force not to be trifled with. It was an elaborate preparation for battle by the Quraysh, full of music, singers and dancers. As said by one of their own, Abu Jahal, "We will go to the place of Badr and stay there for three days. We will slay our sheep, sing our songs, and drink our wine, until all the Arabs hear about us so that they will fear us and know that we intimidated Muhammad." And this is what they set out to do. Their arrogance was unchecked, as they were extremely confident that they would finally wipe out Muhammad and Islam once and for all.

News spreads fast in the desert, and Muhammad soon realized that the Quraysh were coming to engage in a true battle. The Prophet, instead of deciding on his own, addressed his people. In a great show of democracy and inclusion, he said, "Give me your opinion O people." Muhammad was not about to take for granted the lives of the people he ruled—he wanted their say in such a large decision. A man called Al Mukdad Ibn Al Aswad said, "O Prophet of God, you do what you are ordered to do, and we are with you. If you want to reach the end of the world, we are with you and will never let you down." This appeared to be the general consensus, however, the Prophet repeated his request—"Give me your opinion O people." Muhammad knew that there were tribes from Medina that had not voiced their feelings, and he was trying to get their opinion. Sa'ad Ibn Muaaz the head of the tribe of Al Aws said, "Do you mean us, O Prophet of God?" to which Muhammad said, "Yes, I mean you." Sa'ad replied with the following:

“We believe in you, we have faith in the message you bring, we give you our covenant. Go do what God has ordered you to do. If you cross the sea, we will do so with you. And we hate that you will face the enemy without us accompanying you—you will see what kind of fighters we are.”

At this point Muhammad replied—“Rejoice, as if I see now the dead enemies in their places,” meaning with this kind of unity, there was no way we will be defeated.

Preparations began in earnest, and the Muslims looked to find out whatever they could about the advancing force from Mecca. The exact numbers were hard to come by, until the Muslims captured two boys from the Quraysh. They were pressed for information, interrogated and beaten, but they repeatedly said that they did not know the exact number of the advancing Quraysh force. This was unacceptable to those who held the boys, and the pressure did not stop until a random number was given to satisfy those who had captured them. The Prophet was apparently praying while this went on, and upon hearing of it, he reproached those involved, publicly wondering why these boys were beaten. Muhammad said “You beat them when they speak the truth, and you release them when they lie.” He then called the two boys to them and said, “Do not worry, how many camels do they slay a day?” They said “sometimes nine, sometimes ten.” The Prophet then looked up at his people and said “Then their numbers are about one thousand. Be ready, for we will stand up to them.”

As this was the first formal battle in Islam, there are numerous significant events that took place, even before the battle began. The most memorable of these depicts the strength and depth of the Prophet’s character and his unwavering connection to his community, as well as the growing character of the society that was evolving in Medina. A man named Al Habab Ibn Al Monthir was among the people of Medina who were preparing for battle with Muhammad. He was well versed in battle strategy, and during the preparations he went to Muhammad and said, “O Prophet of God, did God tell you to stay here, or are we at this place because of opinion and strategic purposes?” The Prophet said he chose their battle position based on his own strategy. This man then replied, “This is not the proper place to be.” Muhammad, rather than chastise someone for questioning his decision, embraced this man’s obvious knowledge of these matters, and asked him “What do you suggest?” He could have easily said, “Who do you think you are? I am the Prophet of God”—but he did not. The

battle strategy was changed, and their positions were moved to control the wells of water at Badr, preventing the Quraysh from having supply lines to their troops. In this fashion, the Muslims would have a clear advantage, and the Prophet immediately changed the entire plan according to Al Habbabil Minmurthur. It was his, and not the Prophet's plan, on that day at Badr.

Another incident occurred as the believers lined into ranks. As the Prophet set about arranging everyone, he tapped a man who was slouching forward with a stick to push him back in line. The man reportedly said to the Prophet, "You hurt me O Prophet, and you have been sent as a Mercy to mankind, not to hurt people." The Prophet immediately stopped what he was doing, gave the stick to the man, and removed his cloak, saying, "Hit me back." The man instead hugged the Prophet, kissed him and crying, said "I just wanted to touch you before going into battle."

The time for prayer came before the battle, and while praying, Muhammad was moved to tears. The enormity of the responsibility he bore was weighing on him—it was no longer just his life that was at risk, but the lives of all those around him. The future of Islam was being put at risk. He said here a famous prayer—"O God, I pray to you on behalf of those who are barefooted, barely covered, hungry and poor. If they vanish today, you will not be worshipped." This prayer describes very clearly the state of those who were fighting to preserve Islam—they were not well-equipped soldiers, but humble, impoverished people, who were fighting to preserve what they believed in. Abu Bakr came to reassure the Prophet, telling him "God will never let you down." At this time, the miracle of the Quran came to Muhammad in the form of a verse, preserved in Sura Anfal:

إِذْ تَسْتَغِيثُونَ رَبَّكُمْ فَاسْتَجَابَ لَكُمْ أَنِّي مُمِدُّكُمْ بِالْفِ مِّنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ مُرَدِّينَ (٩) وَمَا  
 جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بُشْرًا وَلِتَطْمَئِنَّ بِهِ قُلُوبُكُمْ وَمَا النَّصْرُ إِلَّا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ  
 حَكِيمٌ (١٠)

8.9 Lo! You were praying unto your Sustainer for aid, whereupon He thus responded to you: "I shall, verily, aid you with a thousand angels following one upon another!"

8.10 And God ordained this only as a glad tidings, and that your

*hearts should thereby be set at rest - since no succor can come from any save God: verily, God is almighty, wise!*

This was a true message of hope and assurance. The victory today would come not from the size and type of your army, but from the will of God. It was an affirmation of the sincerity and dedication that they possessed, with full faith in God. It is an affirmation that can be practiced even today.

The battle itself was short and decisive. For all their largesse and conceit, the armies of Quraysh were vanquished. While the numbers of the Quraysh were estimated at one thousand, various sources cite the Muslim force to number around two hundred. The Muslims fought valiantly, swelled on as they fought side-by-side with the Prophet. The Quraysh had demonstrated time and again their hatred of the Prophet, and would have spared no expense to mercilessly kill him and all his followers if given the chance. Islam could have ended at Badr if not for this convincing success, but it was a victory not without casualties, and soon after it's completion, with the Quraysh rushing back to Mecca, humbled so convincingly, Muhammad had to start to address new issues. They had never had an organized battle, and having just had one, despite being victorious, there were now Muslims who had perished in the battlefield. The Prophet started the process of burying his loved ones, his family, and his followers. They were buried as they were—without washing or wrapping—and the Prophet then returned home to his community, who were anxiously awaiting his return, to bask in their victory granted by God. All present understood the significance of what transpired at Badr.

A number of verses from the Quran were now revealed to the Prophet after the battle of Badr. Clear instructions were given regarding behavior after war, such as dealing with prisoners. However, along with this, came messages of encouragement and affirmation to Muhammad, showing him that support was with him all along in the days leading up to the battle.

Sura Anfal starts with the following:

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْأَنْفَالِ ۗ قُلِ الْأَنْفَالُ لِلَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ ۗ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَصْلِحُوا ذَاتَ بَيْنِكُمْ ۗ

وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (١)

8.1 *THEY WILL ASK thee about the spoils of war. Say: "All spoils of war belong to God and the Apostle." Remain, then, conscious of God, and keep alive the bonds of brotherhood among yourselves, and pay heed unto God and His Apostle, if you are [truly] believers!*

The spoils of war belong to God and his Messenger—meaning it belongs to the community. Victory in battle was because the people were conscious of God. The Quran is telling them to "Be God conscious, mend your relations and Obey God and his Messenger," traits that will lead to success in all aspects of life. The Quran then continues:

كَمَا أَخْرَجَكَ رَبُّكَ مِنَ بَيْتِكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لَكَارِهُونَ (٥) يُجَادِلُونَكَ فِي الْحَقِّ بَعْدَمَا تَبَيَّنَ كَأَنَّمَا يُسَاقُونَ إِلَى الْمَوْتِ وَهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ (٦) وَإِذْ يَعِدُكُمُ اللَّهُ إِحْدَى الطَّائِفَتَيْنِ أَنَّهَا لَكُمْ وَتَوَدُّونَ أَنَّ غَيْرَ ذَاتِ الشُّوْكَةِ تَكُونُ لَكُمْ وَيُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُحِقَّ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمَاتِهِ وَيَقْطَعَ دَابِرَ الْكَافِرِينَ (٧) لِيُحِقَّ الْحَقَّ وَيُبْطِلَ الْبَاطِلَ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُجْرِمُونَ (٨)

8.5 *EVEN AS thy Sustainer brought thee forth from thy home [to fight] in the cause of the truth, although some of the believers were averse to it,*

8.6 *[so, too,] they would argue with thee about the truth [itself] after it had become manifest- just as if they were being driven towards death and beheld it with their very eyes.*

8.7 *And, lo, God gave you the promise that one of the two [enemy] hosts would fall to you: and you would have liked to seize the less powerful one, whereas it was God's will to prove the truth to be true in accordance with His words, and to wipe out the last remnant of those who denied the truth*

8.8 *so that He might prove the truth to be true and the false to be false, however hateful this might be to those who were lost in sin.*

The events leading up to Badr are summarized here, including reflecting on the fact that a minority in the community were against the battle and

were in favor of just attacking the caravan as originally planned. But the Quran makes it clear in verse seven that God willed the decisive battle to take place, and on a particular day as well, in order to preserve the truth of His message and to abolish falsehood.

The Qur'an continues, citing other factors that contributed to their victory at Badr:

إِذْ يُغَشِّيكُمُ النَّعَاسَ أَمَنَةً مِّنْهُ وَيُنزِلُ عَلَيْكُم مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً لِّيُطَهِّرَكُم بِهِ وَيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُم رِجْزَ الشَّيْطَانِ وَلِيَرْبِطَ عَلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتَ بِهِ الْأَقْدَامَ (١١)

8.11 [Remember how it was] when He caused inner calm to enfold you, as an assurance from Him, and sent down upon you water from the skies, so that He might purify you thereby and free you from Satan's unclean whisperings and strengthen your hearts and thus make firm your steps.

God says that tranquility will cover you, which means a state of consciousness betwixt sleep and wakefulness. It is an expression of tranquility, where there is no anxiety. The verse continues by telling the Muslims that there was rain, that made them feel the blessing of God, to clean their hearts and remove the presence of Satan, to strengthen their hearts to become stable to fight.

The Qur'an continues in the next verse:

إِذْ يُوحِي رَبُّكَ إِلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ أَنِّي مَعَكُمْ فَثَبَّتُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا سَأَلْتَنِي فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الرُّعْبَ فَأَضْرِبُوا فَوْقَ الْأَعْنَاقِ وَأَضْرِبُوا مِنْهُمْ كُلَّ بَنَانٍ (١٢) ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ شَاقُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (١٣)

8.12 Lo! Thy Sustainer inspired the angels [to convey this His message to the believers]: "I am with you!" [And He commanded the angels:] "And, give firmness unto those who have attained to faith [with these words from Me]: 'I shall cast terror into the hearts of those who are bent on denying the truth; strike, then, their necks, [O believers,] and strike off every one of their finger-tips!"

8.13 *This, because they have cut themselves off from God and His Apostle: and as for him who cuts himself off from God and His Apostle - verily, God is severe in retribution.*

God says the angels were sent to the believers during the battle, to strengthen and empower them. And he further tells the believers that he wants them to fight firmly, to destroy those who have knowingly yearned for the destruction of the truth, and that God is harsh in his retribution against those who deny the truth.

The Qur'an then lays a permanent rule for all believers in the following verses:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا لَقِيتُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا زَحَفًا فَلَا تُولُوهُمُ الْاُدْبَارَ (١٥) وَمَنْ يُولِّهِمْ  
يَوْمَئِذٍ دُبُرَهُ إِلَّا مُتَحَرِّفًا لِقِتَالٍ أَوْ مُتَحَيِّزًا إِلَىٰ فِتْنَةٍ فَقَدْ بَاءَ بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَمَأْوَاهُ جَهَنَّمُ  
ط وَبئسَ الْمَصِيرُ (١٦)

8.15 *O YOU who have attained to faith! When you meet in battle those who are bent on denying the truth, advancing in great force, do not turn your backs on them*

8.16 *for, whoever on that day turns his back on them - unless it be in a battle maneuver or in an endeavor to join another troop [of the believers] - shall indeed have earned the burden of God's condemnation, and his goal shall be hell: and how vile a journey's end!*

This is a very important rule for all Muslims to regard—those who believe, if your enemies have mobilized against you, do not turn your back to them and flee. Whoever turns away to flee from them, except if it is to take a different position and continue to fight, or to join another group to continue a fight, will end up with the wrath of God. Instead, believe in the truth of your convictions in Islam and God will be with you. Then the Qur'an reminds the believers again in an impressive manner in the next verse:

فَلَمْ تَقْتُلُوهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ قَتَلَهُمْ وَمَا رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَىٰ وَلِيُبْلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ  
 مِنْهُ بَلَاءً حَسَنًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (١٧)

8.17 And yet, [O believers,] it was not you who slew the enemy, but it was God who slew them; and it was not thou who cast [terror into them, O Prophet], when thou didst cast it, but it was God who cast it: and [He did all this] in order that He might test the believers by a goodly test of His Own ordaining. Verily, God is all-hearing, all-knowing!

These verses remind the believers that their victory at Badr came from God. They were in essence the hand of God, administering and establishing His justice.

Later on in the same Sura, the Qur'an records certain situations and actions that took place prior to and during the battle itself, and even before the Hijra as well:

وَإِذْ يَمْكُرُ بِكَ الَّذِينَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِيُثْبِتُوكَ أَوْ يَقْتُلُوكَ أَوْ يُخْرِجُوكَ وَيَمْكُرُونَ وَيَمْكُرُ اللَّهُ  
 وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الْمَاكِرِينَ (٣٠)

8.30 AND [remember, O Prophet,] how those who were bent on denying the truth were scheming against thee, in order to restrain thee [from preaching], or to slay thee, or to drive thee away: thus have they [always] schemed: but God brought their scheming to nought- for God is above all schemers.

God is telling Muhammad and his followers that He knew this day would come, long before they did. In the days of their suffering at the hands of the Quraysh, before their small community could even dream of establishing their own society and mobilizing their ranks to fight in battle, God was planning this day. The Quraysh tried to plot and plan so much, but God reminds them all that He is the best of all planners. The Quran is connecting events that occurred long ago, years before the battle of Badr took place, even years before the Hijra, to the present tense. All the egregious acts inflicted upon the Muslims at the hands of the Quraysh led to this day, as part of God's plan.

Verses 29-42 of Sura Anfal record certain situations in the battle, among them being:

حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةً وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ كُلُّهُ لِلَّهِ فَإِنِ انْتَهَوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (٣٩)  
وَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَوْلَاكُمْ نَعِمَ الْمَوْلَىٰ وَنَعِمَ النَّصِيرُ (٤٠)

8.39 And fight against them until there is no more oppression and all worship is devoted to God alone. And if they desist-behold, God sees all that they do

8.40 and if they turn away [from righteousness],

The moment oppression ends, the fighting is meant to stop. It does not mean to stop fighting when people convert to Islam; rather, all fighting stops when oppression ends and people are free to think and worship as they want.

Next comes the rule that refers to items or gains made by the war that should go to the community. The following verses delineate how these gains should be distributed:

وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا غَنِمْتُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ لِلَّهِ خُمُسَهُ وَلِلرَّسُولِ وَلِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ  
وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَأَبْنِ السَّبِيلِ إِن كُنْتُمْ آمَنْتُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا يَوْمَ الْفُرْقَانِ يَوْمَ  
التَّقَىٰ الْجَمْعَانِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٤١)

8.41 AND KNOW that whatever booty you acquire [in war], one-fifth thereof belongs to God and the Apostle, and the near of kin, and the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer. [This you must observe] if you believe in God and in what We bestowed from on high upon Our servant on the day when the true was distinguished from the false - the day when the two hosts met in battle. And God has the power to will anything.

This was revealed after the battle. One-fifth of the spoils of war were to go to the state, using modern terminology, or the leadership. This was not to be spent for personal reasons, but for the public good and interests. The rest is distributed to the kin, the destitute and the wayfarers.

When the two groups met each other in battle, the Qur'an gives us a picture of the field:

إِذْ أَنْتُمْ بِالْعُدْوَةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ بِالْعُدْوَةِ الْقُصْوَى وَالرَّكْبُ أَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ وَلَوْ تَوَاعَدْتُمْ  
لَاخْتَلَفْتُمْ فِي الْمِيعَادِ وَلَكِن لِيَقْضِيَ اللَّهُ أَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُولًا لِيَهْلِكَ مَنْ هَلَكَ عَن بَيْنَةٍ  
وَيَحْيِيَ مَنْ حَيَّ عَن بَيْنَةٍ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَسَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٤٢)

8.42 [Remember that day] when you were at the near end of the valley [of Badr], and they were at its farthest end, while the caravan was below you.<sup>43</sup> And if you had known that a battle was to take place, you would indeed have refused to accept the challenge: but [the battle was brought about none the less,] so that God might accomplish a thing [which He willed] to be done, [and] that he who would perish might perish in clear evidence of the truth, and that he who would remain alive might live in clear evidence of the truth. And, behold, God is indeed all-hearing, all-knowing.

In this verse, the Qur'an describes the positions of the two armies. The group was below you when the battlefield was changed after the Prophet took the consultation noted prior and changed positions to gain a military advantage.

And the next verse reveals another interesting allusion to something psychological:

إِذْ يُرِيكُهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي مَنَامِكَ قَلِيلًا وَلَوْ أَرَاكَهُمْ كَثِيرًا لَّفَشِيتُمْ وَلَتَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ وَلَكِنَّ  
اللَّهَ سَلَّمَ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (٤٣) وَإِذْ يُرِيكُمُوهُمْ إِذِ التَّيَمُّنِ فِي أَعْيُنِكُمْ قَلِيلًا  
وَيُقَلِّلُكُمْ فِي أَعْيُنِهِمْ لِيَقْضِيَ اللَّهُ أَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُولًا وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ (٤٤)

8.43 Lo! God showed them to thee in a dream as few: for, had He shown them to you as many, you would surely have lost heart, and would surely have disagreed with one another about what to do. But God saved [you from this]: verily, He has full knowledge of what is the hearts [of men].

8.44 And so, when you met in battle, He made them appear as

*few in your eyes - just as He made you appear as of little account in their eyes - so that God might accomplish a thing [which He willed] to be done: for all things go back to God [as their source]*

The Qur'an is telling the Prophet that while he slept, in his dreams, God showed the enemy as very few. If He had shown them to be numerous, in their true numbers, the believers would have been demoralized. All the commentators of the Qur'an believe that this was a vision that the Prophet saw long before the battle, and he spoke about it with his companions, although a specific hadith cannot be linked to this event. It has become a general understanding, however, that it did occur, based on this verse. The Quran reveals here that there are psychological factors at work as well—if you see that your enemy has very small numbers, you will have a psychological advantage. If, however, you see that you are small in numbers instead, then you will feel weak and demoralized.

The next verse continues by saying that God showed the unbelievers that the Muslims were very weak and few in number, thus making them more arrogant and self-confident, which would contribute to their defeat.

The verses continue with more orders from the Qur'an:

يا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا لَقِيتُمْ فِئَةً فَاثْبُتُوا وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (٤٥)  
وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا فَتَفْشَلُوا وَتَذْهَبَ رِيحُكُمْ ۖ وَاصْبِرُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ  
الصَّابِرِينَ (٤٦)

8.45 [Hence,] O you who have attained to faith, when you meet a host in battle, be firm, and remember God often; so that you might attain to a happy state!

8.46 And pay heed unto God and His Apostle, and do not [allow yourselves to] be at variance with one another, lest you lose heart and your moral strength desert you. And be patient in adversity: for, verily, God is with those who are patient in adversity.

This verse is simply telling the Muslims that when you are confronted with aggressors, with an army, then you must possess courage and bravery,

and you must remember God at all times, for that will be your true source of power. Be patient and persevere, for success lies with those who do so. The lessons continue:

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بَطَرًا وَرِئَاءَ النَّاسِ وَيَصُدُّونَ عَنِ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۗ  
وَاللَّهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطٌ (٤٧)

8.47 And be not like those [unbelievers] who went forth from their homelands full of self-conceit and a desire to be seen and praised by men for they were trying to turn others away from the path of God - the while God encompassed all their doings [with His might].

Be not like your enemies—those who left their homes arrogantly and in search of glory and prestige from others. Their goal was to deter people from God’s way, not to seek His glory.

Another important directive comes from verses 60 and 61 from the same Sura:

وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهَبُونَ بِهِ عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ  
وَأَخْرَيْنَ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَهُمُ اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُهُمْ ۗ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ  
يُؤْتِ الْيُكُومَ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تظَلَمُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَإِنْ جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلْمِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى  
اللَّهِ ۗ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (٦١)

8.60 Hence, make ready against them whatever force and war mounts you are able to muster, so that you might deter thereby the enemies of God, who are your enemies as well, and others besides them of whom you may be unaware, [but] of whom God is aware; and whatever you may expend in God's cause shall be repaid to you in full, and you shall not be wronged.

8.61 But if they incline to peace, incline thou to it as well, and place thy trust in God: verily, He alone is all-hearing, all-knowing!

Be ready. Prepare everything you can in terms of power to be a deterrent.

This is the principle—to gather the means available to you to ensure victory. Do all you can to deter the enemies, to prevent them from attacking you. When you do this, you deter even those enemies you are not aware of, whose existence you are not privy to. This is what the Qur’an wants, to minimize the possibility of war and to prevent bloodshed, not to trap people into a war. Be prepared so that war will not be needed at all. This, of course, requires spending, and the Qur’an here is reading our collective minds, because it continues by saying spend for this cause, offer money. This state of readiness is expensive, whether you are in the battlefield or not. People should spend for preparedness, and the Qur’an says if you do so, you will never be wronged.

The next verse is the most important in that it provides a solution to all of this preparation, in that it says you are people of peace. Yes, we have outlined all that occurred during the Battle of Badr, and we have given you provision to defend yourself against your enemies, to stand firm and believe in your faith when faced with an untenable situation. We are at war because our enemies have rejected peace—these are explicit conditions, not broad-brush strokes. However, if they lean towards peace, if they change their directive and hold their aggression towards you, if they suspend their hostilities, then so shall you, and you shall put your trust in God. There is no room in Islam for unchecked aggression towards those who are not inclined to do so. The next verses deals with prisoners of war:

مَا كَانَ لِنَبِيِّ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ أُسْرَىٰ حَتَّىٰ يَبْغِزَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ تَرِيدُونَ عَرَضَ الدُّنْيَا وَاللَّهُ يُرِيدُ الْآخِرَةَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (٦٧) لَوْلَا كِتَابٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ سَبَقَ لَمَسَّكُمْ فِيمَا أَخَذْتُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (٦٨) فَكُلُوا مِمَّا غَنِمْتُمْ حَلَالًا طَيِّبَاتٍ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٦٩) يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِّمَن فِي أَيْدِيكُمْ مِّنَ الْأُسْرَىٰ إِنْ يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ خَيْرًا يُؤْتِكُمْ خَيْرًا مِّمَّا أُخِذَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَغْفِرَ لَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٧٠)

8.67 IT DOES NOT behoove a prophet to keep captives unless he has battled strenuously on earth. You may desire the fleeting gains of this world - but God desires [for you the good of] the life to come: and God is almighty, wise.

8.68 Had it not been for a decree from God that had already gone forth, there would indeed have befallen you a tremendous

*chastisement on account of all [the captives] that you took.*

*8.69 Enjoy, then, all that is lawful and good among the things which you have gained in war, and remain conscious of God: verily, God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.*

*8.70 [Hence,] O Prophet, say unto the captives who are in your hands: "If God finds any good in your hearts, He will give you something better than all that has been taken from you, and will forgive you your sins: for God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace."*

Muhammad had released the prisoners of war for compensation, and this should not have been done. These verses tell Muhammad that this should not be done by an Apostle of God, and it is too soon now to be lenient and exchange prisoners for money. Instead, the verses say go to those prisoners and tell them that if their hearts are good, they will be released. If God knows goodness in your heart, he will compensate you for what has been taken from you, and God is All Forgiving, the Most Merciful.

## MEDINA: YEAR 3-6

---

The Battle of Badr was a pivotal moment in Islam. The community was successful in creating and now defending their society in Medina. They were capable of ensuring their own survival, and this fact would now be tested from within Medina itself. The victory at Badr created a great deal of jealousy, particularly among the Jews in Medina. There were groups of Jews in the area, one specifically from an area called Khaynaqa. The Jews from Qaynuqa were included in the constitution of Medina, where they were bound to never take an opposing position against the Prophet or form alliances with those threatening to attack Medina. This would soon be tested in the ensuing years.

This tension first became apparent in verbal forms. It is related that the Jews in Medina started to become verbally abusive towards the Muslims, and an incident occurred where a member of Qaynuqa violated a Muslim woman in Medina. This type of behavior was specifically abolished in the constitution of Medina, and it was widely upheld, so the incident was very disturbing, and it required the Prophet's intervention. This was a violation of the constitution, and it meant that the Jews of Qaynuqa had forfeited their rights per the constitution. The Prophet knew that he could not defend this aggression without informing them of this fact—his contract with them was now over. As stated in Sura Anfal:

وَأِمَّا تَخَافَنَّ مِنْ قَوْمٍ خِيَانَةً فَانْبِذْ إِلَيْهِمْ عَلَى سَوَاءٍ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْخَائِنِينَ (٥٨)

8.58 ...or, if thou hast reason to fear treachery from people [with whom thou hast made a covenant], cast it back at them in an equitable manner: for, verily, God does not love the treacherous!

This verse clearly tells the Prophet to remind people of their covenants, especially if there is a chance of treachery. When the Prophet made this clear to the people of Khynaqa, their response to him was very negative. They told him, "Now you are so proud that you have won a battle, you will fight those who do not know how to fight. If you fight us, we will show you what fighting means." The Qur'an recorded this exchange in Sura Al Imran:

قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَعْتَابُونَ وَنَحْشُرُونَ إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ وَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ (١٢) قَدْ كَانَ  
لَكُمْ آيَةٌ فِي فِئَتَيْنِ الْتَقَتَا فِئَةٌ تُقَاتِلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَأُخْرَىٰ كَافِرَةٌ يَرَوْنَهُم مِّنْهُم  
رَأَىٰ الْعَيْنُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُؤَيِّدُ بِنَصْرِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً لِّأُولِي الْأَبْصَارِ (١٣)

3.12 Say unto those who are bent on denying the truth: "You shall be overcome and gathered unto hell - and how evil a resting-place!"

3.13 You have already had a sign in the two hosts that met in battle, one host fighting in God's cause and the other denying Him; with their own eyes [the former] saw the others as twice their own number: but God strengthens with His succor whom He wills. In this, behold, there is indeed a lesson for all who have eyes to see.

The Qur'an tells the Prophet to proclaim that if you fight us you will be defeated. You will be surrounded and your abode will be the fires of Hell. The next verse continues by saying remember what happened when two groups confronted each other—referring to the Battle of Badr. One group was fighting for the cause of God, while the other was denying the truth. This was a clear reminder from the Quran to be true to your word, and to remember the events of the past.

The Jews in Medina had formed alliances with two people among the Ansar, one being Obada Ibn Al Saamit, the leader of Al Khazaraj, and the other was Abdallah Ibn Obey Ibn Sallol. Obada Ibn Al Saamit subsequently dissolved his alliance with the Jews of Khynaqa after this incident. Abdallah Ibn Obey Ibn Salloly, however, who was the head of the hypocrites in Medina, did not break his alliance. He apparently was unsure of how things would proceed, and if the Jews were somehow

victorious, he did not want to be on the losing side. The Qur'an recorded this moment in Surah Maida:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَارَىٰ أَوْلِيَاءَ ۚ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ  
وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنَّهُ مِنْهُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٥١) فَتَرَى الَّذِينَ  
فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ يُسَارِعُونَ فِيهِمْ يَقُولُونَ نَخْشَىٰ أَنْ تُصِيبَنَا دَائِرَةٌ ۚ فَعَسَىٰ اللَّهُ أَنْ  
يَأْتِيَ بِالْفَتْحِ أَوْ أَمْرٍ مِّنْ عِنْدِهِ فَيُضْبِحُوا عَلَىٰ مَا أَسْرُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ نَادِمِينَ (٥٢)

5.51 O YOU who have attained to faith! Do not take the Jews and the Christians for your allies: they are but allies of one another—and whoever of you allies himself with them becomes, verily, one of them; behold, God does not guide such evildoers.

5.52 And yet thou canst see how those in whose hearts there is disease vie with one another for their good will, saying [to themselves], "We fear lest fortune turn against us." But God may well bring about good fortune [for the believers] or any [other] event of His own devising, whereupon those [waverers] will be smitten with remorse for the thoughts which they had secretly harbored within themselves

The Qur'an is setting a precedent here. In the battlefield, during times of war, do not ally yourselves with Jews and Christians. This was in reference to this era, this time in history. In this type of situation, when you ally with others, you belong to them and not the Believers, as what happened in Medina. This verse has been misused and misunderstood by some Muslims who feel that they should not have Jewish or Christian friends and this is not the intent behind this revelation. The verse is saying not to join hands with the enemies of the Believers—if you do, you belong to them. God will not guide those who are wrongdoers. Those who have a sickness in their hearts—the Hypocrites—will run to and fro, afraid that things will turn against them. God will grant them a victory according to His will, and then will they regret the position that they took.

The Jews of Khynaqa started preparing themselves for the expected confrontation with the Muslims as their allegiance had now been dissolved. They took positions behind their walls, posturing for war. The Prophet surrounded them in what was called the Battle of Khynaqa. When

they saw that they could not defeat the Muslims, and that Abdallah Ibn Obey Ibn Sallol himself had dropped his allegiance to them and would not come to their aid, they negotiated an agreement. They stated that they would leave Medina with their women and children, leaving their money and resources behind. The Prophet took this money afterwards and distributed it, thus ending the first major altercation between the Muslims and Jews of Medina.

Several small-scale confrontations took place at this time, which led to the next major battle in Islam, known as the Battle of Uhud. This was the revenge battle that the Quraysh had been preparing for, to advance on Medina and the Muslims, and to take care of the Prophet once and for all. The Quraysh amassed a force of three thousand well-equipped soldiers, and with their other allies in tow, their numbers were greater than twelve thousand strong. Their women, poets and singers accompanied them to sing and rally the army with passion and emotion. They brought with them warriors skilled with spears, one specifically known as Wahshi, who played an important role in this battle. He was a slave, and he was promised his freedom if he killed Hamza, who was a great hero of Islam.

Upon seeing this army mobilizing towards Medina, the Prophet felt that it would be best to stay in Medina and take a defensive stand. He felt that if the Quraysh fought the Muslims in Medina, there would be what we know as “house to house” fighting, where the people would fight fiercely to protect their families. By doing this, he would also remain in complete accordance with his agreement with the people of Medina, that if the Prophet is attacked within the walls of Medina, they would have to come to his aid. As their leader, he felt that this was the best decision. As the Prophet always did though, he gathered the people and said, “O People, tell me your opinion.” There were discussions and debates, and the majority voice, mainly from the young people, said, “It is so shameful and humiliating for us to stay in our homes. We must go out and confront the enemy.” This was not the opinion of the Prophet, nor was it the opinion of the older, more seasoned people in Medina. This is an illustrative lesson in democratic methodology—when the majority spoke their opinion, the Prophet abided by it, and based on this, he went to prepare himself for war.

While the Prophet was doing this, some of the older people in Mecca apparently spoke to the younger followers, telling them that they were

forcing the Prophet into a decision that he did not like. This was news to them. The Prophet meant a great deal to them, not only as a man of God, but as a leader and a man of great wisdom. This caused them to start questioning their judgment and opinion, and when the Prophet returned ready for battle, they recanted and said "Do what you feel is right, and we will follow." The Prophet did not accept this. He said, "After a decision is made and the Prophet of God dresses for war, he does not take it off until God brings the conflict to an end."

Thus, the Prophet went out to engage in battle, and he left Medina accompanied by approximately one thousand people. When they reached the battleground, he learned that Abdallah Ibn Obey Ibn Salloly and his Jewish alliance decided to leave the field, depleting their numbers. This was another major setback, and people wanted to go back to Medina, to force them to fight, but the Prophet refused. He decided to press on with those at hand. He started inspecting the force in front of him, and he turned away those too young to fight. It is reported that some of these boys cried and even tried to prove their strength to the Prophet, but he still refused to let them fight. Abdallah Ibn Obey Ibn Sallol took three hundred people with him and left, stating that they wanted to return and protect their families. The Qur'an revealed in response to this:

﴿ فَمَا لَكُمْ فِي الْمُنَافِقِينَ فُتْنَيْنِ وَاللَّهُ أَرْكَسَهُمْ بِمَا كَسَبُوا أَتُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَهْدُوا مَنْ أَضَلَّ اللَّهُ وَمَنْ يُضِلِلِ اللَّهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُ سَبِيلًا ﴾ (٨٨)

*4.88 How, then, could you be of two minds about the hypocrites, seeing that God [Himself] has disowned them because of their guilt? Do you, perchance, seek to guide those whom God has let go astray - when for him whom God lets go astray thou canst never find any way?*

As part of his strategy, the Prophet placed archers on the hills of the battlefield, instructing them to attack the enemy from this position and not to leave their positions no matter what the circumstances. Whether the Muslims were victorious or defeated, they were not to leave this post. When the battle started, the Muslims fought very well, with the Prophet himself fighting, along with some women from Medina. The Muslims pushed forth with a great counter-offensive, and the Quraysh started to

scatter and turn in defeat. The Muslims slowly started to sense victory, and when the archers saw this happening, they ignored the Prophet's order and left their positions, some to get the spoils of war, others to participate in the victory. This proved costly, as the genius of Khalid Ibn Al Wald<sup>5</sup>, Quraysh's battlefield leader at the time, became apparent. He maneuvered from behind the mountain, moving past the discarded position of the archers and attacked the Muslims from the rear, turning the fortunes of the war against the Muslims.

A man amongst this group of attackers apparently proclaimed, "I want Muhammad. I am here to kill Muhammad." He rushed towards Muhammad just as someone stepped in front of the Prophet to protect him. The Prophet said "Leave him to me" and he picked up a spear and threw it at his attacker, killing him. This is the only person the Prophet killed in his entire life. This was the only occasion, in clear self-defense, that Muhammad ever hurt someone.

During this battle, the Prophet fell and bled from both of his knees. He could not get up and was then struck in his cheek by an arrow. He was bleeding profusely, almost to the point of fainting. The Muslims came and helped him up, and in order to remove the arrow from his face they had to remove some of his teeth. The Prophet was extremely bloody, covered in dirt and mud, and was very upset, wondering how people would succeed if his face, the face of God's Messenger, was covered with blood at the hands of the Unbelievers. Immediately a revelation from God came to him, from Sura Al Imran:

لَيْسَ لَكَ مِنَ الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ أَوْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ أَوْ يُعَذِّبُهُمْ فَأِنَّهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ (١٢٨)

3.128 [And] it is in not wise for thee [O Prophet] to decide whether He shall accept their repentance or chastise them - for, behold, they are but wrongdoers

This verse tells Muhammad that he has no say in the outcome of this

<sup>5</sup> Khalid Ibn Al Wald, one of the future heroes of Islam, was at this point in time leading the Quraysh—he was not yet a Muslim. He apparently always said that he was never defeated in battle—neither as an unbeliever nor as a Muslim.

battle. If God wants to forgive them, He will, and if He wants to punish them, He will do so, for they are tyrants. It is not because your face is covered in blood. This is a very great lesson in humbleness, and it shows how the Qur'an was always very swift in applying its rules, even to the Prophet.

As the battle ensued, word spread that Muhammad was killed, when in actuality he was being treated by his daughter Fatima to control the bleeding from his wound. After it stopped, he resumed fighting. He apparently said, "Let us take the mountain, they should not be higher than us," strategically improving their position in battle. The Muslims followed the Prophet up the hill and they defended him heroically. One man, known as Ka'ab Ibn Malik, sustained seventeen wounds defending the Prophet. Many people were martyred on this day<sup>6</sup>—about 70 in all—and the Quraysh subsequently mutilated their bodies. Hamza in particular, who died in this battle, was badly mutilated by Hind, the wife of Abu Sufyan, one of the leaders of Quraysh. She went to him after the battle, cut open his body, and ate his liver. After this incident, she was known as *Aqilatu Al Akbad*, The Liver Eater.

The battle ended on the mountain. Abu Sufyan took to the mountain and said, "O Muhammad, a day for the day of Badr. We will meet again in Badr. You will find some of the bodies of your people mutilated—I did not order this, but it does not hurt me to see it." To this came Omar's great response—"No, we are not equal (referring to a day for a day). Our people who were killed are in Paradise, while your dead are in Hell fire." The Prophet himself attended to burying his people in the battleground itself, without washing or wrapping, and in particular, to his Uncle, Hamza.

At this time, the Hypocrites apparently were saying that if the Muslims had stayed in Medina with them, they would not have been killed. This event and the events of this battle are recorded in the Qur'an in Sura Al Imran, and the following verse is very pertinent as we examine the defeat here at Uhud:

<sup>6</sup> Mu'sab Ibn Umair, who was a very special person and who helped spread Islam in Medina before the Prophet's arrival, was unfortunately martyred in this battle.

وَلَقَدْ صَدَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ وَعْدَهُ إِذْ تَحُسُّونَهُمْ بِإِذْنِهِ ۗ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فَشِلْتُمْ وَتَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ  
 وَعَصَيْتُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَرَاكُمْ مَّا تُحِبُّونَ ۚ مِنكُمْ مَّن يُرِيدُ الدُّنْيَا وَمِنكُمْ مَّن يُرِيدُ الْآخِرَةَ  
 ۗ ثُمَّ صَرَفَكُمْ عَنْهُمْ لِيَبْتَلِيَكُمْ ۗ وَلَقَدْ عَفَا عَنْكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَىٰ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٥٢)

3:152 AND, INDEED, God made good His promise unto you when, by His leave, you were about to destroy your foes - until the moment when you lost heart and acted contrary to the [Prophet's] command, and disobeyed after He had brought you within view of that [victory] for which you were longing. There were among you such as cared for this world [alone], just as there were among you such as cared for the life to come: whereupon, in order that He might put you to a test, He prevented you from defeating your foes. But now He has effaced your sin: for God is limitless in His bounty unto the believers.

This is a great verse, for it analyzes the Muslims' defeat. Here the Qur'an is saying God is fulfilling His promise to you—you were already defeating the Unbelievers with the leave of God, until you rendered yourself unworthy of victory when you started disputing amongst yourselves and went in search of worldly gains. Some of you want this world, while others want the next. God tested you, but He also forgave you, and God has great bounties for those who attain to faith. No blame is placed here in the verse.

The Prophet insisted on preparing for a possible subsequent interaction with the disbelievers, even though the Muslims were now recuperating from the battle. This defeat did not slow down his motivation. The Prophet was troubled by the fact that the Quraysh did not proceed fully with their intentions and attack Medina, and he feared they might gather again and return while the Muslims were recovering, which is why he was quick to remobilize. He said, "Let us mobilize immediately and chase the Unbelievers and reach them wherever they are and ensure that they are actually departing from here." Lo and behold, the Muslims discovered that the Unbelievers had gathered themselves in a place called Hamraa Al Aseedd, and they had combined forces with other tribes in the area, for they knew that the Prophet would follow them.

When the Prophet mustered up his remaining forces, people were still wounded, and this was recorded in the Qur'an, praising those who came

to help the Prophet, again in Sura Al Imran:

الَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِلَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَصَابَهُمُ الْقَرْحُ لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا مِنْهُمْ وَاتَّقُوا  
أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ (١٧٢)

*3.172 who responded to the call of God and the Apostle after misfortune had befallen them. A magnificent requital awaits those of them who have persevered in doing good and remained conscious of God.*

The Prophet reportedly said, "I do not want anyone that did not attend the battle to accompany me." In other words, he wanted those people who suffered through that difficult lesson to follow him to this task.

When he reached Hamraa Al Aseed, the Unbelievers assumed that the Prophet had brought new supplies and fresh troops with him from Medina. This thought was enough to scare them away from reengaging the Muslims and they retreated. The Prophet returned from this small encounter unscathed, even though there was no fighting involved. This event is significant, however, as it served to protect Medina from a planned attack, and with it, the saga of Uhud came to a close. The Battle of Uhud is probably the most important event that took place during this third year of Hijra.

Another significant event that occurred during this time frame was the prohibition of alcohol. Alcohol, among other vices, is mentioned in the following three verses from the Qur'an—Surah Baqara and two from Sura Maida<sup>7</sup>:

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِثْمُهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْ  
نَفْعِهِمَا وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلِ الْعَفْوَ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ  
تَتَفَكَّرُونَ (٢١٩)

<sup>7</sup> Mention is also made in Sura Nisa (4), verse 43, in reference to an instance when Muslims were praying and got confused because they were intoxicated—4.43 O ye who believe! Approach not prayers with a mind befogged, until ye can understand all that ye say..."

2.219 *THEY WILL ASK thee about intoxicants and games of chance. Say: "In both there is great evil as well as some benefit for man; but the evil which they cause is greater than the benefit which they bring." And they will ask thee as to what they should spend [in God's cause]. Say: "Whatever you can spare." In this way God makes clear unto you His messages, so that you might reflect*

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَامُ رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ  
فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (٩٠) إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ يُوقَعَ بَيْنَكُمْ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ  
فِي الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ وَيَصُدَّكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلَاةِ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُنْتَهُونَ (٩١)

5.90 *O YOU who have attained to faith! Intoxicants, and games of chance, and idolatrous practices, and the divining of the future are but a loathsome evil of Satan's doing: shun it, then, so that you might attain to a happy state!*

5.91 *By means of intoxicants and games of chance Satan seeks only to sow enmity and hatred among you, and to turn you away from the remembrance of God and from prayer. Will you not, then, desist?*

We have to remember that in the Qur'an, "*khamre*" literally means "cover" or "things that cover the brain." It applies to alcohol, drugs—anything that tampers with God's greatest gift to mankind—the ability to think clearly and to maintain control of one's behavior. The loss of this faculty can only lead to tragedy, on both personal and societal levels. Suffice to say that this teaching is more relevant in today's society than it ever was in the past as alcohol and other intoxicants contribute to most if not all of the major ills in society, which deprive humanity of clear thinking and self-control.

The fourth year of Hijra continued to be a busy year. In the beginning of this year, a man called Tulayha amassed a group to attack the Prophet. One of the Muslims reached him first, however, and assassinated him, preventing the battle from taking place. Later on in the year, the Prophet sent ten Muslims on an exploratory mission to the unbelievers. Upon reaching their destination, amnesty was supposed to be granted to them as the unbelievers had said they wanted to learn the Qur'an. However,

two hundred men attacked the Muslims, and all of them were killed save two, who were taken as prisoners. They were sent to Mecca, sold as slaves, and eventually killed. One was Habib Ibn Oday, and he is an important poet in the history of Islam, who stated, "If I am killed as a Muslim, I do not care which way my death will come." This became one of the important quotations in the history of Islamic civilizations.

In this same month, the Prophet sent a group of people to meet with Abu Amre Ibn Malik. He was one of the leaders of the tribe Bani Amir. The Prophet had initially invited him to Islam and he refused, but he requested from the Prophet to send people so that he could debate and discuss this new religion with them. The Prophet told him that he was concerned about the dangers of the area of Najb, where Abu Amir's tribe was located. However, Abu Amir said he would protect them. The Prophet then sent seventy people, those who had memorized the Qur'an, to teach and discuss and explain the Qur'an to them. These people were truly precious to Islam, and the Prophet sent the best teachers possible, the greatest resource of Islam at that time. Upon reaching Abu Amir's tribe, these seventy people were surrounded and again, all but two were killed, one called Amir Ibn Umaya, and another called Ka'ab Ibn Zayd. Ka'ab was left for dead, and he crawled back to Medina, giving the Prophet the news of what happened. It is known that the Prophet was very saddened by this news.

At this time, the next confrontation with the Jews of Medina transpired, specifically dealing with the Jews from Bani Nu'thir. They were the allies of the Khazraj, and they had a treaty with the Muslims stating that they would protect each other and would never ally against each other. However, when the Prophet and some of his companions were in their company, amongst their homes, he realized that there was a conspiracy among them to assassinate him. He was sure of this, and while this may be pure speculation, it is thought that God probably inspired him, for afterwards they did not deny the conspiracy. The Prophet thus took his people and left and ordered the Jews of Bani Nu'thir to leave. They were contacted by Abdallah Ibn Obey Ibn Sallol, the head of the Hypocrites, who once again pledged his support to them, as recorded in the Qur'an, Sura Al Hashr:

﴿أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ نَافَقُوا يَقُولُونَ لِإِخْوَانِهِمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَئِن  
 أُخْرِجْتُمْ لَنَخْرُجَنَّ مَعَكُمْ وَلَا نُطِيعُ فِيكُمْ أَحَدًا أَبَدًا وَإِن قُوتِلْتُمْ لَنَنصُرَنَّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ  
 إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ (١١) لَئِن أُخْرِجُوا لَا يَخْرُجُونَ مَعَهُمْ وَلَئِن قُوتِلُوا لَا يَنْصُرُونَهُمْ وَلَئِن  
 نَّصَرُوهُمْ لَيُوَلُّنَّ الْأَدْبَارَ ثُمَّ لَا يُنصَرُونَ (١٢)

59.11 ART THOU NOT aware of how those who would always  
 dissemble [their real feelings] speak to their truth-denying brethren  
 from among the followers of earlier revelation: "If you are driven  
 away, we shall most certainly go forth with you, and shall never pay  
 heed to anyone against you; and if war is waged against you, we  
 shall most certainly come to your succor." But God bears witness  
 that they are most flagrantly lying:

59.12 [for] if those [to whom they have pledged themselves] are  
 indeed driven away, they will not go forth with them; and if war is  
 waged against them, they will not come to their succor; and even  
 if they [try to] succor them, they will most certainly turn their backs  
 [in flight], and in the end will [themselves] find no succor.

This verse not only exposed the Jews of Bani Nu'thir at that time, but it  
 also exposed the Hypocrites. Their betrayal and conspiracy was so well  
 known after this revelation that many among them went to Abdallah Ibn  
 Obey Ibn Sallol and told him to go to the Messenger of God, to ask  
 him to pray to God to forgive them, so they could start cleanly with the  
 Muslims and the Prophet. Abdallah Ibn Obey Ibn Sallol turned his head  
 and refused.

Based on this promise of aid from Abdallah Ibn Obey Ibn Sallol, the Jews  
 of Bani Nu'thir did not leave. They took postures behind their walls and  
 fortifications as the Prophet surrounded them and besieged them for six  
 nights. He then ordered that their date palms be cut, launching a form of  
 economic war against them as well. Through all six days, the Jews of Bani  
 Nu'thir did not receive any help from Abdallah Ibn Obey Ibn Sallol. He did  
 not support them or help them, and they eventually started negotiating  
 with the Prophet. They offered to leave with everything they could carry  
 on their camels, leaving behind their weapons, and the Prophet agreed to  
 these terms. The Jews of Bani Nu'thir were so hateful, that while leaving,  
 they destroyed their own homes so that the Muslims could not take any

benefit from them. Two of them actually became Muslims, one named Yamin Ibn Omayer, and the other named Abu Sa'ad Ibn Wahb. The rest left Medina, many joining the previous group of Jews who left in what is now present day Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine.

Abu Sufyan, one of the leaders of Quraysh in Mecca, wanted to engage Muhammad in battle again, to take revenge for Badr years before. (Recall that after Uhud, Abu Sufyan told the Prophet that they would meet again the following year in Badr.) However, the economic situation in Mecca was poor at that time, and mustering an army proved difficult. Abu Sufyan, therefore, decided to trick the Prophet, and had news "leaked" that a huge army was en route to attack Medina. The assumption was that upon hearing this, the Prophet would stay in Medina, protecting himself, thus allowing Abu Sufyan unimpeded access to Badr to celebrate a victory without having a war. When the Prophet heard the news about this so-called army, however, he decided to mobilize and he went to Badr, effectively calling Abu Sufyan's bluff. Upon his arrival at Badr, there was no one to fight. Abu Sufyan and the Quraysh never left Mecca when they realized that the Prophet was coming to fight because they did not have sufficient troops to support them at the time. This was a major setback for the Quraysh, because the news spread throughout Arabia that their attempt to intimidate Muhammad had failed, and in reality, it was Muhammad who intimidated them, scaring them away from a confrontation.

In the beginning of this fifth year, the Prophet learned that a group of bedouins had gathered in a place called Dawmatu Al Jandal, and were violating the accepted rules of Arabia. They were attacking passing tribes wantonly, and were apparently planning an attack on the Prophet. The Prophet again mobilized his forces and upon realizing that the Prophet was coming to them, these bedouins dispersed and retreated.

This event was then followed immediately by another major occurrence, called Ghazwat Bani Al Mustalak. At Bani Al Mustalak resided a tribe that had always allied themselves with the Quraysh, in any battle. They were now gathering people to attack Medina. The Prophet knew about this and decided to preempt their plans by engaging them first. This time, however, the Prophet was joined by people who, up until this time, had never fought with him before. Some of them were from among the Hypocrites—they saw that the Prophet was continually triumphant, albeit in only small battles, but with spoils of war. This prompted many among

them to join the Prophet's forces. As has been seen in prior instances, once the people at Bani Al Mustalak realized that the Prophet was coming to meet them in battle, they retreated, but only briefly. They regrouped later on and attempted to strategically use their archers against the Muslims. The Prophet ordered a counteroffensive, and their enemies at Bani Al Mustalak were defeated.

As was the habit of the time, the Muslims took the women and children as prisoners of war, but something different happened during this circumstance. One of the women captured was called Gowayra, and she was the chief's daughter. She was very wealthy and carried a large amount of prestige, as did her father. The Prophet decided to release her, granting her freedom, and then he married her. When the Muslims saw this, many did the same, releasing their captured women to grant them freedom. This impressed the people of Bani Al Mustalak and the surrounding tribes so much that they converted to Islam. This is why Gowayra is described as the most blessed woman as far as her people are concerned. Because of her, her people were recompensed, given their freedom, and became Muslims. This shows that the different marriages of the Prophet were nearly all for political alliances and goals, which was a very common practice in Arabia at the time. They were not, as the Orientalists like to contend, marriages out of lust in order to herd women.

Two important events happened during and after Bani Al Mustalak. The first started when a man working with Omar Ibn Khatab had a problem with a man from Al Khazaraj. These two people had struck each other, and the man from Al Khazaraj had called his own people to support him, appealing to their tribal sentiments. Omar's friend called on the *muhajireen* to support him. The two groups disputed amongst each other and were prepared to fight. The Prophet heard about this and he immediately came out and said, "What's happening, I hear the language of Pre-Islam, of ignorance. Never use this kind of language, it is rotten." This is very profound, and he took the man who was beaten and pacified him, calming him down, and he made amends with his enemy, both reconciling with each other.

The ranks dissolved, but with the Hypocrites at that time, nothing came easy for the Prophet. Abdallah Ibn Obey Ibn Sallol picked out this event and said,

"I have never seen such humiliation in my life like today. They come to overcrowd us in our homes. I swear by God that they are the Ansar and we are the muhajireen. They are behaving like they own everything. I swear that when we return to Medina, the strongest will oust the weakest."

With these statements, Abdallah Ibn Obey Ibn Sallol was making his intentions very clear—he wanted to have a coup. His remarks were threatening to the state, and he continued to rile the people of Medina, by telling them,

"You brought this amongst yourselves, you gave them your land and money. If you had just kept to yourselves, you'd be in peace. You have even fought and died for them, and now your numbers are small while theirs (the Muslims) are big."

A young boy, Zayd Ibn Arqam, reported these remarks to the Prophet while he was still en route to Medina from Bani Al Mustalak. Initially Muhammad said, "You probably did not hear correctly." The boy responded, "O Messenger of God, I did hear correctly." The Prophet then said, "You probably did not understand what was said," to which Zayd replied, "I repeated exactly what I heard."<sup>8</sup> Omar Ibn Khatab said, "It is clear now. It is a plot for a coup. The man is a hypocrite. Give me permission, O Prophet of God, and I shall kill him." Here the Prophet said something that we should never forget. He said, "What will happen when the word goes around that Muhammad kills his followers, his people?" The Prophet was concerned about the image of the state and the reputation of the Muslims, not only in their time, but historically as well. He did not want to preside over a police state, where people were killed based on information. Instead, in the middle of the day, in the heat of Arabia, he said, "No, tell people we will mobilize right now and go to them." This was not done in Arabia at that time, for people to rally in the middle of the day, let alone en route from a victorious battle. The Prophet, however, wanted to prevent rumors from spreading, with whispers of a plot against them from within demoralizing and polarizing his followers. Therefore, in order to stave off such incidents, the Prophet started assembling his forces to deal with this matter directly.

<sup>8</sup> As cited in Martin Ling's treatise on Muhammad [PBUH], when it was confirmed that Zayd had indeed been telling the truth about what was said, the Prophet approached him while all were walking back to Mecca and said, "thine ear heard truly, and God hath confirmed thy speech."

While doing this, a man known as Usayb Ibn Mu'thir asked the Prophet, "Why are we doing this O Messenger of God?" The Prophet replied with "Did you not hear what your man is saying?" referring to Abdallah Ibn Obey Ibn Sallol. Usayb replied, "Yes, what he said is correct, but you, O Messenger of God, are the highest, and he is the lowest. When we return to Medina, we shall kick him out." As has been seen before this incident, the Prophet always considered the advice proffered by his followers. He strove to make sure their voices mattered in all things. Islam cut through all the ethnic, tribal bonds of the time—it was a new order for all people. For the Prophet, this exchange proved sufficient to allow this situation to wait, despite the rumors that would be borne from it. Abdallah Ibn Obey Ibn Sallol and his band of Hypocrites returned to Medina in tow with the Believers.

The second event that transpired at Bani Al Mustalak is what is now known as *Hadith il 'Ith*, which simply means "the lies spoken." The story goes that as the Muslims started their mid-day assembling, Aisha, the Prophet's wife, was being carried on a camel on a carriage of sorts, as was the practice of the time. She discovered that she had forgotten her necklace, and went back to find it. In the ensuing chaos, upon her return, she discovered that her carriage had left without her, stranding her in the desert. Aisha was a very thin, small woman, so it is easy to see how she could get lost, and, of course, she was scared. A man saw her and asked what happened, and after she told him her circumstances, he escorted her back. As per the custom of the time, he walked ahead of Aisha and she walked behind him until they reached Bani Kurayza. This event would seem insignificant under normal circumstances. However, the circumstances of the time amongst the Muslims were not normal, as emotions were heated and the talk of war against the Hypocrites was still fresh in the air. Despite their reprieve, the Hypocrites jumped on this event regarding Aisha. At Bani Kurayza, they publicly accused her of having an affair with this man. This new attack on Islam came not through poetry or war, but through insinuations against the Prophet's household, an attack via defamation. Obviously the accusation spread quickly, and the news reached the Prophet in Medina. Upon reaching home, Aisha noted that the Prophet was not himself when she greeted him, although he did not accuse her in any way. She soon discovered what was being said about her, and she apparently became very upset. She, or the Prophet, it's not exactly clear who, decided that she would live with her parents until this matter was cleared up. Even after her departure, the community was abuzz with this rumor, and the Prophet was in a very difficult position.

This was Aisha, after all, the woman he loved, and the daughter of Abu Bakr, the second man in Islam.

As the Prophet was always under fire, and the news was known already, he decided to hold counsel with the people. Some told him they had never known anything bad to surround the Prophet or his family, and encouraged Muhammad to dismiss the news. Ali Ibn Abu Talib had a pragmatic approach, saying why risk your reputation for one woman—just leave her. The Prophet finally received good counsel when someone said, “She is your wife, just ask her, talk to her.” This is what the Prophet did, and he asked Aisha’s servant, “Did you notice anything unusual.” The servant replied, “No, she is a wonderful lady, but she is a little young.” The Prophet, Abu Bakr and Aisha’s mother then went to her. At that time she was very upset, as her dignity as a Muslim was in question. Abu Bakr said, “O daughter, all we want is you to tell us the truth. If you did something wrong, say so and ask for forgiveness, for God is forgiving.” She got very upset, and she told him, “What you want from me is to either deny what is being said, even though you won’t believe me, or to confess to something I didn’t do. You want me to ask for forgiveness for something I did not do. I am leaving the whole matter in the hands of God.”

The Qur’an then revealed verses, clearing the name of Aisha, and giving conditions with regard to this matter, in Sura Noor:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ جَاءُوا بِالْإِفْكِ عُصْبَةٌ مِّنْكُمْ لَا تَحْسَبُوهُ شَرًّا لَّكُمْ بَلْ هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ لِكُلِّ  
أَمْرٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَا اكْتَسَبَ مِنَ الْإِثْمِ ۗ وَالَّذِي تَوَلَّى كِبْرَهُ مِنْهُمْ لَهُ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (١١)  
لَوْلَا إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ ظَنَّ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَأَنْفُسِهِمْ خَيْرًا وَقَالُوا هَذَا إِفْكٌ مُّبِينٌ (١٢)

24.11 Verily, numerous among you are those who would falsely accuse others of unchastity: [but, O you who are thus wronged,] deem it not a bad thing for you: nay, it is good for you! [As for the slanderers,] unto every one of them [will be accounted] all that he has earned by [thus] sinning; and awesome suffering awaits any of them who takes it upon himself to enhance this [sin]!

24.12 Why do not the believing men and women, whenever such [a rumor] is heard, think the best of one another and say, "This is an obvious falsehood"?

In other words, these verses are saying that when something bad is said about the reputation of someone, the first thing that should be said is "It must be a lie." A person is innocent until proven guilty and Muslims should hold themselves with high regard.

The Qur'an continues with the next verse, setting the rule that witnesses must be brought forth, and that those who accuse someone without said witnesses are truly held in poor esteem with God, and are liars in His sight:

لَوْلَا جَاءُوا عَلَيْهِ بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ ۚ فَإِذْ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِالشُّهَدَاءِ فَأُولَئِكَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ هُمُ  
الْكَاذِبُونَ (١٣)

*24.13 Why do they not [demand of the accusers that they] produce four witnesses to prove their allegation?- for, if they do not produce such witnesses, it is those [accusers] who, in the sight of God, are liars indeed!*

There is an expression in the Qur'an that deserves mention, and it follows in the next verse:

إِذْ تَلَقَّوْنَهُ بِالسَّتِيكُكُمْ وَتَقُولُونَ بِأَفْوَاهِكُمْ مَّا لَيْسَ لَكُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَتَحْسَبُونَهُ هَيِّنًا وَهُوَ عِنْدَ  
اللَّهِ عَظِيمٌ (١٥)

*24.15 when you take it up with your tongues, uttering with your mouths something of which you have no knowledge, and deeming it a light matter whereas in the sight of God it is an awful thing!*

When the Qur'an came and cleared Aisha, everyone in the community was jubilant, and Aisha's mother told her to "Go and thank your husband, thank the Prophet." In the dignity of an injured, innocent woman, she said "I thank him for what? I thank God who cleared my name."

Another important aspect of this scenario is that, at the time, Abu Bakr was supporting the man who was spreading this lie, unbeknownst to him.

Musatahe Ibn Athatha was a distant relative of his, and when Abu Bakr heard that this was the man spreading the false accusations, he said “I will not give him money any longer, he does not deserve it.” However, God revealed in relation to this in Sura Noor:

وَلَا يَأْتَلِ أُولُو الْفَضْلِ مِنْكُمْ وَالسَّعَةِ أَنْ يُؤْتُوا أُولِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا ۗ أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (٢٢)

24.22 Hence, [even if they have been wronged by slander,] let not those of you who have been graced with [God's] favor and ease of life ever become remiss in helping [the erring ones among] their near of kin, and the needy, and those who have forsaken the domain of evil for the sake of God, but let them pardon and forbear. [For,] do you not desire that God should forgive you your sins, seeing that God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace?

When Abu Bakr heard this, he broke into tears and said, “We love to be forgiven” and he forgave his kinsman Musatahe and continued to support him.

After the Bani Al Mustalak event, it became known that the unbelievers had started to gather again, this time under the coordination of the Jews of Bani Nu'thir. Groups from all around were coming to join a huge army, the likes of which Arabia had never seen before. This army started towards Medina. This situation was very critical—there would be no way Medina could withstand such a force, for this army was not comprised of just Quraysh of Mecca this time—it was a coalition of forces with many resources at their disposal. As was his preference, the Prophet counseled with his people, gathering opinions as to what should be done. A man known as Salman Al Farisi, a man from Persia who was one of the early Muslims, suggested digging a trench around Medina. This was unheard of, but while the Arabs had never done anything like this, it was done in Persia. Persia was a sophisticated society at the time, with ornate, resplendent cities, and trenches were used for protection. Salman reasoned that if they built the trench, it would minimize the total number of the enemy, allowing only a few to cross, thereby making their force more manageable. The Prophet thought this was a good idea, even though the idea of a trench was new to him. The trench was dug, and the Prophet himself participated in the digging, singing and chanting with everyone

else during the strenuous work. In fact, the Prophet took responsibility for a certain section of the ditch, not only to dig it but also to protect it. This had a great impact on the morale of people, the Prophet's sense of personal responsibility for a portion of the trench. He was truly a different kind of leader than what they were used to.

The unbelievers approached Medina and saw the trench, and initially did not know what to do. After some thought, they decided to storm through the trench. A man amongst them, known as Aqrama, who later on became a very devout Muslim, led the first force. Ali Ibn Abu Talib met them and killed many in Aqrama's company. It became clear that they would not be able to cross the ditch. As night fell, even though the weather became very cold, people stayed out guarding the ditch, including the Prophet, who protected his area of the ditch throughout the night. The Hypocrites then said, "God and his Messenger lured us with false promises" and they decided at this very critical time to withdraw from the battle. They made the excuse that they had to protect their homes and left.

The Believers were now very shaken. Even though they had dug the ditch, they were not sure what the next step should be. The Jews of Bani Khurayza were the last official Jewish tribe living in Medina with the Muslims at the time. They were crucial in maintaining the balance of numbers between those in Medina and the unbelievers. The head of the Jews from Bani Nu'thir went to the head of Bani Qurayzah and after conferencing amongst themselves, the Jews of Bani Qurayzah rescinded their treaty with the Prophet and the Muslims and joined the unbelievers in battle. This was now the Prophet's predicament—the Hypocrites have left the battlefield, and the Jews of Bani Khurayza in Medina joined the ranks of the enemy, which was a direct violation of the Medina Constitution that they signed. The Prophet had to subtract three hundred men from the battlefield and send them back to Medina, to protect the women and children, as he was concerned about the numbers there. It was a very dire situation.

Despite all this, the Muslims stood their ground and did not withdraw. They were ready to defend Medina. As mentioned in the Qur'an in earlier verses, God had His own plans, and that night, after all the tumult surrounding the Prophet's army, was very cold and stormy. The winds picked up, creating near tornado-like conditions with sand storms, which affected the sieging force of unbelievers. Even though they were a big

group, they were not cohesive, and they argued and disagreed amongst each other. Abu Sufyan wanted to take his people and go back to Mecca, which angered those who wanted them to stay. A great dispute came to pass, leading to their eventual disbandment. The Prophet prevailed in this battle without needing any major fighting other than Ali's engagement very early on. It proved that the technology of the ditch was a great innovation to follow. (The *sunna*, or example of the Prophet, that can be taken from this is to use the best, most advanced method at hand to protect yourself, instead of holding onto archaic traditions that may prove unsuccessful.)

While the unbelievers withdrew, the other problem at hand was to deal with those Jews who betrayed the treaty of the Prophet and joined the enemy forces. They were no longer trusted, and if not for the sandstorm, they would have greatly contributed to the extinguishing of Islam. The Prophet immediately decided that a solution needed to be reached with regards to them, as this could not remain unresolved. The Prophet showed a very smart side of his personality here, as he decided to work the two Jewish groups, Khurayza in Medina and Nu'thir amongst the Quraysh, against each other. He sent a man to set discord amongst the two, a man known to both tribes. However, he was a recent new Muslim, and the Jewish tribes did not know this, so the Prophet used this to his advantage.<sup>9</sup> He first told the Qurayzah in Medina, "You know how important you are to me. We have dealt with each other for a long time. But you are facing Muhammad, who is very strong now, and you cannot face him alone, and you have to make sure the Quraysh and Bani Nu'thir are with you and won't abandon you if the battle turns." They replied yes they are with us, but he responded with, "No, they cannot be with you unless you bring some of them here and discuss this with them." He then went to the Quraysh and told them something similar, saying, "You know my relationship with you, Muhammad may attack you, you have to be sure the Jews of Bani Khurayza are with you and will help. I am afraid they are rejoining Muhammad in secret [as they regret their treatment of him] and they will try to bring some of you to Medina to be killed." Both of them took his advice on the condition of his own anonymity. The Jews of Khurayza eventually sent to the Quraysh a request for some of their leaders to come to Medina to discuss their plans. Those in the Quraysh

<sup>9</sup> His name was Nu'aym, and he went to the Prophet specifically and offered himself to be used in any way to help the Muslims during this siege. According to Martin Lings' book on Muhammad, when Nu'aym asked the Prophet for permission to lie, the response was, "Say what thou wilt to draw them off from us, for war is deception."

recognized this as a trick, as planted by Nu'aym, and they refused. This refusal made the Qurayzah in Medina think that the Quraysh and Bani Nu'thir were going to desert them, and was not serious about fighting with them, and the discord was set.

Eventually, the Prophet went to Medina from the trench and said, "I will not settle, I will attack Bani Khurayza." He did not even take off his war attire from the trench. He surrounded their area and he said that because they broke their treaty with the Muslims, they would engage in battle, as they could no longer be trusted. Bani Khurayza felt that they were stuck, and they wanted to negotiate and strike a deal like that of Bani Nu'thir. Otherwise, they would be left to die of hunger and thirst due to the siege around them. They knew that this would be a losing battle for them so they said they would leave Medina, leaving their weapons behind, but the Prophet refused. They then said they would leave behind their weapons and their money and the Prophet again refused. The Prophet wanted them to surrender, to leave their fortifications, and only then would he decide upon their terms. Someone was sent to deliver this message, and when those of Bani Khurayza asked him what they should do, he not only recommended that they follow this request, but he apparently made a slashing gesture across his throat, indicating that they would be killed. This man gave them a mixed sign—the message was not meant to be delivered this way, and it was a long time before he was forgiven for this<sup>10</sup>.

The Prophet did not accept any of their offers, asking only for their surrender before discussing terms. Eventually, they had no other choice, and they took their chances and surrendered. Bani Khurayza were the protected allies of Al Khazaraj, and Sa'ad Ibn Muaaz was the leader of Al Khazaraj. The Prophet, being fair, decided that Sa'ad, not himself, should decide the punishment for Bani Khurayza, as he was their leader. Sa'ad Ibn Muaaz was sick at that time, and the Prophet asked him, "What do you think?" Sa'ad asked him, "As if you mean our people?" meaning what would our tribe say to this. The Prophet said "yes." Sa'ad then said, "The men should be killed, and the women and children shall be joined to us." This is the punishment that apparently came to pass, although more historic verification is needed. Recent research indicates that many of the Jews of Bani Khurayza were released, as they appear later on in life

<sup>10</sup> This man's name was Abu Lubabah and upon realizing the ramifications of this gesture, he avoided the Prophet and instead went back to Medina and bound himself to one of the pillars of the mosque in repentance, vowing not to remove himself until God willed it so.

in other parts of the Muslim world. Whichever way this event is perceived, it marked the end of the Jewish presence in Medina, with the exception Khyber, which will be discussed later.

One important event during this year that deserves mention was the marriage of the Prophet to Zaynab Bint Gahshe. Zaynab was a noble lady, and she was married to Zayd, who was known as "Ibn Muhammad", or son of Muhammad, even though he was adopted. This marriage was a great mismatch, as she treated him almost like a slave since she viewed herself as aristocracy. Zayd was not satisfied at all, and he acknowledged that he was mistreated, and he told the Prophet so. He asked to get out of the marriage several times, and the Prophet said to try and salvage the union. At the same time, however, the Prophet knew in his heart that this was a mismatch. He also knew that if a man whom she considered no better than a slave divorced Zaynab, both herself and her tribe would be humiliated. It could only be corrected if the Prophet himself married her for political reasons, like he had done in the past. But the Prophet was weary of the criticism he would receive from the Arabs and Jews if he married the wife of his adopted son. The Prophet therefore continued to advise Zayd to stay in his marriage, until the Qur'an said otherwise. The Qur'an said that adopted children are not biological—you can adopt a child in your care, bring them up and be charitable, but they will not be your biological children, neither in the laws of inheritance nor name. Zayd, from that time, no longer was "Ibn Muhammad", or son of Muhammad. The Qur'an revealed in Sura Ahzab:

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا (٤٠)

33.40 [And know, O believers, that] Muhammad is not the father of any one of your men, but is God's Apostle and the Seal of all Prophets. And God has indeed full knowledge of everything.

The divorce took place and the Prophet married Zaynab. But this story has once again been used and misused, particularly by the Orientalists, who say that the Prophet saw her for the first time and told Zayd to divorce her because he was attracted to her. This is, of course, contrary to the Prophet's character.

During this year the rites of Hajj were set forth and the pilgrimage to Mecca became an Islamic duty. Additionally in this year, the *Hijab* was ordained only for the wives of the Prophet. Hijab is not defined as a scarf or veil, but as a wall or a screen. After the experience with Aisha, and after he became more prominent, it became more of a protective measure for the wives of the Prophet. From the Qur'an, Surah Al Azhab :

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتَ النَّبِيِّ إِلَّا أَنْ يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ إِلَى طَعَامٍ غَيْرِ نَاطِرٍ  
 إِنَاهُ وَلَكِنْ إِذَا دُعِيتُمْ فَادْخُلُوا فَإِذَا طَعِمْتُمْ فَانْتَشِرُوا وَلَا مُسْتَأْنِسِينَ لِحَدِيثٍ ۚ إِنَّ ذَلِكُمْ  
 كَانَ يُؤْذِي النَّبِيَّ فَيَسْتَحْيِي مِنْكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ ۗ وَإِذَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُنَّ مَتَاعًا  
 فَاسْأَلُوهُنَّ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ ۚ ذَلِكُمْ أَطْهَرُ لِقُلُوبِكُمْ وَقُلُوبِهِنَّ ۗ وَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ أَنْ تُؤْذُوا  
 رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَلَا أَنْ تَنْكِحُوا أَزْوَاجَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ أَبَدًا ۚ إِنَّ ذَلِكُمْ كَانَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمًا (٥٣)

33.53 O YOU who have attained to faith! Do not enter the Prophet's dwellings unless you are given leave; [and when invited] to a meal, do not come [so early as] to wait for it to be readied: but whenever you are invited, enter [at the proper time]; and when you have partaken of the meal, disperse without lingering for the sake of mere talk: that, behold, might give offence to the Prophet, and yet he might feel shy of [asking] you [to leave]: but God is not shy of [teaching you] what is right. And [as for the Prophet's wives,] whenever you ask them for anything that you need, ask them from behind a screen: this will but deepen the purity of your hearts and theirs. Moreover, it does not behoove you to give offence to God's Apostle - just as it would not behoove you ever to marry his widows after he has passed away: that, verily, would be an enormity in the sight of God.

So far we have covered most of the sixth year of Hijra. We started with the third year. In summary, this chapter covers events between the third to sixth years of Hijra. More than 20 skirmishes occurred during this period, along with the Battle of Uhud; the besmirching of the reputation of Aisha, the wife of the Prophet; the Battle of the Trench and the betrayal of the Jews in Medina. Through all of these proceedings, the Prophet's decision-making abilities, his sense of reason and fairness, and his willingness to take counsel from all people clearly show his position of leadership in the community, and cemented the roots of Islam in Arabia.

## MEDINA: YEAR 6-9

---

It had been six years since the Prophet came to Medina. Islam was more than just a religion now. It represented a political movement, and as such, there were various factors to deal with, chiefly the enemies of the Arabian Peninsula. These groups were in continuous negotiation to find ways to break the Prophet and topple Islam. It became clear to Muhammad that the peninsula had to be neutralized, either by converting to Islam, or accepting it as a reality.

Out of this came various missions to the outlying areas, where the Prophet would send companions to spread Islam. Their orders were always very clear—to spread the mission of Islam peacefully, and that they were only to fight for the cause of God if threatened. They were not to cheat, break promises, or attack innocents.

For those who did not convert to Islam but lived in Muslim controlled areas, they were protected and granted religious freedoms. Like the Muslim population paid *zakat*, these people paid a tax known as *jizya*. This is still used by the enemies of Islam to give the faith a bad name, even in the present time. The reality is that this tax was paid only by non-Muslims who were capable of fighting, and it was markedly less than the *zakat* (charity) that was incumbent upon all Muslims—men, women and children. The *jizya* tax, along with the *zakat* charity, helped provide for the security of everyone living in the area if there happened to be an attack. In the end, a family would pay much more in *zakat* than they would have to pay in *jizya*.

So in the month of Sha'ban, in the 6<sup>th</sup> year of the Hijra, the Prophet sent a mission to a place called Daumatil Jandan, led by Abd al Rahman Ibn

'Ouf, along with 700 companions. Upon arriving the group presented their conditions to the leader of Daumatil Jandan, a man known as Al Azbagh Ibn Amr al Kulabi (Al Nusrany), and he became Muslim. Some of his people followed suit, while others did not. On the instructions of the Prophet, Abd al Rahman proposed to the daughter of the chief, which served to forge a strong alliance, and this was considered a great honor. The whole tribe eventually converted to Islam, without any bloodshed.

The next important event that happened this year is known as Ghazwat al' Hudaibiya, or the Battle of Hudaibiya. This, however, was actually not a battle at all. The Prophet apparently had a vision, where he saw himself entering Mecca, the *Masjid al Haram*, (the mosque where the Ka'aba resides), accompanied by the Believers. Based on this, he decided to perform *Umra*, (which can be defined as a minor pilgrimage, outside of the prescribed time for Hajj.) He told the believers to prepare, and he also informed various tribes around Medina as well. He ordered that they should take whatever animals they intended to slay there, and he ordered all of his followers to sheath their swords—to show that they were not traveling for military purposes or stances. Upon reaching a place called Asfan, he sent an exploratory party to Mecca, and they returned with the intelligence that the Quraysh would aggressively prevent the Prophet from entering Mecca. The Prophet and the Muslims were thus excluded and denied a right that was given to every other person in Arabia. His intelligence told him that the Quraysh had prepared to fight the Muslims if needed, recruiting over 200 people. The Prophet wanted to take a road devoid of confrontation, and he was keen on avoiding any fighting in Mecca—this was the home of the *Masjid al Haram*, after all, a place of peace and peaceful people.

The Muslims camped in a place called Hudaibiya, and the Prophet decided to wait there and examine the situation. He received a messenger from Quraysh who inquired about his intentions. The Prophet answered that they were there to perform *umra*, and that they did not come to fight. Subsequently another man was sent by the Quraysh, named Al Halees Ibn Al Qama. He was the head of a very resilient group allied with the Quraysh called Al Ahabeesh. When the Prophet discovered that this man was coming to conference with him, he apparently said that Halees comes from a people who honor Al Hadi, which were the sheep that were slain as offerings in Mecca at that time. The Prophet said that when he arrives, "Drive the sheep so that they would be the first thing he sees." This

shows that the Prophet had great knowledge of the different individuals in the area, even his enemies. The Prophet knew that if Halees Ibn Al Qama saw the sheep, he would be in a different frame of mind. After his meeting with the Prophet, Halees went back to the Quraysh and said, "You prevented this man from entering the House of God, while you open this house to everyone else in Arabia, whether they are worthy or not. I suggest you do not stand in his way."

The Quraysh told him that he was not shrewd enough to decipher the tricks of the Prophet, and they sent Urwa Ibn Massoud Al Taefy, head of the people of Al Taif. He went to the Prophet and said, "Muhammad, you have gathered people who are not among the honored of Arabia, from the low classes, and you come here to your own people, of your origins. We pledge that you will not enter Mecca unless we allow you. If you attack Mecca, the rubbish you bring with you (in reference to the scattered tribes accompanying the Prophet) will leave you during the fight and you will be left alone." Abu Bakr, who was restraining himself, got upset and said, "How dare you suggest we leave him. You do not understand our position or situation. He will never be left alone." Urwa Ibn Massoud Al Taefy then stayed with the Prophet and his companions for some time, and he noticed that there was genuine love between the Prophet and his followers. He went back and told the people of Mecca and Quraysh—"I visited Qisra, (the ruler of Persia) in his kingdom. I visited Caesar in his kingdom in Rome. I did not find a king loved by his people like Muhammad amongst his followers. My recommendation to you is if he offers you something fair, take it, because you cannot imagine how those people will fight for him."

The Quraysh decided to negotiate, and the Prophet sent Uthman Ibn Affan and ten others to participate. Those ten people sent had relatives and loved ones living in Mecca at that time, and they used this opportunity to visit with them under the amnesty granted for the negotiations. Uthman entered Mecca and delivered a message to the oppressed, the Muslims in Mecca who were prevented from leaving—either due to marriage, finances, or slavery, as many had masters who denied them their freedom. Uthman said, "I am coming to you with good news. Eventually the truth will be revealed and you will be liberated." Despite the supposed amnesty, however, Uthman and his ten travel companions were set upon and arrested upon arriving in Mecca. The Prophet actually heard that Uthman was killed, when in reality he was only imprisoned. History tells us that the

Quraysh offered Uthman the right to perform *umra*. Uthman responded by saying, "How dare you think that I will do something that Muhammad is not given the same access to." Even though he was just a few steps from the Ka'aba, he refused to perform *umra* because Muhammad was not allowed to do so.

When Muhammad thought that Uthman had been killed, the factors of the equation changed completely, as he was assured of his party's protection by Quraysh. The Prophet said, "I will not leave until I declare war upon them." This shows how important the people were to the Prophet. He decided to change the plan. Even though he came in peace, there was no place for peace now after such aggression. He called the people to give him a *bayya*, or pledge, to fight, which was different from the *bayya* of Medina, which was for protection. The Prophet took this *bayya* under a tree where they were encamped, and this was known as the Bayya of the Tree, the Tree of Ridwan. The Qur'an mentions and records this event in Surah Fath verse 18:

﴿لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ يُبَايِعُونَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ فَعَلِمَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ فَأَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَثَابَهُمْ فَتْحًا قَرِيبًا﴾ (١٨)

48.18 INDEED, well-pleased was God with the believers when they pledged their allegiance unto thee [O Muhammad] under that tree, for He knew what was in their hearts; and so He bestowed inner peace upon them from on high, and rewarded them with [the glad tiding of] a victory soon to come,

This tree was honored to a great extent by this important event, and because human beings are fascinated by things that are tangible, there was a fear that the tree itself would become an icon, Therefore Omar Ibn Al Khattab during his time as caliph uprooted it, to avoid creating another shrine near the Ka'aba. This was an important decision because it went against the emotions and sentiment of the people.

During this *bayya* under the tree, the Muslims placed their hands on the hand of the Prophet, as was the custom in Arabia at the time. This time, however, the Prophet put his hand on top of his own, and said this is the *bayya* of Uthman. The Prophet was saying that even though Uthman

was absent, his presence would still be here amongst us, and here is his pledge. When the Quraysh discovered that this *bayya* had taken place, they sent several small groups to engage in skirmishes with the Muslims. The Prophet captured twelve of them, while one of the Muslims was killed. They were on the brink of full-scale war, and the unbelievers realized that the Prophet was serious. They sent a man named Suhail Ibn Amr to negotiate a treaty where he told the Prophet that the skirmishes were carried out by irresponsible, weak-minded people in Mecca, and not by those who are wise. He requested that the Prophet release his prisoners and that the Quraysh in turn would release theirs. The Prophet responded that he would not release any prisoners until his people, the first group he initially sent, were released. This was done, along with Uthman, and the prisoners were exchanged.

Negotiations then began in earnest, and it started with a number of conditions—that there would be a cease fire between Muslims and Quraysh for four years; that any Muslim who runs from the Muslim camp to the Quraysh would be kept by the Quraysh, but every unbeliever that runs to the Muslims from Mecca must be returned; that the Prophet would turn back this year without performing *umra*, but may return the following year without weapons; and finally, that there would be no problem if anyone joins Muhammad, other than the Quraysh, and anyone who joins the Quraysh against Muhammad should be accepted as well.

The Prophet accepted all of these conditions, which became the Treaty of Hudaibiya, but many of his followers felt that the terms were one-sided. One condition was particularly irksome, which dealt with the exchange of “deserters” so to speak, between the Muslims and the Unbelievers as outlined above. This was unfair and very humiliating in their eyes. Even more bothersome was that the Messenger of God, Muhammad, declared their intentions to perform *umra*, and yet they were to be turned back unfulfilled. It was recorded that Omar was very upset, and some of the believers even said, “The Qur’an said he envisioned us entering the Masjid al-Haram” but now we are not. Upon hearing this, Abu Bakr said, “Did the Qur’an say which year?” which was a strong argument—the promise was still viable, but the time frame, however, was not set. Abu Bakr’s response reminded them that, yes, the Qur’an did say you will enter the Masjid al-Haram, and you will; however, you are the ones who are interpreting it as now, not the Qur’an.

Based on the terms of the treaty, the Prophet told his followers that they were not going to perform *umra*, and he suggested that they cut their hair and slay their sheep anyways, which was usually done upon completion of *umra*, signifying the end of their *ihram*, or state of purity. However, they had not in actuality completed their *umra*, and despite the Prophet's suggestion, complete chaos ensued among his people, with shouting, fighting and accusations flying from one to another. No one had followed the Prophet's suggestion. The Prophet was very saddened by this and entered his tent and his wife, Um Salamah asked, "What is upsetting you?" He said, "I am concerned about my people. God says if people disobey their Prophet, God will not give them victory, and they are about to do so." She replied by saying, "Who says they disobeyed you? You have to understand that their hearts are broken, that they are devastated." She displayed great wisdom, compassion and understanding, and elucidated a facet of the situation to the Prophet that he did not consider. She felt for them, and she told the Prophet, "You, the Messenger of God, you did not order them [to cut their hair and sacrifice their sheep.] You carry on yourself something very big by having this treaty. They are depressed, saddened. So go from here and go to them, and do what you want to be done and see what will happen." This advice turned out to be critical to the community at this time. The Prophet went out and cut his hair, and then slayed a sheep, and the people followed him in suit. They saw in a tangible and concrete way that this was the decision of the Prophet, it was no longer a suggestion. It moved from theory to implementation.

However people still complained about the condition in the treaty that stated a Muslim would not be returned if found in Mecca, but unbelievers, or *kafirs*, fleeing to the Muslims must be sent back to Mecca. The Prophet's wisdom allowed them to understand why he agreed to this condition. If a Muslim fled to Mecca, then their belief must have been weak and they would not be an asset to the Believers. If an unbeliever comes to us, however, they must have great determination to risk so much, and upon returning to Mecca per the treaty, they would be an annoyance to Meccans and a liability for the Quraysh. This was the Prophet's wisdom, and it was implemented so. After this treaty was signed, a person came to the Prophet from Mecca, named Abu Jandel Ibn Suhail. He said he barely made it out of Mecca and that he wanted to join the Muslims. The Prophet said they had a treaty in place, and that he had to go back. The Quraysh actually came and demanded him back. One can imagine how difficult it must have been for the Prophet to let him go, but he kept to the treaty. Abu Jandel was escorted back to Mecca by two guards from

Quraysh. However, upon reaching the gates of the city, he tricked them and killed them both and he escaped. He joined a group outside of the city and initiated the first guerilla war tactics against Mecca. He was one of the major reasons for the attrition the Quraysh faced up until the gates of Mecca finally opened to the Muslims years later.

For every rule, there were certain exceptions, and this was proved during one incident in particular. Uthman's sister from his mother's side, known as Um Qualthoum Bint Ukba Al Hakawaty, ran away from Mecca. She went to the Prophet and told him, "O Messenger of God, I am a woman. If I go back to them, they will do things to me that I could not stand." The Qur'an came with a revelation, stating in Surah Mumtahina verse 10:

يا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا جَاءَكُمُ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ مُهَاجِرَاتٍ فَامْتَحِنُوهُنَّ ۗ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِإِيمَانِهِنَّ  
 فَإِنْ عَلِمْتُمُوهُنَّ مُؤْمِنَاتٍ فَلَا تَرْجِعُوهُنَّ إِلَى الْكُفَّارِ ۚ لَا هُنَّ حِلٌّ لَّهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحِلُّونَ  
 لَهُنَّ ۗ وَأَتَوْهُنَّ مِمَّا أَنْفَقُوا ۚ وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْ تَنْكِحُوهُنَّ إِذَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ أَجُورَهُنَّ ۗ وَلَا  
 تُمْسِكُوا بِعِصَمِ الْكُوفَارِ ۚ وَأَسْأَلُوا مَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ وَلْيَسْأَلُوا مَا أَنْفَقُوا ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ حُكْمُ اللَّهِ يَحْكُمُ  
 بَيْنَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (١٠)

60.10 O YOU who have attained to faith! Whenever believing women come unto you, forsaking the domain of evil, examine them, [although only] God is fully aware of their faith; and if you have thus ascertained that they are believers, do not send them back to the deniers of the truth, [since] they are [no longer] lawful to their erstwhile husbands, and these are [no longer] lawful to them. Nonetheless, you shall return to them whatever they have spent [on their wives by way of dower]; and [then, O believers,] you will be committing no sin if you marry them after giving them their dowers. On the other hand, hold not to the marriage-tie with women who [continue to] deny the truth, and ask but for [there turn of] whatever you have spent [by way of dower]-just as they [whose wives have gone over to you] have the right to demand [the return of] whatever they have spent. Such is God's judgment: He judges between you [in equity] - for God is all-knowing, wise.

Some people have responded to this by accusing such women as saying

anything just to escape. This may very well be, but in the verse itself it says, “God knows best as to their Faith.” Let God be their ultimate judge whilst the believers do their best to know what is in their hearts. At the same time, the rule was set that the same thing would happen if a kafir woman wanted to go back, she would be allowed to do so, and the believers should get paid the money spent on her in return. The Qur’an here sets a practical rule. The Treaty of Hudaibiya is implemented for men because men can resist and fight—at that time they had more maneuverability than woman. Women, on both sides, were exempt.

The Muslims from Mecca who had to be returned became a great asset to Islam. Later on, the Quraysh sent word to the Prophet that they wanted to strike out that term of the treaty—they did not want anyone to be delivered back to them. Not only did this make the believers very happy, they were also reassured. They continued to trust in the Prophet’s wisdom and his decisions, knowing what may not be immediately apparent to them would eventually become very clear.

The Qur’an addresses the Prophet directly in the first verses of Sura Fath (48), about the conditions, trials and tribulations and prospects after Hudaibiya, guaranteeing the completion and fulfillment of Islam:

إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُّبِينًا (١) لِيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِن ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ  
نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا (٢) وَيَنْصُرَكَ اللَّهُ نَصْرًا عَزِيمًا (٣) هُوَ الَّذِي  
أَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِيمَانًا مَعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ وَلِلَّهِ جُنُودُ السَّمَاوَاتِ  
وَالْأَرْضِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا (٤)

48.1 VERILY, [O Muhammad,] We have laid open before thee a manifest victory,

48.2 so that God might show His forgiveness of all thy faults, past as well as future, and [thus] bestow upon thee the full measure of His blessings, and guide thee on a straight way,

48.3 and [show] that God will succor thee with [His] mighty succor.

48.4 It is He who from on high has bestowed inner peace upon the hearts of the believers, so that - seeing that God’s are all the forces of the heavens and the earth, and that God is all-knowing,

*truly wise they might grow yet more firm in their faith;*

Hudaibiya was a political victory in today's modern parlance. There was no fighting, but in terms of its strategy and end result, it signaled the beginning of Islam's final victory. The Prophet now returned to Medina in a secure position. The Hypocrites have been exposed. The Jewish opposition in and around Medina had been nearly completely defused, and now, as part of the final piece to ensure their security, he had a treaty with the Quraysh for four years. For the first time in Islam's short history, there was no direct threat. There was peace. On a local level, Islam was established. It was now time to reach out on a global level.

The Prophet and his followers now embarked on an era of communication with different world leaders and rulers of the time, a period known as Mukataba til Muluk. Messages and messengers were sent to the different kings and states around the region. The Prophet sent a message to Caesar, the ruler of Rome, which started as follows:

*"From Muhammad Ibn Abdallah to Heracle (the title of the ruler of Rome), the Great Man of Rome. Peace be upon those who follow guidance. I call you with the calling of Islam. When you submit to God, you become safe."*

This was not a threat, even though some people took it this way; rather, it was to be seen as an opportunity—if you follow Islam, you will prosper in this life and the next. He continued:

*"If you submit to God, you will be safe, and God will reward you hundred times over. If you turn away, you carry the responsibility of the peasants, the commoners."*

In other words, the common man in Rome would only have the chance to learn about Islam if Caesar allowed it. If Caesar would not do so, this missed opportunity for his people would be on his conscience and would be regarded on the Day of Judgment. It is fascinating to see who the Prophet was targeting—the poor and destitute of the Roman Empire. He continued by quoting from the Qur'an, Sura Al Imran, verse 64:

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ (٦٤)

3.64 Say: "O followers of earlier revelation! Come unto that tenet which we and you hold in common: that we shall worship none but God, and that we shall not ascribe divinity to aught beside Him, and that we shall not take human beings for our lords beside God." And if they turn away, then say: "Bear witness that it is we who have surrendered ourselves unto Him."

This was the message that was sent to Caesar, and upon receiving it, he requested to speak to someone who knew Muhammad. At that time, Abu Sufyan was traveling in the area of present-day Syria with a caravan. Caesar called him to Rome to speak with him. It is important to remember that Abu Sufyan was the head of Quraysh and was the Prophet's archenemy. He traveled to Rome and was asked a series of specific questions by Caesar:

"Who were the ancestors of this man [the Prophet]?" Abu Sufyan replied that he is of great lineage, from a great family.

"Has anyone of you said or spoken what he is saying now before?" The answer was no.

"Do you accuse him of lying? Does he lie?" Again the answer was no, he is not known to lie. "Who follows him, the important people or the poor people?" The poor.

Then Caesar wisely followed that question with:

"Do his numbers increase or decrease?" They increase, replied Abu Sufyan.

"Does anyone of them revert back to the old ways or religion?" He knew of no such cases. "Does he fight you?" Yes, there is a war between him and us.

“How is he in war?” Sometimes he wins, sometimes he loses.

“What does he order you to do?” He orders us to worship not what our ancestors used to worship. He orders us to pray, to tell the truth, to preserve our chastity, to keep our pledges, and to the returning of faith and trust to the people.

Caesar said, “It seems that this man is a Messenger. If you told me he was followed by important people, he would be a politician. You say he is not afraid to fight, I ask if he is lying, and you say he is not. But I feel that there is something about this man. If what I have heard is true, this man will occupy the place I hold now.”

Abu Sufyan apparently reported that upon stating this, there was large protest among Caesar’s people and Abu Sufyan and his party were escorted out to allow Caesar to meet privately with his advisors. Abu Sufyan later said that he felt Caesar of Rome himself was afraid of the Prophet.

Caesar collected his people and locked the doors. He was reported to have said, “If you want true prosperity and guidance, then follow this man.” Again, those around him erupted in dispute against what he had just said. Caesar, who was a politician, then said, “I was just examining you, to see how loyal you are to Rome.” At least from this account, it is possible that Caesar came quite close to becoming a Muslim, but for his party and his political commitments, he decided not to.

The Prophet sent another messenger, Al Harith Ibn Umir Al Azady, to the Prince of Busra, a small kingdom assigned by Caesar. This part of the world was divided into two main kingdoms at the time, the Persians and the Romans, and the Kingdom of Busra was controlled by Rome. Al Harif Ibn Umir reportedly went to the kingdom and proclaimed he had a message to deliver to the Prince. The message was torn apart and he was killed. He was the only ambassador of the Prophet who was killed, and the Prophet was extremely saddened by this situation.

Al Muqauqus, the Prince of Egypt, assigned, again, by the Roman Empire, also received a message from the Prophet. It read:

*“In the Name of God, I, Muhammad, Prophet of God, call to Muqauqus, the great man of the Egyptian Christians. Peace upon those who follow guidance. I call you to the calling of Islam. If you submit to God, you will be safe and God will reward you double. If you turn away, carry your responsibility.”*

Muqauqus summoned for the messenger sent by Muhammad, known as Hateb Ibn Obay, and asked him, “If your Prophet is a real Prophet, why does he not call God to destroy his enemies, instead of proceeding in this manner?” Hateb replied, “Do you believe in Jesus?” He said yes. “Do you believe that people seized Jesus to kill him?” He said yes. “Did Jesus ask God to destroy them?” He said no. “So then why should Muhammad ask God to destroy his enemies if Jesus did not?” Muqauqus told him you are a wise man sent by a wise man. This example shows not only the care in constructing the message, but also the care taken by the Prophet in selecting his messengers.

The King of Persia also received the same message. He tore the message into pieces and told the messenger to return and tell Muhammad that he will mobilize the Persian army to finish off Muhammad in the following year. The Prophet said may God break his kingdom, and interestingly enough, the son of the Persian King conspired against him and killed him, at the very time the King was gathering his forces to attack the Prophet. The new King stopped his father’s plans, and the attack never came.

In the seventh year of Hijra, the Muslims were preparing to engage the remaining Jews in the area of Medina who consistently took a stand against the Prophet and the Believers. This group was located in Khyber, where they launched their campaign to gather people to kill the Prophet.

Khyber was like a military complex, with three large fortifications, each one divided into three separate citadels or castles. Upon their approach to Khyber, the followers started loudly chanting takbir, “Allahu akbar” (simply translated as “God is greater.”) The Prophet noticed that they were getting exhausted, and told them that they were not calling on someone far away, but rather they were calling on God, who hears all. He told them to save their strength for the battle to come.

The Jewish population at Khyber fought very stubbornly once the battle

ensued. During one instance, the Prophet attacked the first fortification, but could not advance on the positions within. He then pulled back and ordered people to cut down the surrounding date palms, to show those inside that they would soon starve. However, the battle continued despite this tactic, so the Prophet rescinded this order. He had intended to scare them to stop fighting by threatening to take away their sustenance, but since it did not work, the Prophet did not want to unnecessarily destroy the trees.

The battle continued, and the Muslims slowly started getting the upper hand, controlling more and more parts of Khyber as the resistance towards them faltered. The Muslims then received intelligence of a weapons storage depot in an area in Khyber. Omar led a group there, and as they stormed the area, they too were repelled back by the Jews there, and had to retreat to the second fortification. Here the Muslims besieged that area and the Prophet ordered the Believers to put everything they had in this particular fight, as it was the beginning of the end of the Jewish resistance in the peninsula. The fighting was very intense, and the Prophet was even wounded for only the second time in his life. They eventually prevailed and overtook the last fortification, taking the remaining resistance as prisoners. One of them was Safia Bint Hoyaa Ibn Akhtab, a very noble lady and a daughter of one of the chiefs of Khyber. Eventually, the Prophet released her and married her, as has been seen in instances earlier, in order to strengthen ties to the area.

When the Jews at Khyber realized that they were defeated and that there was no hope left, they asked for an agreement for surrender. They offered to leave behind their money and weapons, taking only their clothes, and the Prophet granted this. There is something here, however, that should not be overlooked. In their haste to leave, they left behind papers of the Torah. The Prophet ordered for their holy book to be given back to them—he did not destroy it or desecrate it. This shows an implementation of freedom of religion that only Islam has brought to humanity. With this, the engagement at Khyber ended and the Muslims returned to Medina victorious, having lost only fifteen followers to the battle.

An important event that occurred during this time was the conversion to Islam of Khalid Ibn El Waleed, one of the heroes of Arabia and the Quraysh. The Prophet was very happy, and told Khalid how grateful he was that God guided him to Islam. He told Khalid that he always knew

he was very smart, and he had always hoped he would be guided to the truth. Khalid responded by asking the Prophet to pray to God to forgive him for the battles he waged against the Muslims. The Prophet responded with the words, "Islam starts a new page—everything before is null and void."

In the previous year the Prophet had traveled to Mecca, intending to perform *umra*, but instead, was sent back to Medina, with the agreement that he and his followers would be allowed to return the next year unimpeded. It was now the seventh year, and the Prophet and his companions prepared to return to Mecca to perform Umra. Although the terms of the treaty stated they were to bring no weapons, the Prophet decided to carry weapons, but keep them close to their bodies. He did not want to be unprepared in case they were attacked by the Quraysh in Mecca. He ordered his followers to show their strength by exposing their right arms through their garments, as is the custom among the men today. The Unbelievers could not stand seeing the Muslims circumambulating around the Ka'aba, so they evacuated the city and waited for the Muslims to finish their rites of *umra* and leave before returning.

Several confrontations occurred up to the eighth year of Hijra, at which point a very important incident took place, known as *Ghazrath Mu'ta*, or the Battle of Mu'ta. It was mentioned earlier that one of the messengers of the Prophet, who went to the Kingdom of Busra, (in what is now present day Lebanon-Syria-Palestine), was killed. The Prophet felt it was appropriate to exact retribution for this killing at this time, and he gathered an army to go to this kingdom. The instructions of the Prophet to the army were as follows:

*"You fight in the name of God, for the cause of God. You fight the enemy in his land. You will find people in places of worship—do no touch them or stand in their way. Do not kill a woman, a child, or an old man. Do not cut a tree or demolish a building."*

These are the teachings of the Prophet, and, as mentioned earlier, they are the rules of engagement in Islam.

When the Muslims reached Busra, they found that there was an enormous army awaiting their arrival, greater than five times their numbers. There

was some discussion as to whether they should retreat, since they were not ready to engage in such a battle, or whether they should stay and fight. Abdullah Ibn Ruwaha, one of the Muslim leaders, said, "We came out here to fight for the cause of God and to die for the cause of God. What are we hesitating for?" It was decided that they would fight. It was a hard fought battle, and the three people that the Prophet designated as the leaders of this army were martyred during this battle. One of them told the Muslims, "It is better to die while you are advancing, rather than to die while retreating."

The Muslims remained engaged in battle for seven days, in what was a long, bloody fight. Khalid Ibn Walid was fighting for the Muslims now, and continued engaging the Unbelievers for seven days, looking for a way to breakthrough. He then came up with the strategy of transferring the right side of his forces with the left, and those in the front with those at the rear. This sounds very simple, but the Unbelievers now saw faces that they had not seen before. They thought that the Prophet had sent reinforcements to the battle in great supply. This chaos caused the Unbelievers to retreat, and Khalid Ibn El Waleed took this chance to secure and stabilize the army. The Unbelievers retreated and withdrew and the Muslims returned to Medina. Upon their return, the people there were expecting a decisive victory. Khalid Ibn El Waleed, however, felt that salvaging and keeping the army intact was the true victory, which it was; however, people insisted on calling them "the runaways." The Prophet, however, commended them, saying they are the true warriors because they maneuvered to preserve the army for another battle.

Several confrontations again took place until the great battle of *Al Fatih Al Azam*, or the Great Victory, which was the final surrender of Mecca to the Prophet. As has been mentioned, the Treaty of Hudaibiya was set for a term of four years between the Prophet and his followers in Medina, and the Quraysh and their followers in Mecca. The Prophet and all the Believers were willing to wait for the time to pass, so that they could eventually reclaim Mecca. At this time, there were two groups well known to each city. The people of Baqr were known allies of the Quraysh, while those of Huza'a were allies of the Prophet. In the past there was animosity between both of these parties, and only the Treaty of Hudaibiya prevented them from continuing hostilities. In this year, it is said that a poet from Baqr began reciting verses defaming the Prophet. Someone from Huza'a, who apparently could no longer tolerate such slander about the Prophet, went

and challenged this poet. The disagreement spilled into their respective tribes, and in the ensuing time, some people from Baq'r gathered a force together and stealthily attacked the tribe of Huza'a, killing twenty people. The Treaty of Hudaibiya clearly stated that if anyone attacked another, the treaty would be void. This news was broken to the Prophet, and the treaty was basically terminated. The Quraysh tried to salvage the situation by sending someone to the Prophet, to speak on their behalf despite the actions of the people of Baq'r, but it was evident that the point of no return had been passed. Some Orientalists claim that the Prophet waited until he was strong enough and then he broke the treaty. This is false, as the treaty was broken by the alliances of Medina and Mecca, and not by the Prophet.

Abu Sufyan, the leader of Mecca and the Quraysh, was a very well respected man, and he decided to go and meet the Prophet in Medina. He went to his daughter first, who was the wife of the Prophet, and said he wanted to talk. He tried to sit on the Prophet's mat, the place where he usually slept, and she moved it. Abu Sufyan looked at his daughter and said, "Is the mat not good enough for me, or am I not good enough for the mat?" She replied, "While you are an unbeliever, you cannot sit on the mat of the Messenger of God." His negotiations were not very successful, but the Prophet said that "We will continue [to honor the treaty] through this year, but after that I cannot guarantee what will happen. I cannot give you my word." Abu Sufyan went back to Quraysh and told them what happened, and the people in Mecca accused him of selling out, of having safe passage to Medina, to visit his daughter, and to return with such news. These accusations were so severe that Abu Sufyan went to the Ka'aba and prayed to the idols to prove to them that he was still an unbeliever.

The Prophet amassed a huge army, comprised of all the Believers and of those who wanted to ally themselves with the Muslims and Islam, in preparation for the journey to Mecca. His intention was to visually overwhelm the Quraysh. By seeing such a huge force, and knowing that the treaty was broken, the Prophet thought they may surrender the city peacefully. The Prophet was very keen on avoiding bloodshed in Mecca, at least around the Ka'aba. He wanted the area around the Ka'aba to be secure. When the Prophet approached Mecca, he ordered the lighting of 10,000 fires. Ten thousand fires were aglow in the night of the Arabian Desert, to show that he was coming to Mecca with close to 100,000

people. These maneuvers were done to try and impress the enemy into surrendering, but the Prophet was also prepared for the possibility that the Quraysh might attack, despite being vastly outnumbered.

They reached a place called Al Abwa, where he met with two people who were once staunch enemies of Islam, but by this time had become Muslims, which was great news to Muhammad. They apologized for all that they did against the Muslims, but the Prophet quoted from the Qur'an, which when translated, says; "There is no blame on you now. God forgives you. He is the All Forgiving, Most Merciful." They pressed on and reached a place called Al Qadeed, and the Prophet noted how tired everyone was from traveling. They were traveling during the month of Ramadan, and nearly everyone was fasting. The Prophet told everyone to stop and break their fast to rest, and he started himself by eating and drinking. It thus became a rule that if you are traveling or in battle, you may break your fast.

On the road the Prophet met one of his uncles, leaving with his family and wanting to join the Prophet. The Prophet requested that he join the Muslims in Mecca whilst his family continues on to Medina. During this same period, Abu Sufyan converted to Islam. He was convinced that Muhammad would clearly take over Mecca, and when he realized this, his stubbornness gave way to acceptance. The Prophet requested that Abu Sufyan stand in a place where he could see the army passing by, and so he watched as the troops walked by, each group bearing their own flag, until finally came the smallest group, the group of the Prophet. This group was led by Muhammad himself, on the back of his camel, his head lowered in humbleness, weeping as he returned home to Mecca.

Here was a man, a victorious leader, entering the last of all significant battles, who displayed no arrogance or show of victory—just humbleness and gratitude to God. The Prophet made the great declaration that everyone who stayed in their homes would be safe and secure. During this same time, Khalid Ibn El Waleed had problems entering from the other side of Mecca and he engaged in a skirmish where fifteen to twenty people were killed. The Prophet's entrance into Mecca, however, was secure—he just walked in. He continued by saying that anyone who goes to the house of Abu Sufyan or the Ka'aba and its environs would also be safe and secure. Status is given here to Abu Sufyan. It is not in the Prophet's best interests to take the leader of Quraysh and Mecca, a well-

respected man who just became a Muslim, and treat him like a prisoner of war. He made his house a sanctuary, a place where people could flock to, acknowledging his leadership and importance.

The Prophet entered and the people of Mecca awaited his judgment. He asked the famous question, "What do you think I am going to do with you?" They said, "A noble brother and a noble cousin." He said, "You are free, liberated." The group of people who converted to Islam at that time were always known as the Liberated, and people continued to embrace Islam at this moment. A group led by K'ab Ibn Zuhair, the great poet who used to defame the Prophet, came to Muhammad, asking to become Muslims, and the Prophet accepted all of them. K'ab Ibn Zuhair went on to become a famous man singing in praise of the Prophet. After this the Prophet took the *bayya* from the women, with the conditions that they live in chastity, and that they obey God and his Messenger, and all the values of Islam. The Prophet then destroyed all the idols in Mecca and the Ka'aba, and sent people to destroy the idols elsewhere, as there were idols in remote places outside of Mecca as well.

Islam was now established as a major power in Arabia, and nearly the entire peninsula flocked to the faith. There were only two major tribes, Hawazin and Thaqeef, who remained arrogant and decided to prepare to fight Muhammad. They recruited whoever was left, and they prepared a huge army of men and women, with their cattle and sheep in tow—a massive preparation for a battle with the Muslims, leaving them no place to retreat. The Prophet in turn mobilized his troops and there were so many, one of the believers said, "We will not be defeated because of small numbers at all." However, a trap was laid out for the Muslims by these resisting tribes, and the Believers were severely attacked and nearly defeated. While the Muslims were in disarray, the Prophet stood in the battlefield and gave his famous call, "I am the Prophet, there is no lie. I am the son of Ibn Abd Al Motalib." He ordered Abbas to call the Ansar and the Muhajireen and to call those who gave him the pledge under the tree. They were encouraged, they regrouped and surrounded the Prophet and eventually defeated the Unbelievers. This was to be their last major confrontation, and the Qur'an recorded this in a chastising tone in Sura At Taubah, verse 25:

لَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ فِي مَوَاطِنَ كَثِيرَةٍ ۖ وَيَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ ۖ إِذْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ كَثْرَتُكُمْ فَلَمْ تُغْنِ  
عَنكُمْ شَيْئًا وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْأَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ ثُمَّ وَلَّيْتُم مُّدْبِرِينَ (٢٥)

*9.25 Indeed, God has succored you on many battlefields, [when you were few;] and [He did so, too,] on the Day of Hunayn, when you took pride in your great numbers and they proved of no avail whatever to you - for the earth, despite all its vastness, became [too] narrow for you and you turned back, retreating:*

After this the Prophet moved towards Al Taif. It was there that the Prophet was attacked and humiliated early on in Islam, before he left for Medina. Now the remnants of these two tribes, Hawazin and Thaqeef, were there, and the Prophet sent Khalid Ibn El Waleed to Al Taif as the leader of this battle, and the Muslims were victorious there as well. Some of the followers asked Muhammad why he did not pray to God to destroy the people of Thaqeef, and the Prophet replied, "O God guide them and let them come to us as Muslims," which eventually happened.

People from different areas all around Arabia started sending groups to meet with the Prophet. He met several delegates from tribes around the peninsula, and in the aftermath of the major battles this became a very engaged area as Muhammad tried to bring peace throughout the land, which completed the eighth year of Hijra. Not until the ninth year of Hijra did another confrontation arise, this time from the people of Hatem Al Tay. Hatem Al Tay is noted in Quranic history as being one of the most noble, generous men of Arabia. By this time he had already died, and during the battle the Prophet captured Sufana, who was Hatem's daughter. The Prophet, acknowledging her history and the nobility of her family, released her and refused to humiliate her by taking her prisoner. The Muslims followed in suit, and her brother and his tribe proceeded to accept Islam. They eventually became great Muslims, spreading Islam throughout Arabia.

After all this, the Prophet went back to Medina, which still served as the capital of all Islam. Mecca was the spiritual home, but Medina was where the state of Islam was born and where its capital remained. While there, he started to prepare for the Battle of Tabouk. He had heard that the Romans were gathering to engage the Muslims in battle. They were upset to see Arabia and its environs out of their control, as they had installed puppet kings in cities around. Now there was a power in Arabia that liberated all of those kingdoms, setting up a central authority beyond the Roman's control.

This year was a very difficult year economically. The date palms and cultivation were poor and it is known as *'AmI Usra*, the Year of Difficulty. Despite this, the Prophet ordered for a large force to be mobilized and he asked for donations from the Muslims. There are many examples of Muslims giving nearly all of their wealth. Abu Bakr gave almost all of his money, and when the Prophet asked him what he was leaving for his family, he said "I am leaving them God and his Messenger." Omar Ibn Al Khattab gave half of his wealth, and many women gave all of their jewelry. Abdallah Ibn 'Ubay, the leader of the Hypocrites, saw this happening and said, "This man is getting wild. The Romans are going to find us and kill us. I am not going to join the battle—I am going to find an excuse." All the Hypocrites came to the Prophet and asked to be excused from the battle, and the Prophet accepted their reasons. A verse from the Qur'an was then revealed, correcting the Prophet, in Sura Taubah, verse 43:

عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْكَ لِمَ أَذْنَتْ لَهُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَتَعْلَمَ الْكَاذِبِينَ (٤٣)

*9.43 May God pardon thee [O Prophet]! Why didst thou grant them permission [to stay at home] ere it had become obvious to thee as to who was speaking the truth, and [ere] thou camest to know [who were] the liars?*

The Qur'an continues discussing those who would not commit to this endeavor; whose hearts are hypocritical, verses 45-47:

إِنَّمَا يَسْتَأْذِنُكَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَارْتَابَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ فَهُمْ فِي رَيْبِهِمْ يَتَرَدَّدُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَلَوْ أَرَادُوا الْخُرُوجَ لَأَعَدُّوا لَهُ عُدَّةً وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ كَرِهَ انبِعَاثَهُمْ فَثَبَّطَهُمْ وَقِيلَ اقْعُدُوا مَعَ الْقَاعِدِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾ لَوْ خَرَجُوا فِيكُمْ مَا زَادُوكُمْ إِلَّا خَبَالًا وَلَأَوْضَعُوا خِلَالَكُمْ يَلْبِغُونَكُمُ الْفِتْنَةَ وَفِيكُمْ سَمَّاعُونَ لَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾

*9.45 only those ask thee for exemption who do not [truly] believe in God and the Last Day and whose hearts have become a prey to doubt, so that in their doubting they waver between one thing and another.*

*9.46 For, had they been [truly] desirous of setting out [with thee], they would surely have made some preparation therefor: but God*

*was averse to their taking the field, and so He caused them to hold back when it was said, "[You may] stay at home with all [the others] who stay at home."*

*9.47 Had these [hypocrites] set out with you, [O believers,] they would have added nothing to you save the evil of corruption, and would surely have scurried to and fro in your midst, seeking to stir up discord among you, seeing that there are in your midst such as would have lent them ear: but God has full knowledge of the evildoers.*

While the Prophet was busy planning, he heard that some people had built a new mosque, which was later on called Masjid Ad Dirar. The people amongst the Hypocrites tried to steal the focus away from Masjid Quba, the first masjid built in early Islam, by building this new masjid. Their intention was to split the community. The Prophet was not happy with this, and he ordered for it to be destroyed. He questioned them before doing so, asking, "Why did you build this masjid?" and they swore by God's name that their intentions were good. A revelation came in response to this, again Sura At Taubah, verse 107:

وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مَسْجِدًا ضِرَارًا وَكُفْرًا وَتَفْرِيقًا بَيْنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَإِرْصَادًا لِّمَنْ حَارَبَ اللَّهَ  
وَرَسُولَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَيَحْلِفْنَ إِنْ أَرَدْنَا إِلَّا الْحُسْنَىٰ وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ (١٠٧)

*9.107 AND [there are hypocrites] who have established a [separate] house of worship in order to create mischief, and to promote apostasy and disunity among the believers, and to provide an outpost for all who from the outset have been warring against God and His Apostle. And they will surely swear [to you, O believers], "We had but the best of intentions!" - the while God [Himself] bears witness that they are lying.*

Upon approaching Tabouk, the Muslims discovered that the Romans had withdrawn, deciding against entering the Arabian border. The Prophet spent that time forging treaties with all the border tribes, creating alliances with all those in the buffer zone between Arabia and the power of the Roman Empire.

In mobilizing the army for this expedition, the Prophet accepted excuses from people who could not participate, most from the Hypocrites, who were singled out in the Quranic verses mentioned above. There were three Muslims, however, who also proffered false reasons to avoid service in the army. Upon his return from Tabouk, the Prophet approached these three with a smile of sadness, and he asked them why they did not join. One of them, called Ka'ab, said, "The easiest way, O Messenger of God, is to find an excuse, and you will accept this as you accepted all other excuses before. But I cannot do this, you are the Messenger of God. I have no reason. I cannot offer you an excuse." The Prophet turned his face away from him and the other two as well. It was obvious that the Prophet was not talking with them, and all the believers refused to talk with them as well. They were ostracized within their own communities, and even within their families. At one point one of the three was not feeling well, and his wife asked for special permission from the Prophet to care for him—that was how encompassing this social boycott was for these individuals. It was so grueling for these three that the Qur'an describes their plight again in Sura At Taubah, verse 118:

وَعَلَى الثَّلَاثَةِ الَّذِينَ خُلِفُوا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا ضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ  
 أَنفُسُهُمْ وَظَنُّوا أَن لَّا مَلْجَأَ مِنَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ تَابَ عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَتُوبُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ  
 الرَّحِيمُ (١١٨)

*9.118 And [He turned in His mercy, too,] towards the three [groups of believers] who had fallen prey to corruption, until in the end—after the earth, despite all its vastness, had become [too] narrow for them and their souls had become [utterly constricted--they came to know with certainty that there is no refuge from God other than [a return] unto Him; and thereupon He turned again unto them in His mercy, so that they might repent: for, verily, God alone is an acceptor of repentance, a dispenser of grace.*

It was a very joyous day when this verse was revealed. People told the three that they had been forgiven, a verse from the Qur'an was revealed that specifically addressed their difficulty, and God had forgiven them.

Upon returning from Tabouk, the Prophet received a group from Thaqeef. They approached the Prophet to negotiate with him as they still refused to

accept Islam. The Prophet received them in his mosque, and he ordered that a place be prepared for them in the mosque for their arrival. He then said, "Leave them here. Let them live with us and see us and observe us praying." They were very impressed with what they saw. They left a young boy to stay behind and look after their belongings, and upon their departure, this young boy would sneak away to the Prophet and ask to be taught the Qur'an. When these people finally became Muslims, they asked the Prophet to assign a leader for them, and the Prophet assigned this young servant boy.

The Prophet then wrote to the people of Al Taif, who now realized that they could no longer hold out against Muhammad. They responded to him, but with the request that the Prophet hold off on destroying their idols for one month, allowing them to dispose of their idols gradually. The Prophet accepted this strange request, giving them the time to taper off their idolatry. Their argument was that their simple-minded people would be so taken aback if all their idols were destroyed at once, and the Prophet agreed to this term.

During the month of Dul Qida the Prophet ordered Abu Bakr to go and perform Hajj. Abu Bakr took three hundred people from Medina, along with all the sheep and such to perform the Hajj, which was called *Yaum Al Hajj Al Akbar*, the Great Day of Hajj. During this time, the major portions of Surah Taubah and Baqara were revealed, which outlines the relationship of the Prophet with the people of Arabia.

بِرَاءةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ إِلَى الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (١) فَسِيحُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ  
 أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ وَعَلِمُوا أَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِي اللَّهِ ۗ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مُخْزِي الْكَافِرِينَ (٢) وَأَذَانٌ  
 مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ إِلَى النَّاسِ يَوْمَ الْحَجِّ الْأَكْبَرِ أَنَّ اللَّهَ بَرِيءٌ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ۗ وَرَسُولُهُ  
 ۚ فَإِن تُبْتِغُوا فَهَوْا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۖ وَإِن تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِي اللَّهِ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ  
 كَفَرُوا بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (٣) إِلَّا الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَنْقُصُوكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَمْ  
 يُظَاهِرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَحَدًا فَأَتِمُوا إِلَيْهِمْ عَهْدَهُمْ إِلَىٰ مُدَّتِهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ (٤)  
 فَإِذَا انْسَلَخَ الْأَشْهُرُ الْحُرْمُ فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ وَخُذُوهُمْ وَاحْضُرُواهُمْ  
 وَأَفْعِدُوا لَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْصَدٍ ۚ فَإِن تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَخَلُّوا سَبِيلَهُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ

غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٥) وَإِنْ أَحَدٌ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ اسْتَجَارَكَ فَأَجِرْهُ حَتَّىٰ يَسْمَعَ كَلَامَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ  
 أُبْلِغْهُ مَأْمَنَهُ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٦)

9.1 DISAVOWAL by God and His Apostle [is herewith announced] unto those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God, [and] with whom you [O believers] have made a covenant.

9.2 [Announce unto them:] "Go, then, [freely] about the earth for four months- but know that you can never elude God, and that, verily, God shall bring disgrace upon all who refuse to acknowledge the truth!"

9.3 And a proclamation from God and His Apostle [is herewith made] unto all mankind on this day of the Greatest Pilgrimage: "God disavows all who ascribe divinity to aught beside Him, and [so does] His Apostle. Hence, if you repent, it shall be for your own good; and if you turn away, then know that you can never elude God!" And unto those who are bent on denying the truth give thou [O Prophet] the tidings of grievous chastisement.

9.4 But excepted shall be- from among those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God - [people] with whom you [O believers] have made a covenant and who thereafter have in no wise failed to fulfill their obligations towards you, and neither have aided anyone against you: observe, then, your covenant with them until the end of the term agreed with them. Verily, God loves those who are conscious of Him.

9.5 And so, when the sacred months are over, slay those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God wherever you may come upon them, and take them captive, and besiege them, and lie in wait for them at every conceivable place! Yet if they repent, and take to prayer, and render the purifying dues, let them go their way: for, behold, God is much forgiving, a dispenser of grace.

9.6 And if any of those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God seeks thy protection, grant him protection, so that he might [be able to] hear the word of God [from thee]; and thereupon convey him to a place where he can feel secure: this, because they [may be] people who [sin only because they] do not know [the truth].

These events draw to a close the ninth year of Hijra, which has seen Islam

evolve in Medina, vanquishing its enemies and becoming a political and religious magnet for Arabia. The Prophet started out these years in Medina, but at the end of this year, he humbly returned to Mecca, to the home that once rejected him so vehemently. We see Muslims blooming in both numbers and wisdom, and we Islam growing.

## THE LAST YEAR

---

The tenth year of Hijra was the last year of Prophet Muhammad's life. Abdallah Ibn 'Ubay, the head of the hypocrites, died this year. Even though he had actively plotted against Islam and made life very challenging for the Muslims, the Prophet himself prayed the *janazaa*, or farewell prayer, for him as Abdallah Ibn 'Ubayy's son was a great Muslim. It was one of the longest services the Prophet conducted. He wrapped him in his own cloak and the Prophet himself carried him to the grave. While this was a great gesture from Muhammad, showing great magnanimity, the Qur'an, in revelation, made a clear distinction with regard to those who clearly stand against Islam and the Believers. Sura Taubah, verse 84 makes reference to the Hypocrites:

وَلَا تُصَلِّ عَلَى أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَّتَّ أَبَدًا وَلَا تَقُمْ عَلَى قَبْرِهِ ۗ إِنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ  
وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ (٨٤)

*9.84 And never shalt thou pray over any of them that has died, and never shalt thou stand by his grave: for, behold, they were bent on denying God and His Apostle, and they died in this their iniquity.*

As in prior years, there were continued tribal confrontations this year; despite this, the Prophet continued to build on the foundation set forth in the earlier years, and three significant events transpired--one was the sending of emissaries to Yemen; the second was his farewell pilgrimage, including his farewell Khutba; and the third was the Prophet's reception of delegates from the surrounding areas of Arabia.

The emissaries sent to Yemen are important to reflect upon for our present

lives. The Prophet sent Mu'az Ibn Jabal and Abu Musa Al Ashary to the north and south portions of Yemen respectively. He gave them general instructions, to care for the people there and to teach them Islam. But the Prophet gave them both specific instructions as well, saying, "Make things easy, not difficult. Always give them the good news and glad tidings, and do not be repulsive." In these few words lives the ethics and methodology of *dawa*, or teaching, in Islam. Those who make Islam repulsive and make it difficult are acting contrary to the teachings of the Prophet.

The Prophet then spoke specifically to Mu'az Ibn Jabal, telling him that he would meet people in the north of Yemen who had received revelations prior to Islam. They were *ahlul kitab*, or People of the Book. He instructed him thusly: "When you go there, invite them to declare that there is no God save God, and that Muhammad is his Messenger. If they agree to this concept, tell them that Allah ordained that part of their money should be taken from the rich and given to their poor, so that their money will circulate within their community. If they agree with you on this, do not touch their capital or take their money at all." The Prophet then profoundly continued, "Be aware if someone is oppressed or has been subject to injustice, and calls upon God. There is no barrier between this calling and God." This acted as a warning more than anything else, informing Mu'az Ibn Jabal that he should not oppress his people, and if he did so, God would know. If the oppressed call upon God, there would be nothing anyone could do to intercede, for God will respond to them.

We know that the Prophet questioned Mu'az, asking him how he was going to conduct his affairs. Mu'az said, "According to the book of God." He then asked him, "What if you do not find it in the book of God?" and Mu'az replied, "I will follow the way of his Messenger, peace be upon him." Again, the Prophet responded by saying "What if you do not find the answer in the ways of the Messenger?" Mu'az said, "I [will then] think intelligently and do the best I can." This is both a landmark moment and a landmark hadith, as it opens the doors for *ijtihad*, or independent discovery and interpretation, in Islam. From this moment, and to the present, there will always be issues, situations and problems whose solutions are not directly accessible to us. The relation of this encounter shows that in Islam there is a reliance on the mind and rationality, for there will be situations where human intelligence must work and function to solve problems.

The farewell pilgrimage of the Prophet is the next important event during this time period. It was the Prophet's only pilgrimage, or *hajj*, and it is called his farewell pilgrimage because shortly afterwards, and the Prophet alludes to this in his khutba at Arafat, it became clear to him that he was on the final leg of his journey as a Messenger of God.

The Prophet performed the pilgrimage in the current manner employed by modern Muslims. At that time, he was accompanied by what is estimated to be over ninety thousand followers. One can only imagine the sight of this man, who was kicked out of Mecca, who had to secretly leave the city under the cover of night, who was now returning and performing his pilgrimage with over ninety thousand people. He was extremely humbled and magnanimous, allowing any and all requests brought to him amongst his people, so long as they were good and made the pilgrimage easier.

On the ninth day of Dhul Hija, he went to Arafat, the major gathering place of Hajj, and he delivered his farewell Khutba, *Khutba til Wada*, or the Farewell Speech of the Prophet. Thematically, there were many issues he addressed. He opened by seeking refuge with God, asking for forgiveness, seeking His protection and asking God to protect all Muslims from themselves. He declared the *shahada* again-- "There is no God but God, and I am His servant and messenger." Then came the first admonishment to his people, to be conscious of God, which was followed by the instruction to obey God. He then said, "I will probably not meet you again in such a gathering, so whoever hears something from me, tell it to others." After every item mentioned, he spoke "I relayed The Message, I have conveyed it. I pray to you God to be my witness." It is widely accepted that Muhammad was feeling his own mortality, and he was dealing directly with God during this sermon. His main concern and preoccupation at this time was his relationship with God—he wanted to make sure he fulfilled his duties.

He proceeded to mention different items--"Your blood and your money should be protected and safeguarded. You must respect each other's life and property. All your trusts that you have committed to should be fulfilled. Usury (interest) from now on is abolished, and I begin with the usury due to my uncle. All usury due from the time before Islam onwards is now null and void." (i.e. Usury is now abolished with the advent of Islam, even if the terms were established before Islam.) "Vows of retaliation for spilled blood will not be tolerated." (For both of these terms, the

Prophet was the first to enact the edicts by applying them to his own life. With regards to retaliation, in essence the Prophet was saying let bygones be bygones.) The Prophet then focused on the integrity of Islam in Arabia and amongst the Muslims. He said, "Satan gave up as far as being worshipped in this land of yours. But he is still obeyed in the matters you take easily." This does not mean that people in Arabia and Muslims in general will proclaim, "We are no longer Muslims, we are devil worshippers." The meaning here is that Satan's influence will be present in other, smaller matters in life, where people commit sin without drawing a lot of attention to themselves, in matters taken for granted. This therefore was a reminder for people not to forget other aspects of life where going astray may be easy.

After this, the Prophet focused on the care of women, for he knew that tribal societies tended to abuse women and considered them as secondary citizens. He elucidated that women must be respected and their needs provided for. He then emphasized the solidarity of the Muslims saying, "Do not revert after me to deny the truth and to deny the Message and to kill each other." (Unfortunately, this is exactly what happened after his death, and it continues to occur today.) He continued, "I left for you, that if you follow, you will never go astray, the book of God [the Qur'an]." He continued by mentioning the care of all people. "Your Lord is One. Your Father is Adam and Adam came from dust. The noblest amongst you in the eyes of God is the one who is most God conscious. An Arab is no better than a non-Arab. Everyone here tell others what I said today." <sup>11</sup> And on this day came the revelation of this great portion from verse 3 of Sura Al Maeda

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا (٣)

*5:3 Today have I perfected your religious law for you, and have bestowed upon you the full measure of My blessings, and willed that self-surrender unto Me shall be your religion....*

This day marked the day of *Eid 'ul Adha*, the festival of sacrifice, which is the celebration upon completion of the pilgrimage, and which is celebrated to this day.

<sup>11</sup> These remarks are paraphrased

And thus the Prophet completed his only *hajj*. He had received the entire message of Islam during his lifetime. He started from small building blocks, establishing a state during his own life, and he is probably the only Messenger who saw the completion of his work before his passing.

After the Prophet finished his pilgrimage he journeyed back to Medina and began receiving different delegations from throughout Arabia. One delegation came from Ufu Najaran, from the northern part of Arabia. They were Christian and numbered sixty in all. They came on horses and entered the Prophet's mosque wearing their Christian attire, adorned with silk, gold, and crosses. They gifted to the Prophet certain statues and icons. He accepted certain things and refused others that had strong religious connotations. The Prophet was very hospitable to them, and they performed their own prayers in the mosque. They did not know the direction of Jerusalem in the mosque and the Prophet showed them so. The Prophet served them food and water himself, and he left them there for three days. Even though Muhammad was the leader of all the Muslims, he waited on this delegation himself, hosting them in his own mosque. He was never above such behavior and this was the model he wanted all Muslims to follow.

Afterwards, the Prophet asked them to accept Islam, and they replied by saying, "No, we were Muslims before you." The Prophet replied that there were three problems they had that prevented them from being Muslim—"Number one, you worship the cross. Number two, you eat pork, and number three, you claim that God has a son." These three issues were very important, and they asked the Prophet, "Who other than Jesus has no father?" and here the Qur'an came with the revelation from Sura Al Imran, verse 59:

إِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيسَىٰ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ آدَمَ ۖ خَلَقَهُ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ (٥٩)

*3.59 Verily, in the sight of God, the nature of Jesus is as the nature of Adam, whom He created out of dust and then said unto him, "Be" - and he is.*

There were of course debates and discussions about this, and the Qur'an continued in revelation in the next verses:

فَمَنْ حَاجَّكَ فِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ فَقُلْ تَعَالَوْا نَدْعُ أَبْنَاءَنَا وَأَبْنَاءَكُمْ  
وَنِسَاءَنَا وَنِسَاءَكُمْ وَأَنْفُسَنَا وَأَنْفُسَكُمْ ثُمَّ نَبْتَهِلْ فَنَجْعَلْ لَعْنَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَاذِبِينَ (٦١)

3.61 *And if anyone should argue with thee about this [truth] after all the knowledge that has come unto thee, say: "Come! Let us summon our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and ourselves and yourselves; and then let us pray [together] humbly and ardently, and let us invoke God's curse upon those [of us] who are telling a lie."*

This verse is, in a way, a form of psychological challenge, to uproot the real feelings of the people. Of course, they refused to "invoke the curse of God on those who lie!" The Prophet again asked them if they would follow Islam, and again they said no. The Prophet continued by saying that there is no compulsion in religion and they decided to pay the *jizya* in order to be protected, which the Prophet accepted. They were escorted from the mosque in a respectful manner, and this interaction with the people of Najraan is a landmark example in Islam of tolerance towards people of other faiths.

Another important delegation, led by Al Asha Ibn Qays, came from an area of Arabia known as Kinda. When the Prophet received them, they challenged Muhammad by saying that they were hiding something and for the Prophet to tell them what it was. The Prophet responded with, "This is the business of the fairy tellers; I am not one of those. God sent me with the truth, and he sent me a book that will not be touched by falsehood—not now or in the future." He then recited some Qur'an, and while doing this, the Prophet started crying, with tears rolling down his face. They asked him, "Are you crying for fear of the one who sent you?" He said, "Yes, my fear of Him made me cry. He has sent me on a straight path on the edge of a sword. If I deviate even a little, I shall be destroyed." He then asked them to become Muslims and they said yes. The Prophet continued by asking them about their luxurious clothes of silk, that they were not suitable. The delegation discarded their attire, and followed Islam afterwards.

Like these examples, the Prophet received many other delegates from around Arabia—from Hamdan, Bani Ghassan, Bani Saad, Bani Asad, Bani Muharib, and many others. With each delegation, there was always an

interesting discussion and an interesting lesson learned.

Busy as all this was, the tenth year neared completion and the Umma went into the eleventh year of Hijra. The Prophet was one day on the Mimbar talking and said, "A servant of God has been given the choice for either the best things in this life, or what is with God, and he chose what is with God." At this, Abu Bakr cried and said, "We are ready to die in your place" which is an Arabic expression. In this year, the Prophet became very sick, and for thirteen days he asked his wives if he could be nursed in the house of Aisha. They all accepted—she was younger and probably more able to take care of him. The Prophet ordered Abu Bakr to lead the people in prayer, and this was one of the notions that led to Abu Bakr being the first caliph, in leading the state after the Prophet.

At the end of these days, while Abu Bakr was praying and leading the people, the Prophet came out, supported by Ali and Al Fadle, because he couldn't walk alone. When Abu Bakr saw him, he was very disturbed and the people became very excited. The Prophet said, "O people, I heard that you are concerned about the death of your Prophet. Was any Prophet before me immortal? I am going to join my Lord, and then you will come and join me. I tell you take good care of the *muhajireen* (the immigrants)." He continued by saying that the immigrants should take care of them, give them good advice, and admonish them. He then recited Sura Al Asr:

وَالْعَصْرِ (١) إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ (٢) إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا  
بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ (٣)

103.1 CONSIDER the flight of time!

103.2 Verily, man is bound to lose himself

103.3 unless he be of those who attain to faith, and do good works, and enjoin upon one another the keeping to truth, and enjoin upon one another patience in adversity.

He continued by saying, "When you are so anxious for something, do not ask for it to be rushed to you—God has his own timing. Be patient." He continued further, "I recommend to you also the Ansar. They are the ones

who opened their homes to us. They shared their wealth with us. If some of them do something wrong, forgive them. If they do something right, appreciate it.” He continued, “I will meet with you in Paradise. Whoever wants to be with me there should do or say what is right or what is due.”

On the Fajr prayer of that following day, the Prophet opened the curtain of his room, and he looked towards the believers as they prayed. He enjoyed seeing them and he smiled a very bright smile. He closed the curtain again and left. The believers thought that the Prophet wanted to come out to the prayer, but he gestured to them to go and continue their prayer. In the middle of this morning the Prophet, peace be upon him, died. This was on the Monday of the 13<sup>th</sup> of Rabbi Al Awal, on the 11<sup>th</sup> year of Hijra, which was equivalent to the eighth of June 633 A.D. He died at the age of 63.

One can only imagine the impact his death had on the believers. At that moment, Abu Bakr was not in the area, and it was a great shock to the people, to the point that Omar nearly lost his mind. He said, “Whoever says he is dead, I will kill. He just went to God, like Moses did, and he will come back.” Omar knew better than this, but he was unable to handle the reality of the situation. Abu Bakr finally arrived and he was told of the Prophet’s passing. He entered the home of Aisha. He looked at the face of the Prophet, he kissed it and he cried. He said, “Yes, he died. How beautiful you are, alive and dead.” Abu Bakr came out of the house with tears in his eyes, but he was composed and he first spoke to the people outside, who were in a state of chaos and shock. He thanked God and praised Him and said, “Whoever is worshipping Muhammad, Muhammad is dead. Whoever is worshipping God, God is alive and eternal.” He then recited various verses from the Qur’an, one in particular that was revealed during the Battle of ‘Uhud, when it was thought that Muhammad was killed. From Sura Al Imran, verse 144:

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ أَفَإِنْ مَاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَىٰ  
 أَعْقَابِكُمْ وَمَنْ يَنْقَلِبْ عَلَىٰ عَقْبَيْهِ فَلَنْ يَضُرَّ اللَّهَ شَيْئًا وَسَيَجْزِي اللَّهُ الشَّاكِرِينَ (١٤٤)

3.144 AND MUHAMMAD is only an apostle; all the [other] apostles have passed away before him: if, then, he dies or is slain, will you turn about on your heels? But he that turns about on his heels can in no wise harm God - whereas God will requite all who are

*grateful [to Him].*

After hearing this from Abu Baker, Omar said, "It's as if I had never heard these verses before." This is something that happens to all of us. In times of need, a verse is read with your heart and feelings, and it hits us and we see it as completely new and refreshing. Even though Omar had read this verse many times in the past, in this particular situation, it was as if he was hearing it for the first time, and he collapsed to the floor, crying.

The Prophet remained in his home Monday, Tuesday, and part of Wednesday until the Muslims decided on who would be the new leader. This, again, in retrospect, is amazing to think of. Here is the most important man on earth at the time, and the most important man in our lives up to the present, and after his passing the affairs of the community took precedence. There were no plans for prolonged grieving and public mourning—there was business that had to be taken care of even before the burial of Muhammad. Looking back at the situation, it seems to be a very smart move—the presence of the Prophet's unburied body may have served as a motivation to those in possible leadership positions, as if to say, "Hurry up and finish the business at hand." This is why there was the meeting in Al Saqeefa, where people met to decide who would be the Caliph.

It is known that after this meeting, Ali washed the body of the Prophet with Abbas and his two sons. Upon completion of this, they wrapped the Prophet and dug a hole in the same place where he died, and this is where he resides to this day. Before the burial took place the believers entered into the room and prayed Janaaza. Janaaza was not performed in congregation at that time—each one came in on his own prayed. The grave was then dug in the floor, and Muhammad, peace be upon him, departed this life, but left for us the book of God and his way and model.

## EPILOGUE

---

The Seera obviously encompasses more than what has been presented here. It is not possible to comprehensively encapsulate the life of Muhammad in such a concise manner. However, the purpose of this volume was always to show snapshots of the Prophet, pictures of a life that we may be glossing over or missing, but remain relevant more so today than ever before. As we reflect back on his life, we can take notice of many amazing things. More than anything we see a man who was extremely busy. Working for a great cause took stamina, energy, relentless passion and endurance. To appreciate how busy the Prophet was, let us go over some of the highlights of the Seera to reflect on what Muhammad accomplished in a relatively short time span.

During the ten years after the Hijra, the Prophet was engaged in or involved with sixty-seven battles. He communicated with nine world leaders, from all corners of the known globe. He received twenty-two delegates from tribes and communities in Arabia. In addition to this, situations arose from his several marriages; there were general problems inherent in life, like dealing with a scarcity of resources, where often he did not have the means to light a fire, missing hot meals, sometimes for nearly a year. This was a man who slept on the floor, leaving marks on his body. He stood against very strong, powerful enemies who held tightly to entrenched, stubborn traditions. He weathered many attacks against his character, including the character of his household. He built a community, creating a brotherhood and sisterhood, and he worked to solve the problems of this new community, working as a leader, investigator and judge—all the while proffering smiles to his followers, maintaining his character. He sent people all over the surrounding areas to teach people about Islam, but only after he himself taught them. With all of this, imagine this simple man sweeping the floor of his house, treating the sick animals, sewing his own

clothes, while at the same time enjoying life by playing and racing with his wife, or offering her his shoulder to rest her head—It is unbelievable to imagine one man doing so much with his life.

And while accomplishing this, he displayed all aspects of human life and emotion. We saw him as a father, a father who endured the loss of his children at one point in time. We saw him as a husband. We saw him poor and we also saw him prosperous while working for Khadija. We saw him as a teacher, a preacher, a peacemaker, a warrior, a statesman, a businessman, a healer, a trader, a community leader, a social worker—every aspect of human activity was embodied in this orphan, born in Arabia and chosen by God to carry His message.

One of his followers, or *sahaba*, Zayd recalled, “[The Prophet] was never seen without a smile on his face.” Young children would take his hand to play with him, and he never pulled it away. He never shook hands without looking someone in the face, and he never was the first to pull away. He never withdrew any kindness or act of good for anyone, even if it was for someone he did not know. He was never intimidated when Muslims were weak, and he always maintained his dignity and his pride. He promised his people during times of difficulty that this religion would prevail until all are safe and secure, while in times of victory, he remained humble, as when he entered Mecca after years of estrangement, prostrate on his camel, with tears streaming down his face.

He was a very refined man in a time and place where refinement was lacking. Refinement was not taken as a virtue in the Arabian environment—it was not conducive to this particular geography. Yet we find in the Prophet a man who was so keen to be clean and to make all around him so. He made sure his nails were trimmed, his beard kept, his cloak clean, and his voice temperate and nice. He once saw a man entering the mosque with his hair unkempt, and he gestured for him to comb his hair, and told people that whosoever has hair should respect it. He told people that if they ate garlic or onions not to come to the mosque, as they would not smell nice in such a crowded place. He said that when you clean the road, it is an act of charity. He praised the woman who used to sweep and clean the mosque, and he asked God to bestow mercy upon her when she died. He told his followers not to urinate on the road, but to go to an isolated area and to clean oneself afterwards. He preached against wasteful behavior, telling people not to even waste water if on a riverbank. He always smelled

good, and recommended the same to others. He was gentle with people, even in response to the man who pulled his cloak, making marks on his neck—he was not harsh with anyone. He never laid his hands on anyone in his life, except during war when a man was coming to kill to him, and only then did he respond, in self-defense.

He was a refined man in a land that lacked any refinement at all. This refinement did not come from his parents, as he was an orphan; nor did it come from the community he was raised in, nor did it come from society-at-large. It was something innate in himself, in his nature.

He was never loud, and he always looked at people while speaking. He repeated only what was needed, but he did not use flowery speech to say things that were not needed. His expressions were very precise and tailored—when he said, “The Blessing of God will be on the servant of His who says something good, so he gains goodness, or stays quiet so he stays safe.” This saying can take up a whole chapter for its explanation, yet the Prophet had the ability to condense the meaning in one sentence. When he felt that people did not understand his explanations, he asked them so, and he then instructed in kind. When he taught, he always started his lessons by questioning. When he referred to people who were doing something wrong, he referred to their behavior in generalities, so as not to name anyone specifically and single them out.

He was compassionate to the weak, and was kind to children and to the elderly. He told the wives of his people how to care for their husbands and their children, and that they should never lie to their children. He once saw a woman calling for her young son, telling him, “Come here, I have something sweet for you.” The Prophet asked her, “What do you have?” to which she replied, “I have some dates here for him.” This eased the Prophet’s mind, as he told her, “If you did not have anything for him, your actions would have been recounted as a lie.”

He cared for the thoughts and wishes of children as well. There was a young boy called ‘Umir who had a small bird called Nu’thir, and the bird was sometimes sick. The Prophet would sometimes see this boy and would say, “O ‘Umir, how is your bird Nu’thir?” He was warm to all people, regardless of their age.

He was very aware of the needs of the women in the community, as they would complain to the Prophet, telling him that they did not have the opportunity to be with him as the men seemed to monopolize his time. Knowing that the men in their society were rough, the Prophet set aside a special time for the women in the community in addition to the general gatherings, to learn from him separated from the men.

He often emphasized the importance of caring for God's creatures. He said, "Everything living, if you care for it, God will reward you." He said not to kill animals unless for eating. He always ordered people to care for trees, and asked them not to be cut down unnecessarily. He once told a woman she would be punished because she imprisoned a cat without feeding it, and he retold a story of a very sinful woman who was forgiven of all of her sins because she gave water to a thirsty dog. It is said in some recollections that he stopped his army on his approach to Mecca to allow a dog carrying its litter to cross his path unharmed.

His generosity was well known. One of the known stories was when his wife wanted to feed him well, and cooked a goat for him. This is important to put into the proper context, as sometimes a year would go by between hot meals for the Prophet. During this incident, the Prophet was late to come home, and every poor person that passed by asked what the aroma was that came from the home, and were thus given a piece of meat, until all that remained was a small piece of the shoulder for the Prophet. Upon coming home, with the expectation of a lavish meal, the Prophet asked for the goat, and his wife told him all of it is gone except for the shoulder. At this point, the Prophet corrected her saying, "No, all of it stayed except the shoulder." He considered what was given to the poor as ever lasting, and what remained as lost.

He was a man, who, in spite of the promises from God, asked for forgiveness seventy times a night. When they asked him why he was asking for forgiveness this many times, he said "Shouldn't I be grateful?" He was not asking out of fear, but out of gratitude. He has said that whoever is not grateful to people is not grateful to God. Therefore, per his example, if someone does something good, go and thank him. He continued by saying if you love someone, let him or her know, so they can love you back. His generosity was without measure, so much so that during the month of Ramadan, his hand was like a cloud of rain, always giving day and night.

With regards to his tolerance and patience, it was touched on briefly with his interaction with the delegation from Najaraan. This was his character—he was known to send food and gifts to his Jewish neighbors, and when the funeral procession of a Jewish person passed by, he would stand out of respect. This was something coming from Muhammad, who told people not to stand for him. When asked about this potential discrepancy, he said, “Isn’t he a human being?” He could tolerate the animosity of people while maintaining a pleasant disposition and a sense of compassion, to the point that the Qur’an remarked that he was a man whose relationship with people was based on compassion, not animosity. When given a choice, whether to be punished or destroyed, he found another way to plead to God, saying, “O God, Guide my people.” This is an attitude of compassion, not one of arrogance. He was always keen to say something nice—“Either you say something good, or do not say anything.” He continued by saying, “Two small organs make up one’s personality—the heart and the tongue.”

His courage was renowned, and it is a known story that when Medina was threatened, and it was thought that the enemy was storming the city, Muslims rushed out to find that the Prophet was already on his way back—he had already gone ahead to face the potential dangers, and he was coming back to tell his people that there was no threat. This was their leader, the first to face any threat, rather than waiting in the wings, sending out people in front of him to die.

One can talk a lot about the characteristics about the Prophet’s personality, even about his appearance. Many people have remarked about his natural build and looks, and there are a plethora of recounts as to the Prophet’s handsome features. However, it does not seem proper to emphasize this based on what the Prophet himself said—“God will not look at your figure or your looks. He will look at your hearts and your deeds.” It is a great disservice to this scope of a life when we emphasize the color of his eyes, the size of his beard, or the build of his shoulders. It is one thing to mention it in passing, but it is another thing to base poetry, songs and the like on the softness of his hands, or his athletic build, or that his eyes were black and sparkling. This is not what made Muhammad. It was his character and his teachings that made him into the person we relate to today.

He protected his family, and expected the same from others, as he told

men how awful it is to be disrespectful to members of their family. He said in his concise manner, "The best one of you is the best for his family, and I am the best for my family." In other words, if you want to be like me, I am the best for my own family, so be your own best example for your own family. Muslims should understand this—before we go and change the world and society, we should see whether we are serving our own family or not. He chastised men who were physically harsh with their wives, saying, "What a shame that you want to beat them in the day, and then sleep with them in the night."

Let us remember how common a practice this was in Arabia, where women were seen as objects and not people. He was once asked, "Who is the person most close to me O Messenger of God?" The Prophet replied, "Your mother." "Then who?" "Your mother." "After that?" "Your mother again." "Then whom?" And then the Prophet replied, "Your father." This exemplifies the care and respect and the high regard the Prophet placed on women, and with this example, mothers. Another asked the Prophet, "If I carry my mother around on my shoulders, would I have paid her back for all that she has done for me?" The Prophet's reply was, "No, even if you do that for the rest of your life, you wouldn't have repaid her."

Another person came to the Prophet during an impending battle with the enemies of Islam and said, "I want to struggle for the cause of God with you. I want to go to war with you." The Prophet said, "No, your struggle (*jihad*) is at home, taking care of your parents." It is important to note here that the Prophet did not like people evading the call to defend Islam; however, he knew in this case that this man's parents would suffer greatly if their son was not there, and he made this exception very easily.

The Prophet also outlined rules of behavior for his people in general, telling people not to overcrowd each other. If one is sitting in a space, make room for the others—accommodate each other. He said that a Believer becomes so easy to befriend because they make themselves available to others.

He was known for his sense of humor. Once an old woman approached him and he said, "No old women will enter Paradise." This of course upset her, and he then smiled and continued, "I am just teasing you, for in Paradise, you will become young again." He was not a stiff, ossified,

frowning individual. People in his presence would joke, laughingly throw pebbles at each other, and we know how he once raced with his wife Aisha, and she said, "I used to race with the Prophet, and I used to beat him, until I added weight, and then he used to win." This man knew how to enjoy his family and he knew how to appreciate a good joke.

His nature was so expansive. He extended himself to teach people, to befriend people, appreciating their feelings. There was a woman once who asked to be divorced from her husband. Her husband still loved her very much, and he continued to pursue her and he asked the Prophet to mediate on his behalf. The Prophet asked her, "Do you accept this man?" to which she said, "No." The Prophet said, "I am just coming to speak on his behalf." She then asked him, "Is this an order from the Messenger of God, or is it just mending relations." The Prophet said, "No I am just speaking for him." She then said, "I do not want him." He respected her wishes and went out and told the man so.

When Umma Hani complained that when she gave protection to two prisoners some Muslims said she could not do so, and the Prophet responded by publicly recognizing and reminding all about her full status as a vital community member. In so many places, the Prophet said, "the smallest or the weakest in the community will have the protection and the stature amongst the believers like anyone else." Among all of this, the Prophet said, "Do not tell me anything bad about any of my companions, because when I come out to see them, I do not want to have anything in my heart against anyone." This is purity of the heart towards people, and the Prophet is taking the precautions against his own human nature. He knew that if someone said anything to him about anyone, it would bias his opinion, even slightly, and he didn't want that. When he spoke to people, he did not want anything negative in his heart towards them. If you have positive feelings towards people, you effectively become a better communicator, leader and example. However, if there is a sense of negativity, it lessens the drive and sense of enthusiasm inherent in leadership.

He always visited the sick, and he always recognized people's accomplishments and happiness. He advocated taking care of one's neighbors, and when people asked him, "Who are the neighbors?" he replied, "Up to the seventh" meaning seven to right, left, front and back, which encompasses quite a bit. He taught his people that the one who

spends a night on a full stomach while his neighbor goes hungry does not belong to our community. Imagine how this simple tenant would modify our behavior now if we did the same. He continued by saying that the believer is the one whose neighbor is safe and secure from anything that he does. Whatever the believer does should not hurt his neighbors. He would wonder why the kafirs would dump garbage in front of his house because he would say, "What kind of neighborhood is this?" The concept of "neighborhood" was honored, respected and protected by the Prophet. He continued by saying that neighbors have certain rights—if they are sick, you visit them; if they are hungry, you feed them; if they are poor you lend to them and if they are happy you congratulate them. The Prophet created a network of strong relations in his fledgling society.

There were times when he captured his enemies, and by his mercy he forgave them, except those who continued to challenge and fight him despite being granted clemency numerous times. He always leaned towards mercy and forgiveness. It has been recounted by his companions that every time he was given the choice between two things, he always chose the easier of the two. When he imposed difficulties on himself, and people wanted to share his burden or partake in his difficulty, he would say "No" to them—I have to do *tahajud* every night, you do not; I have to fast so many more days each year, you do not, etc. His responsibility was greater, and his need for spiritual nourishment was much greater than anyone else, so it was very important for him to make sure things were simple and easy for everyone. He once got upset with Mu'ath for leading the community in a very long prayer, saying, "Would you O Mu'ath be the one who will try people to the point that they will hate religion?" He would say "Whoever leads the prayer should make it mild and light."—this from the man who used to pray on his own until his feet would swell up; however, this applied only to himself, and he did not want to impose this on others. He explained to any who would lead the prayer, "You do not know who is in the lines behind you. A man may be sick or tired. Be considerate of the mother whose baby is crying during the prayer." It was not the baby's crying that he was concerned about, but the mental state of the baby's mother, hearing the baby cry during the prayer.

All of these characteristics should be available to all Muslims to try and emulate—this is the real Sunna. Somehow the concept of Sunna has been reduced, avoiding all the substance and only dealing with what is on the surface—this is the type of food the Prophet ate, so we should eat it; this

is how long the Prophet's beard was, so we measure our beards for this length. These become the important issues, and they are argued upon and the rules of Islam are violated. Forgotten is the emphasis the Prophet placed on respect, nicety, refinement, compassion and consideration—these somehow become secondary in order to defend what people claim to be the Sunna. They should look at the Sunna that they follow—is it costly or is it free? Question the Sunna that is free and ask yourself about the Sunna that is costly. The Prophet used to tour his home every night, and everything that was not usable he would donate. This is Sunna, is it followed? Why are the clothing or the length of the beard emphasized, all of which costs us nothing? But the generosity, the courage, the sacrifice, and the ascetic life the Prophet lived—this requires efforts and commitment—why is this not emulated? Because it is costly—it costs us money, convenience and time. This is why we cannot claim that we are following the Prophet. If you want to follow him, be serious about it. Be the type of person the Prophet was from within, otherwise we are doing a great disservice to his example and his character.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَتْكُمْ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَشِفَاءٌ لِّمَا فِي الصُّدُورِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ  
لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٥٧)

*10.57 O MANKIND! There has now come unto you an admonition from your Sustainer, and a cure for all [the ill] that may be in men's hearts, and guidance and grace unto all who believe [in Him].*

There are so many things to say about the Messenger of God, about the gift and mercy to humanity that he was, as referred to in this verse. We are honored to be his followers, and the hope is that we will act accordingly and close to his character, to allow us to join him in Paradise, under God's mercy, all praise due to Him. Muhammad's is an amazing personality—not for its entertainment value as a story, but because of its scope and depth, for its empowerment of responsibility to each and every Muslim by way of example. When looked at in this way, it truly is an honor to be a follower of the religion of Islam and of the last of Prophets, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.



## GLOSSARY

---

Throughout this text, Arabic words are used, and as is the case with a series of lectures, they were not always followed with a definition by Dr. Hathout. Here is a glossary of common terms that are seen throughout the preceding chapters, in order to better help the reader understand the meaning and intention of what Dr. Hathout was talking about. Additionally, it serves as a simple primer on the basic terminology in Islam.

***Kaaba***—building erected by Abraham and his son Ismail in Mecca over 3000 years ago. All Muslims turn towards the Kaaba when praying. Housed in this building is the black stone

***Quran***—holy book containing chapters and verses which Muslims believe to be the word of God. These verses came to the Prophet Muhammad [PBUH] by revelation, and it was subsequently written down and preserved by others (as Muhammad could not read.) The Quran was arranged in its current form during the rule of Omar and Uthmam.

***Quraysh***—the tribe in Mecca to which Prophet Muhammad [PBUH] belonged, and the tribe which actively campaigned against Muhammad during the advent of Islam.

***Sura***—the names of the 114 chapters in the Quran. The literal definition of the word “sura” is sign, or revelation.

***Allah***—is the Arabic word for God.

***Hijra***—is the term used to define the day that the Prophet [PBUH] left Mecca for Medina. This day marked the beginning of the Islamic calendar,

which follows the lunar cycle

**Umma**—term used to refer to the entire body of Muslims, worldwide

**Umra**—known as the minor pilgrimage, it is a journey Muslims can make performing a few of the rites of the major pilgrimage, known as Hajj

**Hajj**—is the fifth pillar of Islam, and it comprises a series of rites and rituals in and around Mecca, commemorating events during the life of Abraham and his family, and concluding with praying at Mount Arafat, site of the Prophet's [PBUH] final sermon.

**Jinn**—referred to in the Quran as a type of being that have free will. They are classified differently from humans or angels.

**Shahada**—is the declaration of faith, and is the first pillar of Islam and serves as its foundation. Translated, it is defined as, "I believe in the existence of no God but God, and Muhammad is His final messenger."

**Kafir**—Arabic term for infidel, or unbeliever. This term was widely used in early Islam to define those who were not following the burgeoning faith.

**Zakat**—is a pillar of Islam, and it is obligatory charity to be given by all Muslims.

**Israa and Miraj**—is translated into "the night journey" and it is the term given to describe the Prophet's [PBUH] journey from Mecca to Jerusalem to God over the span of one night

**Bayya**—Arabic term for agreement or pledge

**Ansar**—term used to describe the supporters of the Prophet [PBUH] from Medina.

**Yathrib**—the name of Medina prior to the Prophet's arrival there. Once it became his permanent home, it was named "Medinatul Nabi" or the city of the Prophet.

**Jumaa**—the obligatory gathering of Muslims on a Friday afternoon, for a sermon and prayer, taking place of the Dhuhr prayer.

**Adhaan**—recitation to call people to prayer

**Jihad**—term used in Arabic which means “inner struggle.”

**Qibla**—is the Arabic term for the direction of prayer

**Salat**—term used to define prayer. Muslims pray five times a day, but there are other types of prayers that can be offered. The obligatory five daily prayers are: fajr (dawn); dhuhr (afternoon); asr (mid-day); maghrib (sunset); and isha (evening)

**Ramadan**—the ninth month in the Islamic calendar, where Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset for the duration of the month. Fasting during this month comprises one of the pillars of Islam.

**Eid ul-Fitr**—the Islamic holiday observed at the end of the month of Ramadan

**Eid ul-Adha**—the Islamic holiday observed at the end of the Hajj.

**Zakat ul-Fitr**—charity that is given during or at the end of the month of Ramadan.

**Zakat ul-Mal**—charity that is given throughout the year.

**Fee sa billilah**—translated as “in the cause of God.”

**Muhajireen**—term used to describe individuals who strive in the way of God.

**Sunna**—is used to describe the example of the Prophet [PBUH]. Muslims strive to emulate the Prophetic example in all walks of life, thus coining the phrase, “following the sunna.”

**Hadith**—collection of the Prophet's [PBUH] actions, speech and example. Hadith was transmitted by recollection, memory and word-of-mouth by those around the Prophet [PBUH], so there are sound hadith (where the transmission is sound and verified) and weak hadith (where the transmission is weak and thereby unable to verified completely.)

**Hijab**—translated it means “screen,” presently is a term used to describe a headscarf that a Muslim woman would wear.

**Jizya**—tax that was paid by non Muslims who were living in a Muslim controlled area. It was paid by those only capable of protecting the state, and it was less than the zakat paid by all Muslims

**Masjid al Haram**—is the Arabic term for the Mosque in Mecca, where the Kaaba resides.

**Dawa**—the act of teaching people about Islam

**Ahlul kitab**—in Arabic means people of the Book, or those who believe in the worship of one God. Simplistically, Muslims believe that Christians and Jews are people of the book, along with themselves.

**Janazaa**—term used to define prayers that are conducted when someone dies, usually at a grave or over the deceased.

**Ijtihad**—Arabic term which is defined as the continual independent discovery and interpretation within Islam

**Sahaba**—term given to describe the initial followers of the Prophet, those who accepted Islam upon hearing it from him while he was alive.

**Tahajud**—a type of prayer that is conducted at night, after one has slept for a period of time, before the morning (fajr) prayer.

**Seera/Seerah**—the term used to encompass the events, people and history of the biography of Prophet Muhammad [PBUH].

## REFERENCES<sup>12</sup>

---

- El Akad, Abbas Mahmoud. (2001). *The Genius of Prophet Mohamed (Akbareyet Mohamed.)* Nahda Misr.
- El Bahnasawy, S. (1970). *The Accused Sunna (El Sunna el muftara alyha)*. Dar El Kitab El Elmy.
- El Hakim, T. (1936). *Mohamed the Human Prophet*. Egypt: Multazam El Tabaa wa El Nashre.
- El Kilany, Said Ahmed. (1984). *In the Company of All Prophets*. Vol. One and Two. Kuwait: Dar el Qalam.
- El Sebaay, Mostafa. (1949). *The Sunnah and its place in Islamic jurisprudence. (El Sunnah wa makanatiha fi el tashreeh el Islamy)*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Egypt: Journal El Fat-he.
- El Shatee, Bint. (1959). *The Daughters of the Prophet (PBUH)*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Egypt: Arab Company.
- El Thaaliby, Sheik Abdel Aziz. (1986). *Mohamed the Prophet of God* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Dr. Mohamed El Elawy (Ed.). Beirut, Lebanon: Dar El Arab El Islamy.
- Hawy, Saed. (1979). *The Prophet (PBUH)* Vol. One and Two. (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Beirut, Lebanon: Dar El Kitab El Emaya.

<sup>12</sup> The following is a list of references compiled by Dr. Ragaa Hathout and her family. It is understood that Dr. Maher Hathout's vast knowledge regarding Prophet Muhammad [PBUH] was gleaned from decades of accumulated reading. Much of what Dr. Hathout refers to in this series of lectures—including anecdotes, informal conversations, stories and recollections—came from these books.

