

# Jihad

**BATTLES AGAINST THE JEWS  
AND THE PAGANS OF ARABIA**

**THE QURAN: IN EASY-TO-  
UNDERSTAND FORMAT SERIES**

**VOLUME 5**

**FAROOQ MIRZA**

*The first-ever rendition of the Quran According  
to specific topics and the subject matter*

*A new paradigm in understanding the Quran*

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## DEDICATION

**The seven-volume book** series about the Quran is dedicated to the memory of Muhammad Asad, whose work, “*The Message of the Qur’an*,” was the first-ever attempt at an idiomatic, explanatory rendition of the Quranic message in English. In my opinion, it is the best translation and commentary on the Holy Quran.

Muhammad Asad was born Leopold Weiss in July 1900 in Lviv, now Ukraine. He was the descendant of a long line of rabbis, a line broken by his father, who became a barrister. Asad himself received a thorough religious education that would qualify him to keep alive the family’s religious tradition. He left Europe for the Middle East in 1922 for what was supposed to be a short visit to an uncle in Jerusalem. There, he came to know the Arabs and was struck by how Islam infused their everyday lives with existential meaning, spiritual strength, and inner peace. Weiss then became, at the remarkably young age of twenty-two, a correspondent for *The Frankfurter Zeitung*, one of the most prestigious newspapers in Germany and across Europe. As a journalist, he traveled extensively, mingled with ordinary people, held discussions with Muslim intellectuals, and met heads of state in Palestine, Egypt, Transjordan, Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan.

Back in Berlin from the Middle East, a few years later, Weiss underwent an electrifying spiritual epiphany—reminiscent of the experiences of some of the earliest Muslims—that changed his mind and his life. “Out of the Quran spoke a voice greater than the voice of Muhammad,” Weiss said. Thus, it was that Weiss became a Muslim. He converted in Berlin before the head of a small Muslim community in the city. He took the name Muhammad to honor the

Prophet and Asad—meaning “lion”—a reminder of his given name, Leopold, which is derived from the Latin word for lion. Asad spent some six years in the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, where he studied Arabic, the Quran, and the “Hadith”—the traditions of the Prophet and Islamic history. He mastered the Arabic language not only through academic study but also by living with a tribe that spoke the Arabic dialect of the Holy Quran. At the age of eighty, after seventeen years of effort, he completed his life’s dream, for which he felt all his life had been an apprenticeship: a translation and exegesis, or “tafsir,” of the Quran in English: *The Message of the Qur’an*.

# Contents

|                                                                              |           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Part 1 The General Concepts Of Jihad .....</b>                            | <b>1</b>  |
| Chapter 1 Definition And Classification Of Jihad .....                       | 2         |
| Chapter 2 Jihad In Self-Defense.....                                         | 5         |
| Chapter 3 Jihad In Defense Of Religious Freedom.....                         | 11        |
| Chapter 4 Jihad Against Pagans Of Arabia .....                               | 16        |
| Chapter 5 Jihad Against Muslims, Hypocrites, Jews, And Christians.....       | 24        |
| Chapter 6 Jihad Mandatory For Muslim Men With Some Exceptions .....          | 30        |
| Chapter 7 Military Readiness .....                                           | 37        |
| Chapter 8 Conduct During The Battle.....                                     | 41        |
| Chapter 9 Restriction On The Use Of Force .....                              | 45        |
| Chapter 10 Martyrdom .....                                                   | 49        |
| Chapter 11 Human Rights For War Prisoners And Distribution Of War Gains..... | 53        |
| Chapter 12 Inculcate Friendships With Friendly Non-Muslims ..                | 59        |
| Chapter 13 A Prohibition Of Alliances With Hostile Nonbelievers .....        | 62        |
| Chapter 14 Muhammad The Prophet Of Peace.....                                | 72        |
| <b>Part 2 Battles Against Pagans And Jews Of Arabia .....</b>                | <b>77</b> |
| Chapter 15 Why Muslims Of Mecca Migrated To Medina? .....                    | 78        |
| Chapter 16 Prelude To The Battle Of Badr .....                               | 84        |
| Chapter 17 The Battle Of Badr (624 Ce) (Spoils Of War, Eighth Surah) .....   | 89        |

|                                                                                 |            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Chapter 18 The Expulsion Of Banu Qaynuqa (Fact Or Fiction)                      | 119        |
| Chapter 19 The Battle Of Uhud (625) .....                                       | 125        |
| Chapter 20 Treason By Banu Al-Nadir .....                                       | 153        |
| Chapter 21 The Battle Of Trench (627).....                                      | 161        |
| Chapter 22 The Massacre Of Banu Qurayzah (Fact Or Fiction?)<br>.....            | 176        |
| Chapter 23 The Peace Treaty Of Hdaybiyyah (628) .....                           | 183        |
| Chapter 24 The Battle Of Muth (629) (The First Campaign<br>Against Syria) ..... | 196        |
| Chapter 25 The Conquest Of Mecca (630).....                                     | 198        |
| Chapter 26 The Battle Of Hunayn And Seige Of Taif (630).....                    | 211        |
| Chapter 27 War Against The Jews Of Khaybar .....                                | 220        |
| Chapter 28 The Campaign Of Tabuk (631) .....                                    | 227        |
| Chapter 29 The Conquest Of The Persian And Byzantine Empires<br>.....           | 242        |
| Chapter 30 Proselytization Of Islam.....                                        | 251        |
| <b>Part 3 The Biblical Concept Of War.....</b>                                  | <b>257</b> |
| Chapter 31 Masscres By The Jews .....                                           | 258        |
| Chapter 32 Ruthless Killings By Bible Followers.....                            | 265        |
| References.....                                                                 | 272        |



**PART 1**  
**THE GENERAL CONCEPTS OF JIHAD**

# CHAPTER 1

## DEFINITION AND CLASSIFICATION OF JIHAD

### DEFINITION OF JIHAD

One would be hard-pressed to find a better example of the deliberate distortion of crucial terms and concepts than the case of the word Jihad, both by Muslims and non-Muslims. The Arabic word *MUJAHID* is derived from the verb *JAHADA*, which means he struggled or strove hard or exerted himself.

It has often been erroneously translated in the West as “**holy war**.” Human life is sanctified in all major religions. Therefore, taking human life is never “holy” in the Quran. Killing a human being—a mortal sin under normal circumstances—is allowed as an exception to the rule, only in self-defense, for religious freedom and for punishment for murder.

**The overarching purpose of Jihad:** It primarily refers to the human struggle to promote what is right and prevent what is wrong and is the highest effort at upholding and defending justice.

Islamic law defines jihad as broad and pragmatic. It is not a single concept but a range of activities and, in certain situations, physically standing against oppressors. The exact meaning of JIHAD depends on the context. **Internal Jihad** is for self-purification by changing oneself. The outward practice of **external jihad** encompasses pacifism, patience in adversity, written and spoken jihad and force in the last resort. Under certain conditions, Islamic law allows anticipatory self-defense.

A well-known Hadith refers to four primary ways to commit jihad: with the heart, the tongue, the hand (performing righteous deeds), and the sword. Islamic tradition has two main kinds of jihad.

### 1) JIHAD AL-AKBAR OR "GREATEST JIHAD

Jihad as an internal struggle for self-purification has yet to be discovered among non-believers. It is the most common interpretation of the term. The most difficult jihad is the struggle against evil tendencies and temptations within the soul. For an ordinary man, the biggest trouble is not with his enemy but within him. For instance, the Prophet described man's struggle against his passions, temptations, and weaknesses (jihad an-nafs) as jihad al-Akbar or "greatest jihad." Helping others is another form of jihad. The Prophet also said, "The one who looks after a widow or a poor person is like a warrior fighting for God's cause or like a person who fasts during the day and prays all night."

### PACIFISM AND PATIENCE IN ADVERSITY

Under certain conditions, the practice of pacifism and patience is another form of jihad. The emphasis is on the internal dimension in the form of "patience in adversity." For example, during the Meccan period (610–622), the establishment persecuted the Prophet and a small band of converts for twelve years. Muslims were weak and endured incredible hardships, but they practiced patience in adversity.

### JIHAD AL-ASGHAR/ MINOR JIHAD

***If God had not enabled people to defend themselves against one another, corruption would surely overwhelm the earth. (2:251)***

Pacifism is allowed only in extreme situations. In general, the Quran does not counsel turning the other cheek but instead teaches forgiveness and the return of good to evil when circumstances warrant it. However, these are very different from not resisting evil. Far from requiring the Muslim to turn himself into a doormat for the ruthless, the Quran allows the punishment of wanton wrongdoers to the full extent of the injury they inflict. If one refuses to use force in self-defense, morality evaporates into impractical idealism and “corruption would surely overwhelm the earth.” Islam allows the use of force in self-defense, in defense of oppressed believers who cannot defend themselves, and to protect religious freedom.

## Chapter 2

# JIHAD IN SELF-DEFENSE

The concept of a defensive war in God's cause (jihad) plays a very prominent role in Islam's socio-political scheme and is frequently alluded to throughout the Quran. Since Muslims are expected to organize their communal life within the framework of a state based on the ideological premises laid down in the Quran, they must be prepared for hostility on the part of groups or nations opposed to Islam's worldview and social system, and, conceivably, bent on its destruction.

### NON-VIOLENT JIHAD

Violence is not the only means to struggle against oppressors. Jihad can be performed by tongue or pen. The use of force is only a last resort. The Prophet said, "A great form of jihad is speaking words of truth in front of a tyrannical ruler." Despite severe persecution, the Prophet continued his verbal jihad against false beliefs and social injustices in Mecca's society. Other examples of verbal jihad are international diplomacy to resolve political issues and prevent wars.

**Authority to declare jihad:** Only the heads of the Muslim states can initiate jihad. Vigilantes and non-state actors cannot declare jihad. Such declarations are invalid under Islamic law.

### THE FIRST PERMISSION TO FIGHT

***Permission [to fight] is given to those against whom war is being wrongfully waged—and God has indeed the power to succor***

*them—those who have been driven from their homelands against all rights for no other reason than their saying. “Our sustainer is God!” (22:39-40) And fight in God’s cause against those who wage war against you, but do not commit aggression. (2:190)*

**Foundational verse:** Verse 22:39 was revealed immediately after the Prophet Muhammad migrated from Mecca to Medina. It is the primary verses that speak of individual self-defense.

It constitutes the fundamental Quranic references to jihad or just war. Verse 2:190, revealed one year after the prophet's migration to Medina, and rest of the related verses regarding war in self-defense elaborate further on this foundational principle of self-defense.

#### 1) WAR IN SELF-DEFENSE

*As for those who defend themselves after being wronged, no blame attaches to them. (42:41) And defending only after being wronged, and [trust in God’s promise that] those who are bent on wrongdoing will in time know how evil a turn their destinies are bound to take! (26:227)*

Muslims were “**wronged**” when they were persecuted and driven from their lands for “no other reason than their saying,” “Our sustainer is God.” Permission to use force is therefore predicated on ‘wronging’ Muslims. Self-defense, as the principal reason for war, is maintained throughout the Quran.

“And **fight in God’s cause** against those who wage war against you” has two meanings. It reinforces self-defense and permits Muslims to defend themselves against enemy combatants. Fighting in Islam requires the defense of two fundamental human rights: life and religious liberty.

**State of open warfare:** Following the exodus of Muslims from Mecca to Medina, a state of open war existed between them and the Meccan Quraysh. The aggressive and unrelenting hostility of the idolaters forced the Prophet to draw the sword, together with his entire community and God-entrusted faith. That other teachers succumbed to force and became martyrs was, to Prophet Muhammad, no argument that he should do the same. Once seized the sword in self-defense, he held it with unwavering vigilance until the end.

**Defense of Medina:** Due to the formation of the first Islamic state in Medina, governments had to protect citizens from aggression. During the Mecca period, no such nation/state existed. The spirit of self-sacrifice through pacifism, a characteristic of the Mecca period, received its complement in the idea of sacrifice through action.

#### ANTICIPATORY SELF-DEFENSE

The Quran also allows for necessary preparation and the use of force when an attack on Muslim land is imminent. It was a practice among the warring Arab tribes to conclude peace treaties, but in many instances, the terms of those treaties were never honored. Muslims may resort to the use of force in anticipation only if and when the other party is openly hostile to them. In such circumstances, the Quran (8:58) gives conditional permission: ‘if thou fearest treachery from any group, throw back (their covenant) to them, (so as to be) on equal terms:’ ‘The “reason to fear treachery” must not be based on mere surmise but on clear, objective evidence. The prime example of anticipatory self-defense is the battle of Badr (624 CE).

## 2) WAR TO SAVE OTHER HELPLESS VICTIMS

The Quran allows the use of force to defend other believers who are oppressed and unable to defend themselves. Especially when these believers are faced with ethnic cleansing or genocide.

***And how could you refuse to fight for God's cause? Helpless men, women, and children cry, "O our sustainer! Our people are oppressed in this land, so lead us out [to freedom]. Raise for us, out of thy grace, a savior who will bring us succor!" (4:75) But as for those who believed but did not emigrate [to your country], you are in no wise responsible for their protection until they migrate [to you]. Yet, if they ask you for succor against religious persecution, it is your duty to give [them] this succor—except against a people with whom there is a covenant, for God sees all that you do. (8:72)***

You are not responsible for protecting Muslims outside the Islamic State's political jurisdiction. However, if they are persecuted and ask for your help, it is your duty to help them. The exception is if you have an alliance or non-interference treaty in each other's internal affairs. In such cases, since an armed intervention by the Islamic state on behalf of Muslim citizens of a non-Muslim state would constitute a breach of treaty obligations, the Islamic state is not allowed to seek redress by force. A solution to the problem could be brought about by negotiations between the two states, or, alternatively, by the emigration of persecuted Muslims.

This principle is not limited to the protection of Muslims and should be extended to others on humanitarian grounds. This is in tune with the higher message of the Quran and respect for the sanctity of life:

***If anyone slays a human being—unless it be [in punishment] for murder or for spreading corruption on earth—it shall be as though he killed all humanity. Whereas, if anyone saves a life, it shall be as though he had saved all humanity. (5:32)***

## OFFENSIVE WAR

***Do not commit aggression, for God does not love aggressors. (2:190) And never let your hatred of people who bar you from the inviolable house of worship lead you into sin of aggression. Help one another through virtue and God-consciousness instead of enmity and evil. Remain conscious of God, for God is severe in retribution! (5:2)***

The Quran explicitly forbids aggression. The term offensive Jihad was invented by Muslim demagogues and exploited by Islam's enemies. Besides being historical, the above injunction has timeless, general import. It refers to anyone who might endeavor to bar believers—physically or metaphorically—from the exercise of their religious duties (symbolized by the Inviolable House of Worship), and thus lead them away from their faith into the sin of aggression against them.

The fallacy of offensive jihad is based upon another bogus theory of abrogation. This is where the proponents claim that verses 22:39 and 2:190 are abrogated. There is no hadith or Quranic statement supporting this claim. It is blasphemy to believe that God will change His mind and obviously does not know what He is doing.

## FIGHTING AGAINST THE AGGRESSORS

***Fight during the sacred months if you are attacked. For a violation of sanctity is [subject to the law of] retribution. Thus, if***

***anyone commits aggression against you, attack him just as he did you. However, remain conscious of God and know that God is with those who are conscious of him. (2:194)***

Believers are enjoined to fight back if attacked, even during the sacred months during which, according to ancient Arab custom, all fighting was deemed wrong. The sacred months were the first (Muharram), seventh (Rajab), eleventh (Dhu l-Qadah), and twelfth (Dhu l-Hijjah) months of the lunar calendar. Thus, preserving these periods of truce and promoting peace among the frequently warring tribes. The Quran did not revoke, instead, it confirmed this ancient custom. The concluding words of the above verse imply that by remaining conscious of God, they must, when fighting, abstain from all atrocities, including the killing of non-combatants.

## CHAPTER 3

# JIHAD IN DEFENSE OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

### DEFINITION OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The doctrine of religious liberty asserts that everyone has the right to profess and practice whatever religion seems fit, according to their conscience. Freedom to practice religion is the most fundamental form of liberty. It encompasses the right to own private property. One can hold worship services without interference. Similarly, there can only be religious liberty if there is freedom of speech, freedom of association, and freedom of movement.

### FREEDOM OF RELIGION

***There shall be no coercion in matters of faith. (2:256)***

On the strength of the above categorical prohibition of coercion in anything related to faith or religion, all Islamic jurists, without exception, hold that forcible conversion is, under all circumstances, null and void. Any attempt to coerce a non-believer to accept Islam's faith is a grievous sin—a verdict that disposes of the widespread fallacy that Islam places before unbelievers the alternative to “conversion or the sword.” Any forced conversion should be condemned as anti-Islamic.

### FIGHT TO END RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

***God does not love aggressors, and oppression [religious persecution] is even worse than killing. (2:190) Fight against them until there is no more oppression [religious persecution] and***

***the One God is worshipped [freely]. And if they desist, God sees all that they do. If they turn away [from righteousness], know that God is your Lord supreme, [and] how excellent is this Lord supreme, and how excellent is this Giver of succor! (8:39-40) Hence, fight against them until there is no more oppression and one God is worshipped [freely], but if they desist, all hostility shall cease, save against those who [willfully] do wrong. (2:193)***

It is permissible to fight against those who oppress believers and prevent them from worshipping God alone. In other words, fight against them until God can be worshipped without fear of persecution. No one must bow down to another deity against his will. If they refrain from oppressing believers, God knows their motives and rewards them according to their merits. Both these passages stress self-defense—in the broadest sense of the word—as the only justification for war.

#### PREVENTING BELIEVERS FROM PERFORMING A PILGRIMAGE

***Those who are bent on denying the truth and barring [others] from the path of God and from the inviolable house of worship which We have set up for all people alike—[both] those who dwell there and those who come from abroad—and all who seek to profane it by [deliberate] evildoing, [all] such shall We cause to taste grievous suffering in the life to come. (22:25)***

Mecca was in the possession of the hostile Quraysh, and only Muslims were banned from entering the Kabah. The verse above was probably revealed towards the end of the year 6 H. when the pagan Quraysh refused the Prophet and his followers, who had come on pilgrimage from Medina, the right of entry into Mecca and

thus into the sanctuary of the Kabah (see under the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah). "Those who profane it" refers to every religious tenet violated by deviations from the right path. The above verse is not restricted to historical situations. Instead, it relates to every attempt at preventing believers from embarking on a pilgrimage to this symbolic center of their faith.

#### THE QURAYSH ARE NOT TRUE GUARDIANS OF KABAH

***What do they have [now] in their favor that God should not chastise them when they bar [the believers] from the inviolable house of worship—although they are not its [rightful] guardians? None but the God-conscious can be its guardians, but of this most of these [evildoers] are unaware, and their prayers before the temple are nothing but whistling and clapping of hands. (8:34-35)***

Owing to their descent from Abraham, the Quraysh considered themselves entitled to the guardianship of the Kabah (the Inviolable House of Worship). This was the first temple dedicated to the One God. The Quran refutes this contention, just as it refutes the claim of the children of Israel to be “the chosen people” by virtue of their descent from Abraham. In this connection, see 2:124, and especially the last sentence, ***“My covenant does not embrace the wrongdoers.”*** The Quraysh had entirely forsaken Abraham's Unitarian faith, forfeiting any moral claim to the guardianship of the Temple (*AL-BAYT*) built by him. Idol worshippers of Mecca illegally occupied the Kabah. They defiled its sacredness by placing idols and offering human sacrifices, to mention some sacrilegious acts.

Dancing around the Kabah, accompanied by whistling and hand clapping, was a ritual practiced by pre-Islamic Arabs. The

expression “whistling and clapping of hands” may also be metaphorical to denote the spiritual emptiness of religious rituals of those who attribute a quasi-divine efficacy to all manner of circumstantial forces, such as wealth, power, social status, luck, etc.

#### SEVERE SUFFERING IN THE HEREAFTER

***As for those bent on denying the truth and barring [others] from God's path, all good deeds will go to waste. (47:1)***

Whatever good deeds they may do will be so completely outweighed by the above-mentioned the sin of barring others from worshiping God in Kabah. Their good deeds will amount to nothing on the Day of Judgment and lead to severe suffering in the hereafter.

#### JESUS' EXAMPLE

In fact, Jesus used force to evict money changers from the temple of Jerusalem: “And they came to Jerusalem, and Jesus entered the temple and cast out those that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves. And he taught, saying unto them, is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? But ye have made it a den of thieves.” (Mark 11, verses 15 and 17)]

#### DEFENSE OF MONASTERIES, CHURCHES, SYNAGOGUES, AND MOSQUES

***If God had not enabled people to defend themselves against one another, [all] monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques—in [all] God's name is abundantly extolled—would surely have been destroyed [before now]. And God will most certainly succor him who supports his cause. (22:40)***

## PROTECTION OF HINDU AND BUDDHIST TEMPLES

***Do not revile those [beings] whom they invoke instead of God, lest they revile God out of spite and in ignorance. (6:108)***

This prohibition of reviling or abusing anything others hold sacred—even in contravention of God's oneness principle is expressed in the plural and addressed to all believers. Muslims are not allowed to harm the objects of those beliefs and hurt their fellow men's feelings. This is why temples that house these idols should not be destroyed or their treasures looted as well. Destruction of Hindu or Buddhist temples is an un-Islamic act.

## DESTRUCTION OF THE STATUE OF BUDDHA

Before its destruction, the 1,700-year-old Buddha of Bamiyan statue stood more than 150 feet high above a small town at the foot of the Hindu Kush Mountains of central Afghanistan. The Taliban demolished the statue in March 2001, contrary to the Quranic teachings.

## CHAPTER 4

### JIHAD AGAINST PAGANS OF ARABIA

Chapter 9 of the Quran was revealed at Medina, and its subject matter is what to do if the enemy breaks a peace treaty and is guilty of treachery. It does not lay down new rules for the use of force. Verses 1–29 were revealed before the battle of Tabuk in October 631 and verses 30–129 after the Tabuk expedition.

Chapter 9 of the Quran discusses three kinds of people: the polytheists (or pagans), the People of the Book, and the hypocrites (those who pretend to be Muslims but never wholeheartedly embrace Islam). This chapter only covers the war against the pagans of Mecca.

The **Meccan idolaters** are called by the technical term “**mushrikun**” (sing. “mushrik”). This term comes from a three-letter Arabic root “sh-r-k”, which means “to associate” or “take a partner unto something,” so that the word mushrikun literally means “those who take a partner [unto God],” that is to say, “polytheists” or “idolaters.” The injunction in this verse to fight against the “polytheists” does not pertain to either Jews or Christians, who are never referred to within the Quran by the term mushrikun. The two groups are called ahl al-kitab or “**People of the Book**,” meaning people who have been given a book or scripture by God other than Muslims.

#### PEACE TREATIES WITH THE PAGANS OF ARABIA

*About those with whom you have made a covenant and who break it every time because they are not conscious of God. If thou find*

***them at war [with you], make them a fearsome example for those who follow them so that they might take it to the heart. If you have a reason to fear treachery from people [with whom you have established a covenant], cast it back at them equitably, for God does not love the treacherous! (8:56-58)***

The covenant or peace treaty refers to agreements between the Muslim community and non-Muslim political groups. It has two implications for nonbelievers breaking their covenants. Firstly, establishing covenants of peaceful relations with non-Muslims is not only permissible but also desirable. Secondly, Muslims may resort to war only when the other party is openly hostile.

Inflict exemplary punishments on them and teach them lessons for those who follow them.

Before launching an attack, inform the offending party that because of clear evidence of their treachery, you have canceled the treaty with them. In other words, “renounce the covenant equitably” before declaring war, and do not commit aggression by attacking your enemies before renouncing the treaty. Thus, the concluding sentence of this verse—“God does not love the treacherous”—is a warning to believers, as well as their enemies.

## TWO COMMON PRINCIPLES FOR UNDERSTANDING THE QURAN

The Quran is the fundamental religious document for Islam and a source of unimpeachable authority in all matters of doctrine, practice, and law. Muslims, regardless of sectarian leanings, agree that the Quran is God's infallible word.

**Reading in context** means something immediately precedes the passage that clarifies its meaning. Islamophobes and Muslim demagogues, with ulterior motives or sheer ignorance, draw-biased conclusions from isolated verses. They conveniently pick those verses that support their evil agendas. They ignore or declare verses not to their liking as “abrogated.” Such arbitrary and selective quotations pervert the Quran's message. The verse (9:5) , or the so-called sword verse, is routinely distorted and quoted out-of-context. It is a classic example of cherry-picking. Therefore, verse 5 should be considered in conjunction with verses 1-4.

**Quran is consistent and free of contradictions:** One of the fundamental principles in understanding the Quran is that its message is considered as one integral whole and consistent within itself. Its real meaning can be grasped only if we correlate its statements with what is mentioned elsewhere in the Quran. Therefore, we must correlate verse 9:5, so-called “the sword verse”, not only with verses 9:1-4 but also with other fundamental Quranic ordinances concerning war.

#### EXPLANATION OF THE SO-CALLED SWORD VERSE

The purpose of the description of verses 9:1-16 is to present verse 9:5, the so-called sword verse, in the proper historical context. This is to refute the charge that Islam allows the killing of polytheists or non-Muslims if they refuse to convert.

***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. [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!" (9:1-2)***

With reference to God—or the Apostle speaking in God’s name—it is best rendered as “disavowal.” These words, addressed to the mushrikin ("those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God") who have deliberately broken the treaties in force between them and the believers, indicate cancellation of all treaty obligations on the latter’s part. The period of four months between this announcement and the beginning (or resumption) of hostilities is a further elaboration of the injunction "cast it (i.e., the treaty) back at them in an equitable manner", given in 8:58 with reference to a breach of covenant by hostile unbelievers.

***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. If you turn away, know that you can never elude God!" And unto those bent on denying the truth give thou [O Prophet] the tiding of grievous chastisement. (9:3)***

And here is an announcement from Allah and His Messenger to the people on the day of the greater Hajj, that Allah is free from (any commitment to) the [polytheists], and so is His Messenger. Now, if you repent, it is good for you. And if you turn away, then be aware that you can never elude Allah.

***But excepted shall be from among those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God - [people] with whom you [O believers] have made a covenant. They have never failed to fulfil 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. (9:4)***

Verse 9:4 was addressed to those pagan tribes with whom the Prophet Muhammad had peace treaties for a fixed period. During this time, the terms of their treaties were not broken. If those who ascribe divinity to anything besides God have fulfilled their obligations towards you and have not helped anyone against you. As a result, observe your covenant with them until the end of the agreed-upon term. It contradicts the propaganda that Islam offers, “convert or die” for unbelievers.

#### THE SO-CALLED SWORD VERSE

***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. (9:5)***

The above verses were addressed to the unbelievers, who deliberately broke the peace treaty with the believers as described in verses (9:1-2). The breaking of the peace agreement must not be based on speculation but on clear, objective evidence. Before using force, inform the offending party of the treaty's cancellation or **“equitably renounce the covenant.”** Do not commit aggression by attacking your enemies before renouncing the treaty. It is a further elaboration of the injunction “cast it (i.e., the treaty) back at them in an equitable manner” given in 8:58 with reference to a breach of covenant by hostile unbelievers.

After the grace period of 4 months, if active hostilities resume, the above injunction— “slay them wherever you may come upon them”—is valid only within the context of active warfare in progress, on the understanding that “those who wage war against you” are the aggressors or oppressors and a war of liberation is war “in God’s cause.” Believers are implored to do everything that may be necessary and advisable in warfare, i.e., any place from which it is possible to perceive the enemy and to observe his movements. Then, lie in wait for them at every conceivable place and make a fearsome example for those who follow them.

“If they repent, pray, and pay the purifying dues (Zakah), *let them go their way:*” can be understood in two ways. “If they repent” refers to seeking peace and abandoning aggression. See 8:61: ***“If they incline to peace, you incline to it as well, and place your trust in God.”*** It can also be understood as a possible conversion to Islam on the part of “those who ascribe divinity to others besides God,” with whom the believers are at war. Conversion to Islam must be accepted, even if it is a deception to save skin. It is only God who knows men’s secrets. A central point of this verse is that repentant converts should not be treated with hostility for previous crimes. With a conversion to Islam, all previous sins are forgiven as if they were sinless at birth.

#### GIVING REFUGE TO IDOLATORS SEEKING PROTECTION

***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]. Then, convey him to a place where he can feel secure. This is because they [may be] people who [sin only because they] do not know [the truth]. (9:6)***

This verse demolishes the accusation of “convert or die.” Seek thy protection, lit., “seek to become thy neighbor,” a metaphorical expression denoting a demand for protection, based on the ancient Arabian custom (strongly affirmed by Islam) of honoring and protecting a neighbor to the best of one’s ability. “Let him rejoin his homeland,” which implies that he is free to accept or not to accept the Quran’s message: a further re-affirmation of the Quranic injunction that ***“there shall be no coercion in matters of faith.”***

***How could they who ascribe divinity to aught beside God be granted a covenant by God and His Apostle? This is unless it is those [of them] with whom you [O believers] have made a covenant in the vicinity of the Inviolable House of Worship? (As for the latter), so long as they remain true to you, be true to them: for, verily, God loves those who are conscious of Him. (9:7)***

#### DO NOT EXPECT ANY RECIPROCAL KINDNESS

***If they [who are hostile to you] overcame you, they would not respect any tie [with you] nor any obligation to protect. They seek to please you with their mouths while their hearts remain hostile, and most of them are iniquitous. God’s messages they have bartered away for a trifling gain and have thus turned away from His path. Evil, behold, is all that they are wont to do, respecting no tie and no protective obligation regarding a believer. It is they, they, who transgress the bounds of what is right! (9:8-10) Yet if they repent, and take to prayer, and render the purifying dues, they become your brethren in faith. We clearly spell out these messages to the people of [innate] knowledge! (9:11)***

## WAR IF THEY BREAK THEIR COVENANT

*But if they break their solemn pledges after having concluded a covenant and reviled your religion, then fight against these archetypes of faithlessness who, behold, have no (regard for their own) pledges, so that they might desist [from aggression]. Would you, perchance, fail to fight against people who have broken their solemn pledges? They have done all they could to drive the Apostle away and have been the first to attack you? Do you hold them in awe? Nay, it is God alone you should stand in awe if you are [truly] believers! Fight against them! God will chastise them by your hands, and bring disgrace upon them, and will succor you against them. He will soothe the bosoms of those who believe and remove the wrath in their hearts. And God will turn in His mercy unto whom He wills: for God is all-knowing, wise. (9:12-15)*

## TRUE BELIEVERS STRIVE HARD IN GOD'S CAUSE

*Do you [O believers] think you will be spared unless God takes cognizance of your having striven hard (in His cause) without seeking help from any but God and His Apostle and those who believe in Him? For God is aware of all that you do. (9:16)*

# CHAPTER 5

## JIHAD AGAINST MUSLIMS, HYPOCRITES, JEWS, AND CHRISTIANS

### JIHAD AGAINST MUSLIMS

*If two groups of believers fight, bring peace between them. If one of the two [groups] continues to act wrongfully towards the other, fight against the one that acts wrongfully until it reverts to God's commandment. If they revert, make peace between them with justice, and deal equitably [with them], for God loves those who act equitably! All believers are brothers. Hence, [whenever they are at odds] make peace between your two brethren and remain conscious of God so that you might be graced with his mercy. (49:9-10)*

The verses above reveal the justification for using force against Muslims who transgress. In this context, "fighting" refers to all modes of discord and contention, both in word and deed. During the Prophet's lifetime, these verses were applied to disputes between families. It was the immediate successors of the Prophet who interpreted verse 49:9 as allowing a legitimate Islamic ruler to use force against rebellion. The fourth Caliph, Ali, used force to suppress the rebellion of the Kharijites.

### THE CHARGERS

*In the name of God, the most gracious, the dispenser of grace. The chargers run panting, sparks of fire striking, rushing to assault at dawn, raising clouds of dust, hurling blindly into any host!*

***Towards his Sustainer, the man is most ungrateful, and to this, he [himself] bears witness indeed. For the love of wealth, he is most ardently devoted. But does he not know that [on the last day], when all that is in the graves are raised and brought out, and all that is [hidden] in men's hearts is bared? On that day, their Sustainer [will reveal that He] has always been fully aware of them. (100:1-11)***

The hundredth surah (the chargers) refers to a parabolic, imaginary situation depicting religious fanatics and their fratricidal or genocidal killing spree.

Arabs employed war horses, or chargers, from time immemorial down to the Middle Ages (the feminine gender of this term because they preferred mares to stallions). The madly storming chargers symbolize the erring human soul devoid of all spiritual direction, obsessed and ridden by all manner of wrong, selfish desires, madly, unseeingly rushing onwards, unchecked by conscience or reason. He is blinded by the dust clouds and confusing appetites, not knowing whether their assault is aimed at a friend or foe. Whenever he surrenders to his appetites, he forgets God and his own responsibility to Him, storming into insoluble situations and, thus, into its own spiritual destruction.

## WAR AGAINST HYPOCRITES

***How, then, could you be of two minds about the hypocrites, seeing that God [himself] has disowned them because of their guilt? Do you, by chance, seek to guide those God has allowed to go astray? For him whom God lets go astray, thou canst never find any way? They would love to see you deny the truth even as they have denied it so that you should be like them. Do not, therefore, take them for***

*your allies until they forsake evil's domain for the sake of God. If they revert to [open] enmity, seize them and slay them wherever you find them. And do not take any of them for your ally or giver of succor, unless it is such [of them] as have ties with people to whom you yourselves are bound by a covenant, or such as come unto you because their hearts shrink from [the thought of] making war on you. Although, if God had wanted them to become stronger than you, they would have undoubtedly made war on you. Thus, if they let you be, and do not wage war on you, and offer you peace, God does not allow you to harm them. You will find [that there are] others who want to be safe from you and their own folk. However, whenever they are faced with a new temptation to evil, they plunge into it headlong. Hence, if they do not let you be, and do not offer you peace, and do not stay their hands, seize them, and slay them whenever you come upon them. It is against them that We have clearly empowered you [to make war]. (4:88-91)*

The above verses refer to hypocrites who have not forsaken evil's domain and waver between belief and disbelief. How could you be of two minds regarding the moral stature of people who pay lip service to the truth of God's message? Yet, they fail to make a sincere choice between right and wrong. It is only the lack of the requisite power and not true goodwill that causes them to refrain from warring against believers.

#### JIHAD AGAINST JEWS AND CHRISTIANS

*[And] fight against those who - despite having been vouchsafed revelation (aforetime) – do not [truly] believe either in God or the Last Day, and do not consider forbidden that which God and His*

***Apostle have forbidden, and do not follow the religion of truth (which God has enjoined upon them), till they [agree to] pay the exemption tax with a willing hand, after having been humbled (in war). (9:29)***

This verse must be read in the context of the clear-cut foundational verses that war is permitted only in self-defense (see 22:34 and 2:90-194). The above injunction to fight is relevant only in the event of aggression committed against the Muslim community or state. People alluded to are accused of grave sin for refusing to believe in God. The term "apostle" is used here in its generic sense and applies to all the prophets on whose teachings the beliefs of the Jews and the Christians are supposed to be based. "Not forbidding that which God and His apostles have forbidden" must also refer to something as grave, as disbelief in God. This "something" means unprovoked aggression, for God has forbidden this through all the apostles who conveyed His message to man.

In the context of an ordinance enjoining war against them, the above verse must be understood as a call to the believers to fight against such - and only such - of the nominal followers of earlier revelation as deny their own professed beliefs by committing aggression against the followers of the Quran (cf. Manar X,338). During the Prophet's lifetime, the battle of Muthah occurred between Muslims and Syrian Christians.

## **JIZYAH**

**Definition:** Jizyah is now of historical interest and is no longer enforced in the Islamic world today. It was levied upon ahl adh-dhimmah, lit., "the people of the covenant," a historical term for non-Muslims living in an Islamic state with legal protection whose

safety is statutorily assured by the Muslim community. Anti-Islamic demagogues routinely distort the term *dimmah* as a “second class” status for non-Muslims. The term *jizyah*, rendered as "exemption tax", occurs in the Quran only once and is no more and no less than an exemption tax in lieu of military service.

**The purpose:** *Jizyah* is intimately bound up with the Islamic state concept as an ideological organization, a pivotal point if the true purpose of this tax is to be understood. In the Islamic state, every able-bodied Muslim is required to serve in the military (i.e., in a just war for God's cause) whenever the freedom of his faith or the political safety of his community is threatened. A non-Muslim citizen who does not subscribe to Islam's ideology cannot be expected to assume a similar burden. A special tax is levied on non-Muslim citizens to provide for their security.

**Exemption from *Jizyah*:** Only such of non-Muslim of the military age are liable to the payment of *jizyah* if they can easily afford it. Prophet - exempted from the payment of *jizyah*: (1) all women, (2) males who have not yet reached full maturity, (3) old men, (4) all sick or crippled men, (5) priests and monks. (6) All non-Muslim citizens who volunteer for military service are obviously exempted from the payment of *jizyah*.

***Jizyah* versus *Zakah*:** No fixed rate has been set either by the Quran or by the Prophet for this tax, but from all available Traditions, it is evident that it is to be considerably lower than the tax called *zakah* ("the purifying dues") to which Muslims are liable and which - because

it is a specifically Islamic religious duty - it is naturally not to be levied on non-Muslims.

Under Islamic law, conquered nations can worship freely, contingent only on paying a special tax. Non-believers are exempt from the Poor Due (zakah). Any interference with their liberty of conscience is a direct violation of Islamic law. These people were, therefore, called "protected ones" (dhimmi). It does not mean second-class citizens like many Islamophobes proclaim.

## CHAPTER 6

### JIHAD MANDATORY FOR MUSLIM MEN WITH SOME EXCEPTIONS

TRUE BELIEVERS STRIVE HARD FOR GOD’S CAUSE

*They who have attained faith, forsaken evil's domain and strive hard in God's cause—these may look forward to God's grace, for God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace. (2:218) For all who pay heed unto God and the Apostle shall be among those upon whom God has bestowed his blessings. The prophets, and those who never deviate from the truth, those [with their lives] who bore witness to the truth, and the righteous ones. How good a company are these! Such is God's bounty, and none has God's knowledge. (4:69-70)*

The expression “those who have forsaken the domain of evil” denotes, primarily, the early Meccan Muslims who migrated at the Prophet’s bidding to Medina, which was then called Yathrib-to live in freedom and accordance with Islam's dictates.

READINESS TO SACRIFICE

*Most certainly, We shall try you all so that We might mark out those of you who strive hard [in Our cause] and are patient in adversity. We shall test [the truth of] all your assertions. Those bent on denying the truth and barring [others] from God's path cut themselves off from the Apostle after guidance is vouchsafed to them. They cannot harm God, but He will make all their deeds go to waste. O you who have attained faith! Pay heed unto God,*

***and to the Apostle, and let not your [good] deeds come to nothing!  
(47:31-34)***

The “test” is one’s readiness to sacrifice anything, even life. “Cutting oneself off” from the Apostle signifies a rejection of his message and, in this context, a refusal to follow the Quranic call to fight for a just cause, i.e., in defense of the Faith or freedom.

***Fighting is ordained for you, even though it may be hateful to you. It may well be that you hate a thing while it is good for you or love a thing while it is bad for you. God knows, whereas you do not know. (2:216)***

All able-bodied Muslim men suffering persecution must pick up arms in self-defense. This verse must be read alongside 2:190-193 and 22:39. However, it also expresses a general truth applicable to many situations.

## **PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN JIHAD**

In addition to men, Muslim women participated in jihad. The women provided water, treated injured soldiers, and helped retrieve the dead from the battlefields. The Prophet’s wives also participated in the battles by carrying water skins on their backs. They would also pour water into injured men’s mouths. Muslim women rarely engage in combat, but some do. In the battle of Uhud, Nusaybah Umm Ammarra, a Medina woman, was actively involved in combat to defend the Prophet. (See Battle of Uhud).

## **ACTIVE VERSUS PASSIVE BELIEVERS**

***Passive believers, other than the disabled, cannot be compared to those who actively serve God in His cause with their possessions***

*and lives. Those who strive hard with their possessions and lives are exalted above those who are passive. Although God has promised the ultimate good unto all [believers], God has exalted those who strive hard above those who remain inactive by [promising them] a mighty reward—[many] degrees thereof—and forgiveness of sins, and his grace, for God is indeed much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace. (4:95-96)*

The above passage refers to “striving hard in God’s cause” (jihad) in the broadest sense of the term, involving both physical and moral efforts and the sacrifice if need be, of one’s possessions and even one’s life. Those believers who remain passive and do not participate in the struggle for God’s cause, be it physical or moral, will not have the same status as those who strive hard for God’s cause.

## FEAR OF DEATH

*Now those who have attained faith say, “Would that a revelation [allowing us to fight] was bestowed from on high!” But now that a revelation clear in and by itself mentioning war, has been bestowed from on high, you can see those in whose hearts is disease. They are looking at you, [O Muhammad], with the look of one who is about to faint for fear of death! And yet, far better for them would be obedience [to God’s call] and a word that could win [His] approval. Since the matter has been resolved [by his revelation], it would be for their own good to remain true to God. [Ask them]: “Would you, perchance, after turning away [from God’s commandment, prefer to revert to your old ways and] spread corruption on earth, and [once again] cut asunder your ties of kinship?” (47:20-22)*

"Revelation is clear in and by itself" is a reference to 22:39-40, which states categorically—and for the first time—that believers are allowed to wage war whenever "war is wrongfully waged" against them. The last sentence in the above verse is a rhetorical question. This alludes to pre-Islamic Arabia's chaotic conditions, senseless internecine wars, and moral darkness from which Islam freed its followers. However, this verse also has timeless significance, as does the whole passage.

#### VERY FEW WILL SACRIFICE THEIR LIVES

***Yet if We were to ordain for them, "Lay down your lives, or forsake your homelands." Only very few of them would do it. If they did what was admonished, it would benefit them and greatly strengthen their faith. Whereupon We should indeed grant them, out of our grace, a mighty reward and guide them on a straight path. (4:66-68)***

The above verse relates to the half-hearted, who were not prepared to undergo sacrifices their faith demands of them. The reference to laying down one's life in the defense of faith, freedom, and, if necessary, abandoning one's homeland deals with fighting for God's cause.

#### THOSE WHO WERE RELUCTANT TO FIGHT

***And there are indeed those among you such as would lag behind, and then, if calamity befalls you, say, "God has bestowed his favor upon me in that I did not accompany them." But if good fortune comes to you from God, such a person is sure to say just as if there had never been any question of love between you and him, "Oh,***

***would that I had been with them, and thus had a [share in their] mighty triumph!” (4:72-73)***

## **PUNISHMENT IN AFTERLIFE**

### **SIN OF COWARDICE**

***Hence, how [will they fare] when the angels gather them in death, striking their faces and backs? This is because they pursued what God condemned and to hate [whatever would meet with] His goodly acceptance. So, He has caused all the good deeds to go to waste. (47:27-28)***

In the present instance, “that which would meet with His goodly acceptance” is the believer’s readiness to sacrifice, if necessary, his life in the defense of the Faith.

### **FAILURE TO FORSAKE EVIL'S DOMAIN**

***Those whom the angels gather in death while they are still sinning against themselves, [the angels] will ask, “What was wrong with you?” They will answer: “We were too weak on earth.” [The angels] will say: “Was, then, God’s earth not wide enough for you to forsake the domain of evil?” For such, then, the goal is hell—and how evil a journey’s end! (4:97)***

Those who avoid all struggles in God's cause without a valid excuse are described here. Meanwhile, the physical exodus from Mecca to Medina ceased to be obligatory for believers after the conquest of Mecca in the year 8 H., but the spiritual exodus from the domain of evil to that of righteousness continues to be a fundamental demand of Islam. In other words, a person who does not “migrate from evil unto God” cannot be considered a believer. This explains the

condemnation, in the next sentence, of all who are remiss in this respect.

## **EXEMPTION FROM JIHAD PARTICIPATION**

### **SCHOLARS**

***It is not desirable that all believers participate in war. From within every group in their midst, some shall refrain from marching forth to war. They shall devote themselves [instead] to acquiring a deeper knowledge of the faith. They shall [thus be able to] teach their homecoming brethren so that they might guard themselves against evil. (9:122)***

### **DISABLED**

***No blame falls to the blind, the lame, nor to the sick [for staying away from a war in God's cause]. Whoever heeds [the call of] God and his apostle [in deeds or in heart], him will He admit into gardens through which running waters flow. Whereas him who turns away will He chastise with a grievous chastisement. (48:17)***

The three categories (blind, lame, and sick) encompass all kinds of infirmities or disabilities which may prevent a person from actively participating in a war in God's cause. Those who cannot participate physically but still support those fighting with their hearts will receive a reward from God.

### **TRULY HELPLESS**

***But excepted shall be the truly helpless—be they men, women, or children—who cannot bring forth any strength and have not been***

***shown the right way. As for them, God may well efface their sin—  
for God is indeed an absolver of sins, much-forgiving. (4:98)***

The truly helpless are those who cannot find the right way—implying that they are helplessly confused and cannot, therefore, grasp this basic demand of Islam or, alternatively, that the message relating to this demand has not been adequately conveyed and explained to them.

#### NON-MUSLIMS

Only Muslim men are expected to participate in Jihad. Non-Muslims are exempt. This the injunction is historical. Modern armies are composed of professionals, and anyone can join.

## CHAPTER 7

### MILITARY READINESS

The Prophet, being a brilliant and shrewd general, planned his battles very carefully and scored victory after victory over his enemies. As an outstanding military genius and a warrior, the Prophet left many traditions regarding decent war conduct. Agreements are to be fulfilled, treachery avoided, and neither the wounded nor the dead should be mutilated or disfigured. Women, children, and the old are not to be slain, and orchards, crops, and sacred objects are to be spared.

#### GATHERING INTELLIGENCE

***And if any [secret] matter pertaining to peace or war comes within their ken, they spread it abroad. If they refer it to the apostle and to those from among the believers who have been entrusted with authority, such of them as are engaged in obtaining intelligence would indeed know [what to do with] it. (4:83)***

The above reference to peace or war—lit., “security or danger” is connected to statecraft principles, and, in fighting for God’s cause. If you come across useful intelligence information, they should not broadcast it. Instead, they should refer it to the special organs of the state entrusted with gathering and evaluating political and military intelligence. If there is credible and objective intelligence that the enemy is preparing for an attack, it is justified to launch a preemptive strike as anticipatory self-defense with the element of surprise in one’s favor. Intelligence gathering is, therefore, fundamental to decision-making in war and peace.

## ETERNAL VIGILANCE IS LIBERTY'S PRICE

***O you who have attained faith! Be fully prepared for danger, whether you go to war in small groups or together. (4:71) And let them not think—who are bent on denying the truth—that they shall escape [God]. They can never frustrate [his purpose]. Hence, make ready against them whatever force and war mounts you can muster. 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. Whatever you may expend [resources, efforts, and sacrifice of life] in God's cause shall be repaid to you in full, and you shall not be wronged. (8:59-60)***

The expression tethering horses (for war mounts) signifies holding in readiness mounted troops at all points open to enemy invasion. In other words, the overall maintenance of military preparedness against every “enemy of God” who deliberately opposes and seeks to undermine God's moral laws is also an enemy of those who believe in Him. Not only does this connote an effort to guard oneself against imminent danger, but also the making of all necessary preparations regarding military organization, equipment, etc.

## CONQUERING THE FEAR OF DEATH

***Fight you, then, in God's cause since you are only responsible for yourself. Inspire believers to overcome the fear of death. God may well curb the might of those bent on denying the truth. God is stronger in might and stronger in deterrent ability. Whoever rallies to a worthy cause shall share its blessings. Whoever rallies to an evil cause shall be answerable for his part in it, for indeed, God watches over everything. (4:84-85)***

## KEY TO SUCCESS IN A BATTLE

***O Prophet! Inspire the believers to conquer the fear of death when they fight. If there were twenty of you who are patient in adversity, they might overcome two hundred. And if there were one hundred of you, they might defeat one thousand of those who are bent on denying the truth. This is because they cannot grasp it. For the moment, God has lightened your burden, for He knows you are weak. And so, if there be one hundred of you who are patient in adversity, they should overcome two hundred. And if there be one thousand of you, they should [be able to] overcome two thousand by God's leave: for God is with those who are patient in adversity. (8:65-66)***

Muslims were extremely weak, both in numbers and equipment. This is an exhortation to believers to conquer the fear of death and be patient in adversity. This is so that they can overcome an enemy many times their number. "The denier of the truth cannot grasp it (i.e., the truth) " because their spiritual deafness and blindness prevent them from grasping it.

Despite these circumstances, they should have been able to stand up to an enemy twice their size. The proportions of one to two, or, as in the preceding verse, one to ten, are not to be taken literally. In this respect, the reference to God's having "lightened the burden" imposed on believers makes it clear that it is a divine command couched in exhortation and not a prediction of events to come. Conquering the fear of death was a key factor in the Muslim army's defeat of much stronger enemies time and again. The Muslim armies defeated two world powers simultaneously, the Persian and Roman Empires, a feat still not understood by the military historians.

## FEAR OF DEATH LEADS TO MORAL DEATH

***Are you not aware of those who forsook their homelands in their thousands for fear of death—whereupon God said unto them, “die,” and later brought them back to life? God is indeed limitless in his bounty for man—but most people are ungrateful. Fight, then, in God's cause, and know that God is all-hearing, all-knowing. Who will offer God a good loan, which He will repay with a manifold increase? For God takes away and gives abundantly. It is unto Him that you shall be brought back. (2:243-245)***

Here, the Quran addresses the problem of warfare in a just cause by alluding to people who—under hostile attack—who forsook their homelands for fear of death. Since there is no indication as to who the people in this verse are referring to, we must, therefore, assume that the above allusion is parabolically connected with the subsequent call to the faithful to be ready to lay down their lives in God's cause. The fact is that fear of physical death leads to moral death for nations and communities. This is just as their regeneration depends on regaining their moral status through overcoming the fear of death. Fight a just war in self-defense against oppression or unprovoked aggression. “Goodly loan” refers to sacrificing one's life, devoting it to His cause. The above verses, although addressed to the Prophet, relate to every believer.

## CHAPTER 8

### CONDUCT DURING THE BATTLE

#### FIGHT WITH VALOR

***And be not faint of heart when seeking out [enemy] hosts. If you suffer pain, they suffer pain even as you suffer it. But you expect [to receive] from God what they cannot hope for. (4:104)***

#### SLAY THEM AND DRIVE THEM AWAY

***Slay them wherever you come upon them and drive them away from wherever they drive you away—for oppression is even worse than killing. And do not fight against them near the Inviolable House of Worship unless they attack you there first. However, if they fight against you, slay them. Such shall be the recompense of those who deny the truth. But if they desist, God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace. (2:190-191)***

Muslims were commanded to fight with valor and utterly destroy their enemies during battle. For the Muslim community, each battle was a life-or-death situation. The consequences of defeat would have meant the extinction of the Muslim community. On the other hand, a Meccan defeat meant loss of prestige and life.

#### RETREAT IS NOT PERMISSIBLE

***O you who have attained faith! When you meet in battle those bent on denying the truth, with great force, do not turn your backs on them. 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 believers] - shall indeed have earned the burden of God's***

***condemnation, and his goal shall be hell, and how vile a journey's end! (8:15-16)***

The implication is that God's promise of victory prohibits retreat. Since this verse, like the whole of this surah, relates predominantly to the battle of Badr, it may well be presumed that the above admonition forms part of the message of encouragement beginning with the words, "I am with you," which God commanded the angels to convey to the believers before the battle. In accordance with the Quran's didactic method, the moral lesson contained in this verse is not confined exclusively to the historical occasion to which it refers. It pertains to the validity of the permanent law.

#### NEVER SURRENDER OR BEG FOR PEACE

***As such, [when you fight for a just cause], do not lose heart and do not beg for peace at any point. For, seeing that God is with you, you are bound to rise high [in the end], and He will not let your [good] deeds go to waste. This world is a play and a passing delight. But if you believe [in God] and are conscious of Him, He will grant you your deserts. (47:35-36)***

Even if the fortunes of war turn against you, the consciousness of having fought in the cause of truth and justice will enhance the inner strength of believers. This is bound to become a source of their future greatness.

#### VICTORY AND THE POWER OF FAITH

***You are indeed the most excellent community that has ever been brought forth for [the good of] mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, and you believe in God. Now if the followers of earlier revelation had attained to [this kind of] faith,***

***it would have been for their own good. [But only a few] are believers, while most are iniquitous. [But] these can never inflict more than a passing hurt on you, and if they fight against you, they will turn their backs upon you [in flight] and will not be succored. (3:110-111)***

The promise of victory against the *followers of earlier revelation* by the followers of the Quran is conditional upon their being, or remaining, a community of people who “enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and truly believe in God.” History has shown that this promise is bound to lapse whenever Muslims fail to live up to their faith.

***You have already witnessed a sign in the two hosts that met in battle. One host fighting for God's cause and the other denying Him. With their own eyes they saw the others as twice their number, but God strengthens them with his succor whom He wills. In this, there is indeed a lesson for all who have eyes to see. (3:13)***

The above Quranic passage has general import and alludes to an occurrence often witnessed in history, namely, the victory of a numerically weak and ill-equipped group of people filled with a burning belief in the righteousness of their cause over a materially and numerically superior enemy lacking a similar conviction.

#### **SPEND FREELY IN GOD’S CAUSE**

***Spend [freely] in God's cause and let not your own hands destroy you, and persevere in doing good. God loves doers of good. (2:195)***

Spend freely in God's cause because you might destroy yourself by withholding your personal and material contribution to this common effort.

#### DIVINE AID CONTINGENT UPON TRUE FAITH

***If you abstain [from sinning], it will be for your own good, but if you revert to it, We shall revoke [our promise of aid]—and never will your community be of any avail to you, however great its numbers, for God is [only] with those who believe! (8:19)***

Thus, the verse must be understood as an admonition to believers that God will be with them only so long as they remain firm in faith and righteous in action and that, however large their community may be in the future, they will be powerless unless they are true believers.

## CHAPTER 9

### RESTRICTION ON THE USE OF FORCE

#### THE PRINCIPLE OF DISCERNMENT

Islamic law imposes restrictions on the use of force in self-defense: military necessity, protection of enemy non-combatants, proportionality, accepting an offer of peace, and refraining from destroying infrastructure, trees, and vegetation. Violence is also prohibited in the vicinity of the holy city of Mecca and during the four sacred months.

Just war conduct should be governed by discernment. Therefore, acts of war should be directed towards the inflictors of the wrong and not towards civilians caught in circumstances they did not create. This rule forbids the use of weapons of mass destruction of any kind.

#### DO NOT KILL OR PLUNDER NONCOMBATANTS

***[Hence], O you who have attained faith, when you go forth [to war] in God's cause, use your discernment. Do not—out of a desire for the fleeting gains of this worldly life—say unto anyone who offers you the greeting of peace, “you are not a believer,” for with God there are unlimited rewards. You, too, were once in the same condition, but God has been gracious to you. Use, therefore, your discernment. God is always aware of what you do. (4:94)***

Even if the enemy uses peace as a deception, it must be accepted. This verse prohibits treating noncombatants as enemies and taking advantage of their supposed non-belief as a pretext for plundering them. “You are not a believer,” and therefore one of the enemies.

The injunction “use your discernment” imposes on believers the duty of making sure, in every case, whether the persons concerned are actively engaged in hostilities or not. This is in sharp contrast to the Old Testament narrative of wars, where noncombatants were routinely killed, and sometimes even enemy animals were not spared.

In one battle, Muslims killed enemy children. When the Prophet found out, he became extremely irate and said, “What has happened to the people to make them transgress their limits and go as far as to even kill children?” A man said, “Sir, were they not the children of the pagans?” The Prophet replied, “Even the best of your people are the children of the pagans.”

Since the preceding injunction refers to the whole community, the above clause, too, bears the same implication, namely, a reference to the time when the Muslim community was, because of its weakness and numerical insignificance, at the mercy of enemies endowed with greater power. Believers are told: “Remember your erstwhile weakness (you, too, were once in the same condition) and treat the peaceful among your enemies with the same consideration with which you yourselves once wanted to be treated.”

## PROPORTIONALITY

***As for him who responds to aggression only to the extent of the attack leveled against him and is treacherously attacked again, God will most certainly succor him, for God is indeed an absolver of sins, much-forgiving. (22:60)***

The conduct of a just war should be governed by proportionality. Responses to aggression should be limited to what the enemy did to

him. This verse stresses the principle of self-defense as the only justification for war, with the proviso that retaliation must not exceed the injury initially suffered. The concluding part of the verse implies that, in the case of repeated, unprovoked aggression, believers are allowed to wage an all-out war to destroy the enemy's military power. Since such an all-out war may conflict with the principle of limited retaliation alluded to above, the Quran states that God absolves believers of what otherwise might have been a sin since it is they “against whom war is being wrongfully waged” by repeated acts of aggression.

#### REFRAIN FROM CRUELTY

***And will you [always], whenever you lay a hand [on others], lay a hand [on them] cruelly, without restraint? (26:130)***

The above refers to the story of the Tribe of Ad and the Prophet Hud. In the verse above, emphasis is placed on the tyrannical behavior of the tribe of Ad, owing to their warlike conflicts with other people. The term *JABBAR*, when applied to a man, denotes haughtiness, overbearing, exorbitant, and cruelty. He does not restrain himself morally in his dealings with those weaker than himself. It expresses a Quranic prohibition, valid always, against unnecessary cruelty in warfare. This is coupled with the positive, clearly-implied injunction to subordinate every act of war—as well as the decision to wage war as such—to moral considerations and restraints.

#### EXCESSIVE VIOLENCE VERSUS RELUCTANCE TO FIGHT

***Are you not aware of those who have been told, “curb your hands, and be constant in prayer, and render the purifying dues?” But***

*as soon as fighting [in God's cause] is ordained for them, lo, some of them stand in awe of men as one should stand in awe of God—or in even greater awe—and say, “O our sustainer! Why have thou ordained fighting for us? If only thou had granted us a delay for a short while!” (4:77)*

"Curb your hands," and refrain from cruelty. The fact that most people must be told to refrain from violence is contrasted, in the next sentence, with the unwillingness of many to expose themselves to physical danger for a righteous cause.

## CHAPTER 10

### MARTYRDOM

Warriors of Islam (mujahideen) will be rewarded with victory in this life. As martyrs (shahids or witnesses) for their faith, those who fall in battle will be rewarded with eternal life. In Islam, a Shahid is a witness to the confession or profession of faith. The willingness to sacrifice everything, even life itself, is the ultimate testimony or profession of faith. The Quran does not mention seventy virgins. Muslim demagogues have added yet another perversion to Islam that unfriendly opponents of Islam routinely exploit.

#### MARTYRS ARE STILL ALIVE

***Say not of those who are slain in God's cause, "They are dead." No, they are alive, but you perceive it not. And most certainly shall We try you by means of danger, hunger, loss of worldly goods, lives, and [labor's] fruits. But give glad tidings to those who are patient in adversity—who, when calamity befalls them, say, "Unto God do we belong and unto Him we shall return." It is they upon whom their sustainer's blessings and grace are bestowed, and it is they, they who are on the right path! (2:154-157) Do not think of those slain in God's cause as dead. No, they are alive! With their sustainer have they their sustenance, exulting in [martyrdom] which God has bestowed upon them out of His bounty. (3:169-170)***

In accordance with the Quran, this life is only the first stage of a journey that continues after death. A day will come when the world ends, the dead will rise from the grave, and the Last Judgment will take place. The righteous will be rewarded, while non-repentant

sinner will be punished. The death of a martyr is an exception to the rule. Without resurrection and God's judgment, martyrs will enter paradise. All their sins have been washed away by their ultimate sacrifice, and they now live an everlasting life in paradise.

#### DO NOT REGRET MARTYRDOM

*O you who have attained faith! Be not like those who are bent on denying the truth and say of their brethren [who die] after having set out on a journey to faraway places or gone forth to war, “Had they but remained with us, they would not have died,” or, “They would not have been slain”—for God will cause such thoughts to become a source of bitter regret in their hearts, since it is God who grants life and deals death. And God sees all that you do. (3:156)*

#### BARTERING TEMPORARY LIFE FOR ETERNAL LIFE

*Hence, let them fight in God’s cause—all who are willing to barter the life of this world for life to come. For him who fights in God’s cause, whether slain or victorious, We will grant a mighty reward. (4:74)*

#### GOD'S FORGIVENESS IS BETTER THAN AMASSING WEALTH

*And if indeed you are slain or die in God’s cause, then surely forgiveness from God and his grace is better than all that one could amass [in this world]. Indeed, if you die or are slain, God will surely gather you to Him. (3:157-158) And as for those who forsake the domain of evil [and strive] in God’s cause, and then are slain or die—God will most certainly provide for them a goodly sustenance [in the life to come] for God—He alone—is the*

***best of providers. He will most certainly cause them to enter into a state [of being] that shall please them well, for God is all-knowing, most forbearing. (22:58-59)***

In other words, causing them to enter life after death in a manner that will please them well. It implies that, by sacrificing their lives for God's cause, they will receive His forgiveness of whatever sins they previously committed.

#### PARADISE FOR MARTYRS AND PUNISHMENT FOR UNBELIEVERS

***And as for those who are slain in God's cause, He will never let their deeds fall to waste. He will guide them [in the hereafter as well], set their hearts at rest, and admit them to the paradise He has promised them. O you who have attained faith! If you help [the cause of] God, He will help you and strengthen your steps. As for those who are bent on denying the truth, ill fortune awaits them since He will let all of their good deeds come to waste. This because they hate [the very thought of] what God has bestowed from on high. Have they, then, never journeyed about the earth and observed what happened in the end to those [willful sinners] who lived before their time? God destroyed them utterly, and the same fate awaits all who deny the truth. This is because God is the protector of all who have attained faith, whereas they who deny the truth have no protector. God will admit all who attain faith and do righteous deeds into gardens through which running waters flow. While they who are bent on denying the truth shall have—even though they may enjoy their life [in this world] and eat as cattle eat—the fire [of the hereafter] for their abode (47:4-12).***

They are opposed to revelations relating to man's moral responsibility to a Supreme Being. In other words, it is their rejection of moral responsibility inherent in all divine revelations. This deprives the deeds of "those who are bent on denying the truth"—even such deeds as might be termed "good"—of all moral value.

## REWARD FOR ULTIMATE SACRIFICE

***God has bought believers their lives and possessions, promising paradise in return. Therefore, they fight for God's cause, and slay, and are slain. This is a promise that God has willed upon himself in [the words of] the Torah, and the Gospel, and the Quran. And who could be more faithful to his covenant than God? Rejoice, then, in the bargain which you have made with Him, for this is your supreme triumph! (9:111)***

## SUICIDE AND MARTYRDOM

There is no direct mention of suicide in the Quran; however, it is clear from the Prophet's Traditions that the sin of suicide is no less than murder. A man was wounded in the battle, and his pain was unbearable, so he took a knife, cut off his hand, and bled to death. According to the Prophetic Tradition, in response to the man's suicide, God said, "My servant hastened himself to Me, and so I made paradise unlawful for him." Similarly, there are many other Prophetic Traditions describing the damnation of suicide victims' souls.

# CHAPTER 11

## HUMAN RIGHTS FOR WAR PRISONERS AND DISTRIBUTION OF WAR GAINS

### THE FIRST QURANIC REFERENCE DEALING WITH WAR PRISONERS

Muslims captured almost seventy prisoners of war at Badr. There was no Quranic reference to prisoners of war before the battle of Badr. The Prophet consulted his Companions. Umar ibn al-Khattab believed they should be killed in revenge for their past misdeeds, particularly for their persecution of Muslims before their exodus to Medina. Abu Bakr, on the other hand, pleaded for forgiveness and prisoners' release. He supported his plea with the argument that such an act of mercy might induce some of them to realize Islam's truth.

The Prophet distributed prisoners among Muslim families of Medina and gave a general order that all prisoners should be treated well. These families treated their prisoners like guests. Some of them fed their own food to their “guests” and ended up hungry. Thus, human rights for prisoners of war were first established following the battle of Badr. Later, Divine revelation established that prisoners' killing is a grave sin, and they must be treated with respect and cannot be tortured.

### KILLING PRISONERS OF WAR: A GRAVE SIN

***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. Enjoy, then, all that***

***is lawful and good among the things you have gained in war and remain conscious of God. He is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace. (8:68-69)***

The reference to the “tremendous chastisement” that might have befallen the Muslims “but for a decree from God that had already gone forth”—i.e., a course of action foreordained in God’s knowledge—makes it clear that the killing of the captives would have been a grave sin. The Prophet adopted Abu Bakr’s approach. The rich prisoners were released for a ransom. Those prisoners who could not pay a ransom but could read and write were asked to teach reading and writing to Muslim children in Medina. When they did, they were also released. Those prisoners who were destitute were freed without a ransom. Only two war criminals, Uqbah bin Muayt and Al-Nadir Ibn al-Harith were executed for their previous misdeeds. (See the chapter on the battle of Badr.)

#### SET THEM FREE AGAINST RANSOM OR BY GRACE

***Now when you meet [in war] those who are bent on denying the truth, smite their necks until you overcome them fully, and then tighten their bonds, but thereafter [set them free] either by an act of grace or against ransom, so that the burden of war may be lifted, thus [shall it be]. And [know that] had God so willed, He could indeed punish them [himself], but [He wills you to struggle] to test you [all] against one another. (47:4)***

The expression “tighten their bonds” denotes the taking of prisoners of war during active combat. In addition, it may also refer to any sanctions or safeguards which would make it unlikely that aggression could be resumed in the foreseeable future. The term ransom also includes, in this context, a mutual exchange of

prisoners of war. “So as to test” believers to prove by actual deeds the depth of their faith and their readiness for self-sacrifice. It also enables the aggressors to realize how wrong they have been and, thus, brings them closer to the truth.

#### FREE THEM EVEN IF THEY DECEIVE

***O Prophet, say unto the captives 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 forgive you your sins, for God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.” And should they seek to play false with you—well, they were false to God [himself] before this. But He gave [believers] mastery over them. And God is all-knowing, wise. (8:70-71)***

To be freed from the obligation of paying a ransom, they might “play false with you” by pretending to show a change of heart and acceptance of Islam. Thus, Muslims are required, by implication, to accept the declarations of the captives at face value. They are also instructed not to be swayed by mere suspicion of their motives. The possibility of treachery on the part of those captives and even a later discovery that some of them had indeed, played falsely should not induce Muslims to deviate from the course ordained by God.

#### THE DISTRIBUTION OF WAR GAINS

##### SPOILS OF WAR ARE PUBLIC PROPERTY

***They will ask you about the war spoils. Say: “All the 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! (8:1) And know that whatever booty you acquire [in war], one-***

***fifth belongs to God and the Apostle, near of kin, the orphans, the needy, and the wayfarer. (8:41)***

All spoils of war belong to “God and the Apostle,” which is a metonym for a government that rules in accordance with the laws of the Quran and the teachings of God’s Apostle. Any war booty claimed is public property, and no individual warrior claims it. The immediate occasion of this revelation was the question of the booty acquired by the Muslims in the battle of Badr. However, the principle enunciated above is always valid. Most Islamic jurists believe that, whereas four-fifths of all spoils may either be distributed among those who actively took part in the war effort or be otherwise utilized for the welfare of the community, one-fifth must be reserved for the specific purposes enumerated in the above verse, by “the near of kin and the orphans,” who, in this context, are the relatives of fallen combatants.

#### WAR-GAINS WITHOUT ACTUAL FIGHTING (FAY)

The verses below refer to the conflict between the Muslim community and the Jewish tribe of Banu al-Nadir of Medina and to the subsequent expulsion of the latter without actual fighting. (For details concerning this conflict, see Chapter: Treason by Banu Nadir.) The term fay is applied in the Quran and the Traditions exclusively to war-gains—whether consisting of lands, tributes, or indemnities—which are obtained, as a condition of peace, from an enemy who has laid down arms before actual fighting has taken place. As so often in the Quran, the expression “God and the Apostle” signifies the Islamic cause. It is also a metonym for a government that rules in accordance with the Quran’s laws and the Prophet’s teachings.

## FAY BELONGS TO THE NEEDY

***Yet [remember] whatever [spoils have been taken] from the enemy [the Banu al-Nadir], God has turned over to his Apostle. You did not have to spur on the horse or camel. [Or you did not have to fight for it]. God gives his apostles mastery over whomever He wills—for God can will anything. Whatever [spoils taken] from the people of those villages, God has turned over to his Apostle—[all of it] belongs to God and the Apostle, [and not to individual Muslim warriors] and the near of kin [of deceased believers], orphans, the needy, and the wayfarer, so that it may not be [a benefit] going round and round among such of you as may [already] be rich. Hence, accept [willingly] whatever the Apostle gives you [thereof] and refrain from [demanding] anything that he withholds from you; and remain conscious of God: for God is severe in retribution. (59:6-7)***

See 8:41 above, which relates to booty acquired in actual warfare, of which only one-fifth is reserved for the above five categories. However, fay gains are to be used in their entirety under these five headings. Accordingly, in later times, the head of an Islamic state must decide—in the light of exigencies—how the share of “God and His Apostle” is to be utilized for the commonwealth.

## NEEDY AMONG EMIGRANTS

***[Thus, part of such war-gains shall be given] to the poor among those who have forsaken the domain of evil: [emigrants] those who have been driven from their homelands and their possessions, seeking favor with God and [his] goodly acceptance, and who aid [the cause of] God and His Apostle. It is they, who are true to their word! (59:8)***

## NEEDY AMONG THE ANSARS

***And [it shall be offered, too, unto the poor from among] those who, before them, [before emigrants came to them] had their abode in this realm and in faith. [Those] who love all that come to them in search of refuge, and who harbor in their hearts no grudge for whatever the others may have been given. But they rather give them preference over themselves, even though poverty may be their own lot. For, such as from their own covetousness are saved-they shall attain to a happy state! (59:9)***

It is also for those (Ansars) who embraced the faith before the Emigrants arrived in Medina. They received the refugees with the utmost generosity, sharing with their brethren their own dwellings and all their possessions. They preferred to give to others over themselves, even though they were in need. Thus, greed, stinginess, and covetousness are pointed out here as the main obstacles to man's attaining a happy state in this world and in the hereafter. In a wider sense, the quote above also refers to all true believers, always, who live in freedom and security within Islam. They are prepared to receive, with open arms, anyone who is compelled to leave his homeland to live in accordance with his faith dictates.

## CHAPTER 12

### INCULCATE FRIENDSHIPS WITH FRIENDLY NON-MUSLIMS

The sixtieth surah (The Examined One) was revealed after Hudaybiyyah's truce. This surah is devoted to believers' relations with unbelievers.

TREAT PEACEFUL NONBELIEVERS WITH KINDNESS AND  
FULL EQUITY

*It may well be that God will bring about [mutual] affection between you [O believers] and some of those whom you [now] face as enemies, for God is all-powerful, much forgiving, and a dispenser of grace. As for such [of unbelievers] as do not fight against you on account of [your] faith, and neither drive you away from your homelands, God does not forbid you to show them kindness and behave towards them with full equity, for God loves those who act equitably. (60:7-8)*

Believers are encouraged to form friendships with non-believers who are not hostile to them and their faith. Islam is an evangelizing faith, and developing rapport with nonbelievers is the first step in promoting it. There are many exhortations in the Quran to be gracious to one's parents and kinsfolk who may be nonbelievers. This is done more explicitly in the above verses, where believers are reminded that friendly relations with unbelievers who are not hostile to the Muslim community are permissible and even desirable.

## ALLY WITH GOD'S PARTISANS AND THE APOSTLE

*Your only helper shall be God, and his Apostle, and those who have attained faith and are constant in prayer, render the purifying dues, and bow down [before God]. For all who ally themselves with God and his Apostle and those who have attained faith—it is they, the partisans of God, who shall be victorious! (5:55-56) Those who are bent on denying the truth are allies of one another. Unless you act likewise [being ally among yourselves], oppression will reign on earth, and widespread corruption. (8:73)*

## EXEMPLARY UNITY BETWEEN THE TWO ARAB TRIBES

*Hold fast, all together, to God's bond, and do not separate from one another. And remember God's blessings on you. How, when you were enemies, He brought your hearts together so that through His blessing you became brethren. When you were on the brink of a fiery abyss, He saved you from it. (3:103) He has strengthened thee [the prophet] with His succor and by giving believing followers whose hearts He has united. Therefore, if you had expended all that is on earth, you could not have brought their hearts closer [by thyself], but God did bring them together. Verily, He is almighty and wise. (8:62-63)*

During pre-Islamic times, the two main Arab tribes of Medina—the Aws and Khazraj—were at war with each other and had strong hatred for one another, causing long conflicts and battles between them. The reminder of their one-time mutual enmity is an allusion to man's lot on earth from which only God's guidance can save him. Their disbelief had them standing at the edge of a fiery abyss or a

pit of fire. This is also a metaphor for suffering and the inescapable consequence of spiritual ignorance.

***Those who have attained faith and forsaken evil, striving hard with their possessions and lives, for God's cause. In addition, those who shelter and succor [them]—these are [truly] friends and protectors of one another. (8:72) And how could you deny the truth when it is in you that God's messages are conveyed, and it is in your midst that His apostle lives? But he who holds fast unto God has already been guided onto a straight way. (3:101)***

Historically, the expression “forsaking the domain of evil” relates to the Meccan Muslims who migrated with the Prophet to Medina. “Those who shelter and succor [them]” refer to the Ansar at Medina who were newly converted Muslims in that town. These two groups of believers formed an exemplary alliance and friendship.

## CHAPTER 13

# A PROHIBITION OF ALLIANCES WITH HOSTILE NONBELIEVERS

### DETERMINE WHO YOUR ENEMIES ARE

For those whose behavior and utterances indicate enmity toward Islam and its followers, friendship is out of the question. It is impossible to establish genuine friendships with hostile nonbelievers whose outlook on life is so fundamentally different from Islam's teachings. The prohibition on taking unbelievers as friends relates only to those who are actively antagonistic towards believers.

In dealing with a nonbeliever individually, avoid stereotyping and give the benefit of the doubt to that person. Even casual contact with an inactive nonbeliever is better than no contact. If it is possible to do good to the nonbeliever, perhaps the doors of goodwill will finally open. In general, Muslims may encounter the following groups as potential enemies. This refers, of course, to relations between communities, and not necessarily between individuals.

### DENIERS OF THE TRUTH

***O you who have attained faith! Do not take truth deniers for your allies instead! Do you want to present God with manifest proof of your guilt? (4:144) As for those who choose truth deniers as allies instead of believers, do they hope to be honored by them when all honors belong to God [alone]. (4:139) [Remember that] those bent on denying the truth are allies of one another. (8:73)***

The term “allies” alludes to a moral alliance with deniers of the truth and adoption of their way of life. This is motivated by the false hope of being honored or accepted as equals by the former. Imitation of confirmed unbelievers' way of life conflict with true faith's ethical principles and inevitably, it leads to the gradual abandonment of those principles. Those bent on denying the truth of the divine message share a common denominator between them precluding being real friends with believers. The injunctions provided in this verse are general law and valid for all time.

#### NO RELATION WITH THE HOSTILE PAGAN QURAYSH

***O you who have attained faith! Do not take my enemies—who are your enemies as well—for your friends, showing them affection even though they are bent on denying whatever truth has come to you. They have driven the Apostle and you away, [only] because you believe in God, your sustainer! If [it be true that] you have gone forth [from your homes] to strive in My cause, and out of a longing for My goodly acceptance, [do not take them for your friends], inclining towards them in secret affection. I am fully aware of all that you conceal and do openly. And any of you who do this has already strayed from the right path. (60:1)***

“My enemies—who are your enemies as well?” implies that people who deliberately reject God’s messages are ipso facto inimical to those who believe in them. They are guilty of the persecution and forced emigration of the Prophet and his followers from Mecca to Medina. In a more general sense, however, it is an allusion to the potential persecution of believers of all times by “those who are bent on denying the truth,” i.e., those who are averse to religious beliefs as such.

## DENIERS OF TRUTH WANT YOU TO DENY TRUTH

***If they [your enemies] could manage to overcome you, they will [still] remain your foes. They will stretch forth their hands and tongues against you with evil intent, for they desire that you too may deny the truth. But [bear in mind that] neither your kinsfolk nor [even] your own children will be of any benefit to you on resurrection day, [for then] He will decide between you [on your merit alone], and God sees all that you do. (60:2-3)***

## THOSE WHO FIGHT AGAINST YOU

***God only forbids you to become friendly towards those who fight against you because of [your] faith. These people drive you away from your homeland or assist [others] in driving you forth. As for those [from among you] who turn towards them in friendship, it is they, they who are truly wrongdoers! (60:9) O you who have attained faith! Do not be friends with whom God has condemned! They [who would befriend them] are indeed bereft of all hope of a life to come—just as those deniers of the truth are bereft of all hope of [ever again seeing] those who are [now] in their graves. (60:13)***

Only people without belief in an afterlife can remain neutral between right and wrong. They have no hope of seeing those in their graves because they reject the resurrection.

## NONBELIEVER RELATIVES

***O you who have attained faith! Do not take your fathers and brothers as allies if the denial of the truth is dearer than faith. Those of you who ally themselves with them—it is they, they who are evildoers! (9:23)***

## ENMITY TO ISLAM AND MUSLIMS

***O you who have attained faith! Do not take friends who are not like you. They spare no effort to corrupt you and are delighted to see you in distress. Vehement hatred has already emerged from their mouths, but what their hearts conceal is far worse. We have indeed made the signs clear to you if you use your reason. Lo! It is you who are willing to love them, but they will not love you. Although you believe in all revelations [including the Bible] and when they meet you, they assert, "We believe [as you believe]." When they find themselves alone, they gnaw their fingers in rage against you. Say: "Perish in your rage! God has full knowledge of what is in the hearts [of men]!" If good fortune comes to you, it grieves them. If evil befalls you, they rejoice in it. But if you are patient in adversity and conscious of God, their guile cannot harm you at all: for God encompasses [with his might] all that they do. (3:118-120)***

“Those who are not of your kind” means only those whose enmity to Islam and its followers is apparent from their behavior and utterances. Their outlook on life is so fundamentally opposed to Muslims' that genuine friendship is out of the question.

## PSEUDO ALLIES AND CRYPTO ISLAM

***Let not the believers take those who deny the truth for their allies in preference to the believers—since he who does this cuts himself off from God in everything—unless it be to protect yourselves against them in this way? But God warns you to beware of Him, for with God is all journeys' end. Say: "Whether you conceal what is in your heart or bring it into the open, God knows it. He knows***

***all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth, and God has the power to will anything.” (3:28-29)***

The phrase “*unless it be to protect yourselves*” means that if you have reason to fear, those who deny the truth when more powerful than the Muslims and can damage the latter, unless they become “allies.” In this case, such believers are allowed to show pseudo-friendship to the disbelievers outwardly and conceal their feelings of rejection of the way of life of the deniers of the truth. “Crypto-Islam” is the secret adherence to Islam while publicly professing another faith. This word was used in reference to Spanish and Sicilian Muslims during the Inquisition.

“Whether you conceal what is in your heart” refers to the real motives underlying the decision of a Muslim group or power to form an alliance with “those who deny the truth” in preference to, or against the legitimate interests of, other believers.

## CRYPTO MUSLIMS

The first Muslims arrived in Spain in 711. Mass expulsion of all Muslims was decreed and carried out in 1609-14. 300,000 people were forced to leave their homes and deported. In 1502, Spanish Muslims were offered baptism or exile. Many of them were baptized and practiced Islam secretly. In 1526, the Muslims of Valencia and Aragon were similarly forced to convert. Thereafter, Islam was officially banned in Spain. These forcible converts were called “Moriscos” (Spanish: “Little Moor”), a designation for Spanish Muslims who became baptized Christians. Several generations later, crypto-Muslims were expelled from their homeland. Beginning in the 12th century and continuing for hundreds of years, the Inquisition is infamous for its torture and

persecution of Jews and Muslims. Its most deadly manifestation was in Spain, where the Spanish Inquisition was a dominant force for more than 200 years, resulting in some 32,000 executions.

#### RECASTING FAITH UNDER DURESS

***As for anyone who denies God after attaining faith and this, to be sure, does not apply to one who does it under duress, his heart remains true to his faith. But [only] him who willingly opens his heart to a denial of the truth. Upon all such [falls], God's condemnation and tremendous suffering await them. (16:106)***

#### THE CASE OF AMMAR BIN YASIR

The above verse was revealed in the case of Ammar bin Yasir whose parents were mercilessly butchered before his eyes by the Quraysh. He was put to such unbearable torture that, to save his life, he had to utter the words of unbelief demanded of him. Afterward, when he came to the Prophet feeling guilty and sorrowful, he said: "O Messenger of Allah, they did not let me go until I spoke evil of you and praised their deities." The Prophet asked him: How do you feel about this in your heart? He replied humbly: My heart is fully convinced of faith. At this, the Prophet replied: "If they put you to the same torture again, you may utter the same words."

#### CRYPTO JEWS

It was during the 14th century that the Christians reconquered Spain in full swing. A crusading spirit permeated most levels of society. Compounded with the fear of the Black Death in the mid-14th century, the atmosphere was ripe for anti-Jewish sentiment. During the riots against Jews, hundreds and thousands of Jews were killed,

and many fled, or converted to Christianity. Those Jews who existed outwardly as Christians but practiced Judaism in secret were called *Marranos* in Spanish, literally meaning “swine.”

## PROHIBITION OF ALLIANCE WITH HOSTILE JEWS AND CHRISTIANS

***O you who have attained faith! Do not take [hostile] Jews and Christians as your allies. They are allies of one another, and whoever allies himself with them becomes one of them. God does not guide such evildoers. (5:51) If you pay heed to some of those to whom revelation was vouchsafed aforetime [hostile Jews and Christians], they might cause you to renounce the truth after you believe [in it]. (3:100)***

Each of these two communities extends genuine friendship only to its own adherents—i.e., the Jews to the Jews and the Christians to the Christians. Also, due to their hostility towards Muslims cannot, therefore, be expected to be allies with Quran followers. Those who ally with them deliberately sin because of the believer’s loss of moral identity. This is if he imitates non-Muslims’ way of life. However, as made abundantly clear in 60:7-9, this prohibition of a “moral alliance” with non-Muslims does not constitute an injunction against normal, friendly relations with those well-disposed toward Muslims.

## HYPOCRITES SEEKING ALLIANCE FOR POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY

***And yet you can see how those in whose hearts there is a disease vie with one another for their good will, saying [to themselves], “We fear in case a fortune turns 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. While those who have attained faith will say [to one another], “Are these the self-same people who swore by God with their most solemn oaths that they were indeed with you? In vain are all their works, for now, they are lost!” (5:52-53)***

“Those in whose hearts there is a disease” refers to hypocrites within the Muslim community vying with one another and trying to imitate the way of life of the hostile Jews and Christians seeking their goodwill, mostly for political expediency “in case fortune turns against them.” God may bring an “opening”—namely, the opening of good fortune for the believers. The “other event of God’s own **devising**” may refer to a divine punishment of the hypocrites apart from the good fortune in store for the true believers.

#### DO NOT ASSOCIATE WITH HYPOCRITES

***Are you not aware of those who would be friends with people whom God has condemned? They are neither of you [O believers] nor of those [who utterly reject the truth]. So, they swear to a falsehood while knowing it [to be false]. God has prepared them for severe suffering [in the life to come], and evil indeed is what they do. They have made their oaths as a cover [for their falsehood], and thus they turn others away from God's path. Hence, shameful suffering awaits them. Neither their worldly possessions nor their offspring will be of any help to them against God. It is they who are destined for fire, to endure! On the day when God raises them all from the dead, they will swear before Him as they [now] swear before you, thinking they are on firm***

***ground [in their assumptions]. Oh, it is they, they who are the [greatest] liars! (58:14-18)***

In the above context, the ones “who would be friends with people whom God has **condemned**” are the half-hearted who—while dimly perceiving the truth of God’s existence and self-revelation—are nevertheless unwilling to surrender themselves to this truth for fear of estranging themselves from their God-denying environment and, thus, of losing what they regard as the material advantages of a spiritually uncommitted life. It is this moral falsehood to which the last sentence of this verse refers. They turn others away from God’s path by sowing doubts in others’ hearts. In their minds, their preference for worldly benefits over spiritual commitment are reasonable and morally justified. The people, thus, characterized, have reached the utmost degree of self-deception.

#### SATAN’S PARTISANS

***Satan has gained mastery over them and caused them to remain oblivious to God. Such are Satan’s partisans. Oh, it is they, Satan’s partisans, who will truly lose! Those who contend against God and his Apostles, they [on judgment day] shall be among the most abject. [For] God has thus ordained: I shall most certainly prevail, I and my Apostles!” God is powerful, almighty! You cannot find people who [truly] believe in God and the last day and [at the same time] love anyone who contends against God and his Apostle—even though they may be their fathers, sons, or brothers, or [others of] their kindred. (58:19-22)***

The operative phrase of this passage is contained in the words, “anyone who contends against God and His Apostle”—i.e., anyone

who is engaged in active hostility against God's message and the person or teachings of His Apostle.

#### DO NOT BEFRIEND MOCKERS OF YOUR FAITH

*You who have attained faith! Do not take for your friends such as mock at your faith and make a jest of it. Be they from among those who have been vouchsafed revelation before your time, or [from among] those who deny the truth [of revelation as such]—but remain conscious of God, if you are [truly] believers. For, when you call to prayer, they mock at it and make a jest of it—simply because they are people who do not use their reason. Say: “O followers of earlier revelation! Do you find fault with us for no other reason than that we believe in God [alone], and in that which he has bestowed from on high upon us as well as that which he has bestowed aforetime? Or [is it only] because most of you are iniquitous?” (5:57-59)*

#### IF YOU EVER ABANDONED YOUR FAITH

*O you who have attained faith! If you ever abandon your faith God will in time, bring forth [in your stead] people whom he loves and who love him—humble towards the believers, proud towards all who deny the truth. [People] who strive hard in God's cause, and do not fear being censured by anyone who might censure them. Such is God's favor, which He grants unto whom He wills. And God is infinite, all-knowing. (5:54)*

By relying on non-Muslims who are hostile to Islam and taking them as allies and mentors, you have abandoned your faith.

## CHAPTER 14

### MUHAMMAD THE PROPHET OF PEACE

#### MAKING PEACE WITH ENEMIES

Early Islam as a movement was strongly influenced by peacemaking values reacting against the inherently violent pagan Arab society and decades-long war between Persians and Romans. The Persian conquest of Jerusalem in 614 struck the Prophet contemporaries as apocalyptic, triggering the Quran's prediction:

***Defeated have been the Byzantines in the lands close-by; yet it is they who, notwithstanding this defeat, shall be victorious within a few years: [for] with God rests all power of decision, first and last. (30:2-4)***

The few Muslims around the Prophet were despondent on hearing the news of the Byzantines' discomfiture. They were Christians and, as such, believed in the One God. The pagan Quraysh, on the other hand, sympathized with the Persians who, they thought, would vindicate their own opposition to the One-God idea. In 622 – i.e., six or seven years after the Quranic prediction - the tide turned in favor of the Byzantines. In that year, Emperor Heraclius defeated the Persians. Muslims during the Mecca period were explicitly allied with Christian emperor Heraclius showing early Islam had Western leanings. The Prophet's deep distress at the carnage within chronically violent Arabian society and between Christians and Persians led him to imagine an alternative society based on peace during the first half of his prophetic career (610-623). The Quran repeatedly instructs believers to repel evil with good, pardon their persecutors, and wish peace to those who harass them. The

Prophet's teachings resemble Jesus' sermon on the Mount. More than six hundred years before Islam, Jesus of Nazareth uttered these revolutionary and counter-intuitive words:

***“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless anyone who curses you, do good to anyone who hates you, and pray for those who carry you away by force and persecute you” (matt.5:44).***

Prophet Muhammad was just as familiar with the radical notion of reconciliation through forgiveness and prayed for his enemies' forgiveness. The Quranic text speaks of forgiveness 150 times. Forgiving your neighbors or best friends is easy; however, forgiving your enemies requires a radical psychological transformation from hate to compassion.

In the second half of the Prophet's career (622-632), despite pagan attacks, he did not abandon his peace option. He repeatedly sued for peace with the bellicose Meccans. When it failed, he was forced to adopt defensive war in the face of a determined pagan foe.

#### MAKE PEACE EVEN IF THEY DECEIVE

***If they refrain from fighting, hostility shall cease. (2:193) When you are greeted with a greeting [of peace], answer with an even better greeting or [at least] with the like thereof. God keeps track of all things. (4:86) If they incline to peace, you incline to it as well, and place your trust in God: he alone is all-hearing, all-knowing! And should they seek to deceive you [by their show of peace]—God is enough for thee! (8:61-62)***

The implication is that, even if they offer peace with a view to deceiving you, this offer of peace must be accepted. This is because all judgments of their intentions must be based on outward evidence

alone. In other words, mere suspicion cannot be an excuse for rejecting peace offers. “When you are greeted with a greeting” refers to an offer of peace by those with whom believers are at war. It also refers to individuals who, while possibly belonging to the enemy, have, in all outward appearances, peaceful intentions. In accordance with these injunctions, believers are obliged to make peace with an enemy who wants an equitable understanding. In the same way, they must be considerate of those who do not actively participate in hostilities among their enemies.

#### HONOR THE PEACE TREATY WITH PEACEFUL NONBELIEVERS

*How could they who ascribe divinity to others besides God be granted a covenant by God and his Apostle? This is unless you [O believers] have made a covenant near the inviolable house of worship? [As for the latter], so long as they remain true to you, be true to them, for God loves those who are conscious of Him. (9:7)*

The “covenant” alluded to is the truce agreement concluded in 6 H. at Hudaibiyyah, near Mecca, between the Prophet and the pagan Quraysh. According to this peace treaty, nonbelievers were not to show open hostility to Muslims. If they kept the treaty's terms, which included maintaining peace for ten years, Muslims were expected to do the same. The specific reference to “God and His Apostle” is meant to stress that the Apostle speaks and acts in God's name.

#### PEACE THROUGH LIMITED USE OF FORCE

**Pacifism:** Peace, according to the most popular (Western) view, is an absence of dissension, violence, or war. Pacifists have adopted

this interpretation. For them, all violence is bad. Generally, the Quran does not counsel turning the other cheek. Under exceptional circumstances, pacifism may be the only option. During the Mecca period, when Muslims were weak and the enemy was too strong, the Islamic community bore severe hardships but practiced pacifism for 10 years. Islam teaches forgiveness and the return of good to evil when circumstances warrant. However, these are very different from not resisting evil.

## RESISTING EVIL IN SELF-DEFENSE

Far from requiring the Muslim to turn himself into a doormat for the ruthless, the Quran allows punishment of wanton wrongdoers to the full extent of the injury they do. When we refuse to allow this, morality evaporates into impractical idealism or sheer sentimentality. Islam is a religion of peace, with a notable exception: When aggression is committed against its adherents, Muslims must fight in self-defense, which is the true meaning of jihad in the context of armed struggle.

Arabia was a historically violent society, and Muslims had to fight their way to peace. Major social change the Prophet attempted in the peninsula is rarely achieved without force. When Prophet Muhammad died in 632, almost all Arabian tribes joined the Ummah as Confederates or converted Muslims. Since the members of Ummah could not attack one another, the ghastly cycle of tribal warfare and of vendetta and counter-vendetta had ended. Single-handedly, Prophet Muhammad brought peace to war-torn Arabia with minimal force.

Force can be used for constructive ends and noble causes. The battles the Prophet Muhammad fought resulted in the loss of less

than a few thousand combatants on both sides. Women, children, and noncombatants were rarely harmed, and prisoners of war were protected. In general, the campaigns of the Prophet were defensive in character, with occasional pre-emptive strikes.

With this general background information in this section, we will proceed next to specific examples of armed conflicts in which the Prophet was involved in part 2.

**PART 2**  
**BATTLES AGAINST PAGANS AND JEWS**  
**OF ARABIA**

## CHAPTER 15

### WHY MUSLIMS OF MECCA MIGRATED TO MEDINA?

The disbelievers of Mecca tried their utmost to turn the Prophet away from his message of God's Oneness and force him to compromise with idolatry. He was tempted with greed, threatened with false propaganda, persecuted, physically abused, verbally abused, and subjected to economic pressure and social boycotts. In short, they did all they could to defeat his resolve. Ordinary Muslims fared even worse than the Prophet, who had the backing of his powerful Hashim clan. When Muslims fled Mecca, they took refuge in Yathrib, later Medina.

#### PERSECUTION OF MUSLIMS IN MECCA

*O you who have attained faith! Remember the blessings God bestowed upon you when [hostile] people were about to lay hands on you, and He stayed their hands on you. Remain, then, conscious of God, and in God let believers place their trust. (5:11) Say: "[Thus speaks God]: O you servants of Mine who have attained faith! Be conscious of your Sustainer! Ultimate goodness awaits those who persevere in doing good in this world. And [remember] wide is God's earth, [and] verily, they who are patient in adversity will be given their reward in full, beyond all reckoning!" (39:10)*

"Wide is God's earth" and "migrating from evil unto God" are the spiritual connotations of hijrah. It is said that the verse (47:13) was

revealed on the first night of the Prophet's hijrah from Mecca to Medina.

## REWARDS FOR REMAINING STEADFAST DURING PERSECUTION

***Now as for those who forsake the domain of evil in the cause of God, after suffering wrong [on account of their faith]—We shall most certainly grant them a station of good fortune in this world, but their reward in the life to come will be far greater yet. If they [who deny the truth] could but understand those who, having attained to patience in adversity, and placed their trust in their Sustainer!” (16:41-42)***

The “forsaking of the domain of evil” has a purely spiritual connotation. If they, the deniers of the truth, could really understand the spiritual motivation of the believers, they would themselves begin to believe.

## CITY OF MEDINA

The city of Medina is about two hundred miles north of Mecca. It was not a commercial center like Mecca; its main source of livelihood was agriculture, where farmers lived by cultivating date palms. The city of Medina was also in a transition state, passing from a nomadic to an urban culture, with concomitant dislocation in economic, social, and psychological structures. The city is said to have been established by an Amalekite chief, whose name it bore until the arrival of the Prophet Muhammad. Yathrib changed its ancient name and was henceforth styled Medinat an-Nabi, “the city of the prophet,” or in short, Medina, the city par excellence because it became the symbol of exemplary Muslim society.

## DEMOGRAPHY OF MEDINA

Its population structure was a composite of two powerful tribes—the Al Aws and Al Khazraj—and three minor tribes whose members were adherents of Judaism (Qurayzah, Nadir, and Qaynuqa) and some other minor groups.

In Medina, the Prophet had become the head of a collection of tribal groups—a super tribe—that were not bound by blood but by a shared ideology. This was an astonishing innovation in Arabian society. The super tribe or “ummah” consists of Muslims (believers), nominal believers, hypocrites, Jews, and nonbelievers.

The Muhajirs, or **Emigrants**, and **Ansars** or Helpers, became known as the **Sahabah**. (Companions), a distinct group, the vanguard of Islam. The band of faithful Quraysh, who had left their birthplace and every tie of home, received the name Muhajirun, or Emigrants. The honorable designation of Ansars, or Helpers, became a common title for Medinese Muslims, who helped Islam in its hour of severe trial.

## THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN MEDINA

There had been ongoing fighting in the oasis for nearly a hundred years before 620. At first, it was between single clans; then, clans joined together in ever larger groups. Jewish clans were sometimes on opposing sides, where Jews killed Jews.

## MASSACRE AT THE BATTLE OF BUATH

About 618, there was an epic battle at a spot called Buath, in which nearly all the oasis clans were involved. This battle saw heavy slaughter. Though fighting had ceased, there was no agreement

about blood money or compensation claims. They needed one man with authority to adjudicate disputed cases. Muhammad was invited by a delegation from Yathrib to serve as a chief arbitrator or judge in a bitter feud between its Arab tribes. They could not but know that a neutral outsider to Medina, like Muhammad, would be in a better position to act as an impartial arbiter than any Medina resident. One of the most powerful men in the oasis, Abd Allah bin Ubayy, remained neutral at Buath in the hope of becoming such an adjudicator acceptable to all. It was said that, but for Muhammad, Abd Allah bin Ubayy would have become king of Medina.

### PROPHET MUHAMMAD'S LEADERSHIP

The city of Medina lacked the unified leadership exercised in Mecca by the Umayyads; this played in favor of a forthcoming leader. Also, contact with the Jews familiarized the Arabs of Medina with the concept of an inspired religious leader.

Upon his arrival in Medina, its inhabitants welcomed Muhammad. From his arrival, Muhammad assumed a different role. The despised preacher becomes a masterful politician; the prophet becomes a statesman. We see him now as the leader not merely of the hearts of a handful of devotees but of the collective life of the city. He was its judge, general, and teacher. Even his enemies conceded that he played his new role brilliantly. Faced with problems of extraordinary complexity, he proved extraordinarily endowed as a statesman.

### ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FIRST ISLAMIC STATE

The migration marked a turning point in Muhammad's fortunes and a crucial stage in the Islamic movement's history. Islam took on a

political form by establishing an Islamic community-state at Medina to realize God's will on earth. At Medina, Muhammad had the opportunity to implement God's governance and message, for he was now the prophet-head of a religious-political community.

Tradition depicts his administration as an ideal blend of justice and mercy. As chief of state and trustee of his people's life and liberty, he exercised the justice necessary for order, unflinchingly meting out punishment to those who were guilty. When injury was toward him, on the other hand, he was gentle and merciful, even to his enemies. In all, the Medinese found him to be a master whom it was as difficult not to love as not to obey, for he had, as one biographer has written, "the gift of influencing men, and he had the nobility only to influence them for good." For the remaining ten years of his life, his personal history merged with that of the Medinese commonwealth, of which he was the center. Exercising superb statecraft, he welded the heterogeneous and conflicting tribes of the city, three Jewish, into an orderly confederation.

The task was not easy, but in the end, he succeeded in awakening a spirit of union unknown in the city's history. His reputation spread, and people flocked from Arabia to see the man who accomplished this feat. The Prophet's example offers a paradigm and the basis for an ideology for the fusion of religion and state in the Muslim experience. Like Judaism, Islam becomes a religion and state in one.

## PACIFISM VERSUS SACRIFICE THROUGH ACTION

Muslims were allowed to use force to defend the newly founded state since the primary duty of any state was to defend its own citizens against aggression. The spirit of self-sacrifice through

pacifism, a characteristic of the Mecca period, received its complement in the idea of sacrifice through action.

Unlike a Christian church, which is separated from mundane activities and devoted only to worship, no activity was excluded from the mosque. In the Quranic vision, there is no dichotomy between the sacred and the secular. The aim was the integration of the whole of life in a unified community, which would give Muslims intimations of Unity, which is God.

## **CHAPTER 16**

### **PRELUDE TO THE BATTLE OF BADR**

#### **PERPETUAL STATE OF WARFARE**

The hijrah was no mere change of address because, in pre-Islamic Arabia, the tribe was sacred. Turning your back on your blood group and joining another was unheard of. Abandoning your tribe was blasphemous, and the Quraysh could not condone it. They vowed to exterminate Muslims in Yathrib. The Prophet had become the head of a collection of tribal groups not bound together by blood but by a shared ideology. This was an astonishing innovation in Arabian society. The Meccans declared war on Muslims and Muhammad and fixed a prize of one hundred camels for his capture.

Quraysh leaders wrote to Abd Allah B. Ubayy: “You have allowed this person (Muhammad) to stay at your place. It is now incumbent upon you to fight him and banish him from your place. Otherwise, we’ll attack you suddenly, all at once. We will kill your young men and take possession of your women.” A raiding party of the Meccans attacked near Medina and took away many camels and sheep.

In Carlyle’s words: “Muhammad always professed to publish his religion by preaching and persuasion alone. Now driven foully out of his native country, since unjust men had not only given an ear to his earnest God-inspired message, the deep cry of his heart, but would not even let him live if he kept speaking it. He resolved to defend himself like a man and Arab. If the Quraysh will have it, so, they shall have it. Tidings felt to be of infinite moment to them and all men. They would not listen to these; they would be trampled

down by sheer violence and murder. There will be ten years of all the fighting, breathless, impetuous toil, and struggle.”

## RECONNOITERING EXPEDITIONS

After six months in Medina, the Prophet began sending out reconnoitering parties to gather intelligence and intimidate by keeping an eye on the Meccans' movements. It is quite apparent from the small number of men sent out on these missions that they were not meant to fight the Meccans or loot their caravan.

## MOTIVES FOR RAIDS

Two outstanding motives for launching the raids set them apart from Arab raiding:

1. In the first place, they were a means for emigrants to gain an independent economic position in Medina. The emigrants faced severe poverty and lived in the largess of the Ansaris while the Quraysh confiscated their properties in Mecca. Emigrants could not rely exclusively on Medina's Muslims' hospitality. Medina's economy was based on agriculture. Emigrants from Mecca were skilled in commerce. Transforming a merchant into an agriculturist would have been daunting. Meanwhile, the Meccans, who controlled the peninsula's trade, brought economic pressure on the refugees and their Ansar hosts. If Muslims organized long-distance caravans to Syria, they were bound to conflict with the Meccans.
2. The raids were to humble Quraysh pride in anticipation of coming acts of divine displeasure. By ruining the trade, the Meccans would be forced to come to terms with the fact that in Islam, they faced something much larger than they expected.

## RAID OF NAKHLAH

The Quraysh were alerted to the danger posed by the enemy presence in Yathrib with the potential of disrupting caravans' trade to Syria northward. It seemed to them that this would not affect their trade to the south toward Yemen. The Quraysh were soon disillusioned when the Muslims intercepted the caravan coming from Yemen at Nakhlah, close to Mecca.

In January 624, the Prophet sent out an expedition of a dozen men with sealed orders; in this way, their destination would not be betrayed by the enemy. They marched eastwards before opening their orders after a day's travel. They were instructed: "When you see what is in this letter, go to Nakhlah between Mecca and Taif and observe the Quraysh and let us know the news."

At Nakhlah, they saw a donkey caravan approaching Mecca from Yemen carrying trade goods for the Quraysh. This was the last day of the Rajab, one of the holy months when fighting was not allowed. The leader of the Muslim party decided to act on his own and quickly overpowered the guards—killing one and taking two prisoners—and reached Medina with the captured goods and the prisoners. But when the Prophet saw them, he said, "I have not instructed you to fight during the holy months." He castigated the expedition leader and his companions. The event was scandalous at Medina, but abated only after Divine revelation:

***They will ask you about fighting in the sacred month. Say: "Fighting in it is a grave offense but barring men from the path of God and denying Him, and [turning them away from] the Inviolable House of Worship and expelling its people there from— [all this] is yet graver in the sight of God, since oppression***

***is graver than killing." [Your enemies] will not cease to attack against you till they have forced you to stray from your faith if they can. But if any of you turn away from his faith and die as a denier of the truth, their good works will go waste in this world and in the life to come. These are the ones destined for fire, where they will abide. (2:217)***

While the violation of the truce in a holy month is offensive, religious persecution of the faith was more horrific and justified the violation. This act deepened the divide between Muslims and Quraysh. In the pagan Arab culture, the four holy months reserved for peace were a primary symbol. The four sacred months during which warfare was considered blasphemous in pre-Islamic Arabia—a view later confirmed by Islam—are Muharram, Rajab, Dhu l-Qadah, and Dhu l-Hijja.

## THE PRINCIPLE OF PRIMACY OF ISLAM

Islam's primacy over old customs was asserted. No bond or tie of pagan society holds in the Islamic community, unless explicitly acknowledged within Islam. In the following years, this principle was consistently applied. Whatever crime a person is guilty of, even against Islam. When a person adopted Islam, the slate was wiped clean. The Prophet forgave the slave who killed his uncle Hamza. Hind, Abu Sufyan's wife mutilated Hamza's dead body and chewed his liver. The Prophet forgave them both because they accepted Islam.

## PROPHECIES REGARDING THE BATTLE OF BADR

The victory in Badr was predicted in verses 17:76, 30:5 (victory for the Byzantines and Muslims), and then in the following verses:

*Are, then, those of you who [now] deny the truth better than those others—or have you, perhaps, been promised immunity in the [ancient] books of [divine] wisdom? Or do they say, “We are a group united, [and therefore] bound to prevail”? [Yet] the hosts [of those who deny the truth] shall be routed, and they shall turn their backs [in flight]! But the Last Hour is the time when they truly meet their fate. That Last Hour will be most calamitous, and most bitter, for those lost in sin. They will realize they have sunk into error and folly! On the Day when they shall be dragged into the fire on their faces, [they will be told]: “Taste now the touch of hellfire!” (54:43-48)*

“The book of **wisdom**” is a generic term denoting all the divine scriptures revealed by God to the prophets. Those “deniers of the truth” draw their assurance from being representative of the majority opinion and united and therefore bound to prevail—a self-delusion based on a purely materialistic outlook on life. The reasoning that underlies this thought may be summed up thus: We who reject these so-called divine revelations represent a very large body of opinion, and because our views are held by so many, they are right and, therefore, bound to triumph in the end.

Although the Prophet recited this verse just before the battle of Badr, the above passage has a much broader, timeless meaning. This view finds strong support in the subsequent verses. These verses speak of the evil and other worldly consequences of deliberate sin, apart from the social and moral defeat, in this world, of the sinful community.

## **CHAPTER 17**

### **THE BATTLE OF BADR (624 CE)**

### **(SPOILS OF WAR, EIGHTH SURAH)**

Badr is located 130 kilometers southwest of Medina and lies in a harsh natural landscape of desert plains, steep hills, and sand dunes. In pre-Islamic times, Badr was part of the night journey from the Red Sea coast along the caravan route from Mecca to Damascus. Badr was once known for its wells.

Most of the eighth surah Al-Anfal (spoils of war) was revealed during or immediately after the Badr battle. It deals almost entirely with the battle of Badr and the lessons to be derived from it. As already mentioned, a state of war existed between the Quraysh of Mecca and the Muslim community in Medina. Abu Jahl kept raiding parties constantly on the move, attacking any isolated Muslim parties that could be ambushed. He forayed into the Medina suburbs and damaged crops and gardens. He let Muhammad see that his feelings had not changed, that his intentions were still murderous.

So far, however, no decisive encounter has occurred, and Muslims have lived under constant threat of Quraysh invasion. The Prophet probably wished to end this situation and inflict a decisive defeat on the Quraysh. This would ensure a measure of safety for his, yet weak, community.

#### **RUMOR OF ATTACKING THE MECCAN CARAVAN**

During the month of Shaban, 2 H. (624), the Muslims of Medina learned that the Meccan trade caravan, which had crossed to Syria

some months earlier under the leadership of the Umayyad chief, Abu Sufyan, had started its return journey southwards. The caravan carried merchandise but also weapons. It was estimated that the caravan had made a profit of 50,000 dinars (pieces of gold). The weapons and the newly acquired wealth were to be used, according to the same reports, to equip an army to fight against the Muslims.

The Prophet announced his plan ahead of time to intercept the caravan. He sent two scouts to Hawra on the seashore west of Medina to bring him the news when the caravan arrived. The Prophet had reasons to stay in Medina because Ruqayyah, the Prophet's beloved daughter, was seriously ill. However, personal considerations aside, the Prophet set out with his army towards Badr rather than risking being too late to intercept the caravan. He did not even wait for his Scout's return. The Prophet told his son-in-law, Uthman ibn Affan, to stay home to care for his wife, Ruqayyah.

#### ARMED ENCOUNTER VERSUS PLUNDERING THE CARAVAN?

The fact that the Prophet, contrary to his custom, had made his plans known so long in advance suggests that the purported attack on the caravan was no more than a strategy to lure the Meccan army into an armed encounter. Had he intended to attack and plunder Abu Sufyan's caravan, he could have done so quietly by waiting until it reached the vicinity of Medina and swooping down on it. In that event, Abu Sufyan would have had no time to obtain further military help from Mecca. From the outset, his real objective was an encounter with the Quraysh army. God wanted Muslims to confront the powerful Quraysh army. Its destruction at Badr was the prelude to the elimination, in the next few years, of all armed opposition to

Islam in its homeland. The following Quranic verses further support this view:

#### GOD'S DECREE TO CONFRONT THE QURAYSH ARMY

***Even as your Sustainer brought you forth from your home [to fight] in the cause of the truth, although some believers were averse to it. [So, too], they would argue with you about the truth [itself] after it became manifest. Just as if they were driven towards death and witnessed it with their very eyes. And, lo, God gave you the promise that one of the two [enemy] hosts [the Quraysh army or the caravan] would fall to you. You would have liked to seize the less powerful one [the caravan]. While it was God's will to prove the truth in accordance with his words and wipeout the last remnant of those who denied the truth. So that he might prove the truth to be true and the false to be false; however hateful this might be to those lost in sin. (8:5-8)***

Some believers believed they had come to attack the caravan for easy booty. They were averse to leaving Medina to fight the Quraysh. It was indeed God's will that they battle the Quraysh army—so, too, they would argue with you whether God willed it. The two hosts refer to the Quraysh army. The weaker one was a caravan traveling from Syria with only forty armed men, making it an easy target. The Muslims could not vindicate the Prophet's cause by capturing and plundering the rich caravan. Although such an action would have benefited the Muslims materially, it would not have lessened the pagan Quraysh's strength. A decisive victory by the Muslims against the Quraysh army would shatter the enemy's self-confidence. This would pave the way for Islam's ultimate

triumph in Arabia. It is to this future fulfillment of God's promise that the "words" refer.

#### ABU SUFYAN'S REQUEST FOR HELP

Rumors of the Prophet's plan reached Abu Sufyan through his Medina spies. The caravan consisted of about one thousand camels laden with valuable merchandise, making it the richest of the year. The Prophet's announcement, ahead of the impending attack, gave Abu Sufyan time to alert his compatriots in Mecca. He sent a fast-riding courier, Abu Qubay, to Mecca with an urgent request for help and induced the latter to dispatch a considerable force toward Medina. Abu Sufyan had paid Abu Qubay handsomely, and he was determined to play his part well. When Qubay arrived in Mecca, he slit his camel's nostrils, and blood poured everywhere as a sign of impending calamity. He tore up his shirt into ribbons, turned the saddle around, and sat with his back to the camel's neck. "Men of Quraysh, all your goods for Abu Sufyan, Muhammad, and their companions are on them."

#### ABU JAHL, COMMANDER OF A POWERFUL ARMY

Based on Abu Sufyan's message, the Quraysh assembled a powerful army under the leadership of the Prophet's most bitter opponent, Abu Jahl. The Adi clan did not take part in this expedition. Every chief of the clan led a contingent except Abu Lahab, who sent a man from the Makhzum tribe who owed him money. Even Bani Hashim and Bani l-Muttalib (clans of the Prophet) felt honor and bound to defend the caravan. Talib, the eldest son of Abu Talib, led a body of men from both clans, and Abbas (uncle of the Prophet) traveled with them.

Umayyah also decided to stay home because he was elderly and obese. Uqbah brought incense and placed it in front of Umayyah, saying, "Scent thyself with that, for thou art a woman." "God curse thee," said Umayyah, and he left with the others. The Quraysh army consisted of about one thousand warriors clad in chain mail. Seven hundred camels and over one hundred horses accompanied them. To rescue the caravan, they headed north.

### MARCH OF THE MUSLIM ARMY TOWARDS BADR

At the same time, the Prophet marched out of the Medina towards Badr with three hundred Muslims. They were very poorly armed, with seventy camels and two horses between them. Just over a quarter were immigrants, and nearly three-quarters were Muslims from Medina. The valley of Badr was one of the principal halts on the road between Mecca and Syria. To find out where the caravan was, the Prophet sent two scouts ahead. They halted at Badr to draw water and overheard a conversation between two girls from the area. "The caravan will come tomorrow or the next day, and I will work for them and pay you what I owe." When the Scouts heard these words, they rushed to the Prophet with the news.

### ABU SUFYAN ON THE SPYING MISSION

Abu Sufyan also visited the same well in Badr Valley shortly thereafter. He hastened ahead of the caravan to see if it was safe to continue. On reaching the water well, Abu Sufyan found a villager and asked if he had seen any strangers. The villager said two riders had stopped at this well and drew some water from the well. Abu Sufyan picked up the camel dung, broke it into pieces only to find date stones, and said, "this is the fodder of Medina." Sensing that the Muslim army was close by, Abu Sufyan returned to the caravan,

changed its traditional route, and veered towards the coastal lowlands to put as much distance as possible between himself and Badr.

## THE WAR COUNCIL: THE DEMOCRATIC DECISION TO FIGHT

The Prophet heard that the Quraysh had set out to protect their caravan. The Prophet felt bound to consult with his men about whether to advance or retreat. Therefore, he held a war council to decide on the course of action. The overwhelming majority, led by Abu Bakr and Umar, favored an immediate advance.

## AL-MIQDAD BIN AMR

Amr stood up and voiced the feelings and thoughts of most emigrants when he said: “O Messenger of God, do what God has commanded you to do. We are with you now and always. We shall not tell you what the Israelites told Moses: ‘You and your Lord should go and fight against the enemy.’ We shall follow you and obey your orders.”

## SAAD IBN MUADH

The Prophet was anxious to know what the Ansars would do. The Helpers at Aqabah pledged to protect the Prophet in Medina. Would they be prepared to help him against an enemy now that he was no longer in Medina? Sensing his anxiety, **Saad ibn Muadh**, one of the Ansar leaders, rose and said: “We have witnessed that you are God's Messenger. We have pledged to obey you. Wherever you are, we will be with you. If there is a showdown with the polytheists, we will support you. In war and peace, we will remain faithful to you.

Even if you ask us to cross this sea, and you plunge into it, we will also plunge into the sea with you. None of us will stay behind. We do not dislike meeting your enemy tomorrow. We are experienced in war and trustworthy in combat. It may well be that God will let us show you something that will bring you joy. Therefore, take us along with God's blessing."

Fittingly, the Prophet was delighted by this answer. As previously noted, the Ansars were indispensable for success in the struggle between Islam and paganism.

### SOME SUGGESTED RETREAT

However, there was no unanimous agreement among the Muslim ranks. Some of the Prophet's followers believed they would attack the relatively weak trade caravan and its weak escort. They disliked fighting the Quraysh main army. Instead, they wanted to attack the Meccan caravan returning from Syria and acquire easy booty. They feared the enemy was too strong and suggested withdrawing to Medina. The overwhelming majority favored an immediate advance, and their enthusiasm carried others along. In the end, most of them declared they would follow God's Apostle wherever he led them.

### COUNTER-SPYING BY THE MUSLIM

When they reached a halt less than a day's march from Badr, the Prophet rode on with Abu Bakr. He obtained information from an old man that the Meccan army was already nearby. The Prophet sent three of his men to Badr's well to obtain further information. At the well, they saw two men loading their camels with water for the Meccan army. They overpowered both men and brought them to the

Prophet. “Tell me about the Quraysh and their whereabouts,” said the Prophet. “They are behind this hill,” they replied. “How many men are they?” he asked. “Many.” They wouldn't give details, so he asked how many animals they slaughter daily. “Some days nine, some days ten. They are between nine hundred and a thousand, he said. The Muslim army arrived at Badr, one hundred miles west-southwest of Medina, expecting to meet Abu Sufyan or the Meccan army there.

### THE CARAVAN'S ROUTE CHANGE

In the meantime, Abu Sufyan successfully changed the traditional caravan route. And when the caravan was out of the Muslim army's reach, Abu Sufyan sent words to the Quraysh. He said, “Since you came out to save your caravan, your men, and your property, and God has delivered them, go back.”

The Meccan commander, Abu Jahl, rejected Abu Sufyan's advice and was set on teaching a lesson to the impudent upstarts in Medina. He did not immediately return home after hearing the caravan was safe. Abu Jahl said, “By God, we will not turn back until we reach Badr. We will spend three days there, slaughter camels, feast, and drink wine, and the girls shall play for us.”

### WAR IS NOT FOR SELF-GLORY

***And be not like those [unbelievers] who set forth from their homelands full of self-conceit and a desire to be seen and praised. They were trying to turn others away from God's path while God encompassed all their doings [with his might]. (8:47)***

This refers to the Quraysh army, which set forth from Mecca under Abu Jahl in the conviction that they would destroy the Prophet and

slaughter his followers. These words warn believers of all times not to march to war boastfully and for empty glory.

#### DEFECTION OF SOME MECCANS

Al-Akhnas ibn Shurayq, one of Mecca's leaders, urged his followers to pay no attention to Abu Jahl and returned to Mecca with Banu Zuhrah. Talib also returned with some of his clansmen. But Abbas decided to stay in the army. He took with him three of his nephews, two sons of Harith and Aqil, son of Abu Talib.

#### DEFECTION OF ABD ALLAH, SON OF SUHAYL

Abd Allah embraced Islam against his father's wishes. Fearing he would escape without his father, he was brought to Badr. Abd Allah escaped anyway and fled to the Muslim camp, where he walked straight to the Prophet. Joy was seen on both faces. Then he joyfully greeted his two brothers-in-law, Abu Sabrah and Abu Hudhayfah.

#### VOICES OF PEACE AMONG THE QURAYSH

Just as some Muslims were reluctant to fight, some in the Quraysh army struggled with whether force was justified against their kinsmen. This is because the caravan was safe. There were many rational voices among the Quraysh seeking peace, but arrogance and reliance on superior power won the day.

#### UMAYR B. WAHB'S PREDICTION

When the Quraysh settled in their camp at Badr, they sent Umayr b. Wahb, a diviner by arrow, to estimate the number of men in the Muslim army. He rode horseback down to their camp. On his return, he said, "Three hundred men, a bit more or less, but wait till I see

whether they have any men in ambush or support.” He headed back down, far into the valley, but saw nothing. On his return, he said, “I found nothing, but O people of Quraysh, I have seen camels carrying death – the camels of Yathrib laden with certain death. These men have no defense or refuge but their swords. By God! I do not think any of them will be slain until he slays you. They will kill a number equal to their own. What is the point of living after that? Consider, then, what you will do.”

#### UTBAH B. RABIA’S PLEA FOR PEACE

No sooner had Umayr spoken than Hakim ibn Hazm, Khadijah’s nephew, seized this opportunity. While walking through the camp, he found Utbah b. Rabia. Hakim said to Utbah, "Thou art the greatest man of Quraysh, and their Lord, the one whom they obey. Wouldst thou be remembered with praise among them until the end of time?" "How shall that be?" replied Utbah. "Lead the men back," said Hakim. He also suggested paying blood-wit to the Nakhlah victim's brother. Utbah agreed and strongly urged the Meccans to abandon the attack. Instead, he suggested all the Arabs deal with Muhammad together – they would reap the harvest of pride if Muhammad won or enjoy effortless victory if he lost.

#### OPPOSITION TO PEACE BY ABU JAHL

Abu Jahl once again opposed the peace proposal and said, “No, by God, we will not return until God decides between Muhammad and us.” Turning to Amir b. al-Hadrami, Abu Jahl urged him to remind everyone of his brother's slaying at Nakhlah. Amir threw off his clothes, sprayed dust on his body, and frantically yelled his brother’s name. Thus, the flame of war was rekindled. Abu Jahl

taunted Utbah with cowardice, fearing death for himself and his son, Abu Hudhayfah, who had joined the Muslim ranks.

## MEETING IN THE BADR VALLEY

***[Remember that day] when you were at the near end of the valley [of Badr], and they were at its farthest end. At the same time, the caravan was below you. And if you knew a battle was to happen, you would have refused the challenge. (8:42)***

Badr Valley consists of a plain with steep hills surrounding the north and east sides. A low rocky range rests on the south side, and a succession of sandy hillocks climb on the west side.

The Prophet and his followers were encamped in the northern part of the Badr valley, nearest to Medina. Their enemies from Mecca, however, occupied its southern region. Both forces found themselves in a position where honor made it impossible to walk away without fighting.

## ACCESS TO WATER

A rivulet, expanding from within the inland mountains, runs through the valley, producing several springs. At the nearest springs, the Muslim army halted. However, a man of the Ansar named Hubab ibn al-Mundhir said to the Prophet: “Is this a place which God has ordered us to occupy so that we can neither advance nor withdraw from it nor is it a matter of opinion and military tactics?” When the Prophet replied that it was the latter, Hubab suggested they travel to the last spring nearest to the enemy and take possession of all the wells in Badr to deprive the enemy of water. His suggestion was immediately accepted, giving Muslims a strategic advantage.

## INNER CALM AND ABUNDANT RAIN

***Remember when He caused inner calm to enfold you as an assurance from Him. He sent down water from the skies to purify you and free you from Satan's unclean whispers. This would strengthen your heart and make your steps firmer. (8:11)***

Inner calm refers to believers' spiritual peace and self-confidence in the face of overwhelming odds before the battle of Badr. Following a long march, the Muslim army was refreshed by the rain. The rain was an unexpected blessing and helped purify them both physically and spiritually from unclean whispers of uncertainty, fear, and self-doubt. The Prophet and his companions camped in a sandy valley. The rain from before settled the dust and made the ground lighter and firmer, making it easier to walk on. That night, God sent peaceful sleep to the believers, and they awoke refreshed.

## THE PROPHET'S DREAM BEFORE THE BATTLE

The Prophet's companions constructed an observation booth from palm branches in which the Prophet and Abu Bakr slept. Saad ibn Muadh kept watch at the entrance with his sword drawn.

***Lo! God showed them to you in a dream as a few. Had he shown them to you as many, you would surely have lost heart and disagreed about what to do. But God saved you [from it]. He has full knowledge of what is in the hearts [of men]. 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 lead back to God [as their source]. (8:43-44)***

The Prophet had a dream just before the Badr encounter. God had shown enemies to the Prophet as few. He informed his companions, encouraging them greatly. However, at the time of the encounter, the Muslims could no longer doubt the enemy's overwhelming numbers. The phrase, "He made them appear as few in your eyes," has a metaphorical meaning: it implies that, at that time, the Prophet's followers were so full of courage that the enemy seemed insignificant to them. On the other hand, the Quraysh were so conscious of their power and numerical superiority that the Muslims appeared insignificant to them. This was a mistake that ultimately cost them the battle and many lives.

#### SATAN'S DECEPTIONS

***And lo, Satan made all their doings seem admirable to them and said, "No one can overcome you this day, for I shall be your protector!" But as soon as the two hosts came within sight of one another, he turned on his heels and declared, I am not responsible for you. I see something you do not. I fear God - for God is severe in retribution!" At the same time, the hypocrites and those whose hearts were diseased said, "Their faith has deluded these [believers]!" But he who places his trust in God [knows that] God is almighty, wise. (8:48-49)***

Satan assured the unbelievers he would be "[their] neighbor." This is an expression derived from the ancient Arabian principle that a man is honor-bound to aid and protect his neighbors and is Satan's blandishment and abandonment of sinners. In view of their numerical weakness and lack of arms, the hypocrites wondered how the Muslim army could withstand the powerful Meccan force. "Those in whose hearts was a disease" refers to the vacillating and

faint-hearted among the Prophet's followers, who were afraid to meet the Quraysh in battle.

## CONQUERING FEAR OF DEATH

***O prophet! Inspire the believers to conquer all fear of death when fighting, [so that] if there be twenty of you who are patient in adversity, they might overcome two hundred. If there be one hundred of you, they might overcome one thousand of those bent on denying the truth. This is because they cannot grasp it. For the time being God has lightened your burden, for he knows you are weak. So, if there be one hundred of you who are patient in adversity, they should [be able to] overcome two hundred. If there be one thousand of you, they should [be able to] overcome two thousand by God's grace, for God is with those who are patient in adversity. (8:65-66)***

This is a general exhortation to believers to conquer a fear of death and be patient in adversity. Muslims' success in conquering the known world was due to breaking the idol of fear of death. This stemmed from their deep faith in the afterlife and the reward of entering paradise. It enabled them to overcome an enemy many times their number. "The denier of the truth cannot grasp it (i.e., the truth)"—because their spiritual deafness and blindness prevent them from grasping it. To this day, they fail to understand the power of faith. The most reputable Western historians blame Islamic victory on booty lust.

Muslims were extremely weak, both in numbers and equipment. Under those circumstances, they should be able to stand up to an enemy twice their number. The proportions of one to two, or—as in the preceding verse, one to ten—are not to be taken literally; as a

matter of fact, the Muslims defeated at Badr a much better-armed army thrice their number. The reference to God having relieved the burden imposed on believers in this respect makes it clear that both this and the preceding verse imply a divine command couched in terms of exhortation and not a prediction of future events.

## BOTH ARMIES IN COMBAT POSITION

Early in the morning, with the sun rising, the Quraysh army was drawn up in lines and moved slowly over the intervening sand hill of Aqanqal. The rain the night before made the soil heavy and difficult to walk on. When the Prophet saw them on horses and camels with richly decorated coverings descending from the hill into the valley, he cried, "O God, here come the Quraysh in their vanity and pride, contending with Thee and calling thy apostle a liar." The Prophet looked at his followers, consisting of more than three hundred men, then looked at those who were ascribing divinity to beings other than God, and they consisted of more than one thousand. Islam's fate hung in the approaching battle.

Followed by Abu Bakr, the Prophet entered the observation booth and turned towards the Qiblah (Mecca), raising his hands, pleading with his Sustainer: "O God! Fulfill what Thou hast promised me! O God! If this small band who have surrendered themselves unto Thee is destroyed, Thou wilt not be worshipped on earth." A light slumber came upon him, and when he woke up, he said, "Be of good cheer, Abu Bakr, the help of God has come."

## THE START OF COMBAT

The time for action has arrived. On the 17th (or, according to some authorities, the 19th or 21st) of Ramadan, the Muslim army came

face-to-face with a powerful Quraysh force of more than thrice their number. The Quraysh had begun to advance across the dunes, ready for combat. They were already close to the well previously captured by the Muslims, and it seemed likely that their first move would be to take possession of it. The enemy was close, but Medina's army did not move. The Prophet forbade his followers not to act until he ordered them to advance. They were only to check the Quraysh's flank movement by firing arrows.

### THE DEATH OF THE MECCAN WARRIOR

One desperate Quraysh warrior, Aswad of Makhzum, swore to drink water from the well occupied by Muslims, destroy it, or perish in an attempt. With signal gallantry, he advanced to the brink when a blow from Hamza's sword nearly severed his leg. He crawled onwards and made good his vow before Hamza's sword ended his life. Now, with the death of a Meccan warrior, fighting became inevitable.

### CHALLENGE FOR ONE-TO-ONE DUAL

First, a few single combats were held according to Arabian customs. Two brothers named Utba b. Rabia and Shaybah, and al-Walid, son of Utba, stung by Abu Jahl's charge of cowardice, challenged the Muslims to a duel. Some Medina youth ventured out to meet their challenge, but the Meccans refused to fight them.

They insisted on engaging their tribesmen rather than Medina's inhabitants. The Quraysh crier calls forth: "O Muhammad, send out our peers of our tribe to fight us." The Prophet, turning to his kinsmen, said: "You sons of Hashim! Arise and fight according to your right." Then Hamza bin Abdul Muttalib, Ali ibn Abi Talib, and

Ubaydah ibn Al-Harith, the uncle and cousins of the Prophet, stepped forth. Then Utba called his son Walid, "Arise and fight." So, Walid (brother of Hind, wife of Abu Sufyan) stepped forward, and Ali came out against him. They were the youngest of six. The combat was short. Walid died from Ali's sword. Badr was the first encounter, on the battlefield, between Islam and Heathenism. Ali ibn Abi Talib, the young lion, opened it for Islam. His victory was Islam's triumph. All other Islamic battles followed the same pattern; Ali won them all.

Eager to avenge his son's death, Utbah (father of Hind) hastened forward, and Hamza advanced to meet him. The outcome was the same, and Hamza, another God's lion, slew Utbah. Shaybah (uncle of Hind) alone remained one of Mecca's champions, and Ubaydah approached him. They both advanced over the years. Shaybah struck Ubaydah's leg, bringing him to the ground. Seeing this, Hamza and Ali attacked Shaybah and killed him. Then, they carried their wounded cousin back to their camp. Ubaydah later died of injuries and severe blood loss. Bone marrow oozed from the stump of his leg. As the Prophet approached him, Ubaydah had only one thought: "Am I not a martyr, O Messenger of God?" "Indeed, thou art," he answered.

Momentary tense stillness between the two sides was broken by the sound of an arrow from Quraysh fatally wounding a freedman of Umar. A second arrow pierced the throat of Harithah, a youth of Khazraj, as he drank water from the well.

#### RETREAT IS NOT PERMISSIBLE

***O you who have attained 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. 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 believers]—shall indeed have earned the burden of God’s condemnation, and his goal shall be hell, and how vile a journey’s end! (8:15-16)***

The implication is that God's promise of victory prohibits retreat. Since this verse, like the whole of this surah, relates predominantly to the battle of Badr, it may well be presumed that the above admonition forms part of the message of encouragement beginning with the words, “I am with you,” which God commanded the angels to convey to believers before the battle. In keeping with the Quran's didactic method, the moral lesson contained in this verse is not limited to the historical context. Instead, it has the authority to make permanent laws.

#### CASTING A HANDFUL OF PEBBLES

At the beginning of the battle, the Prophet cast a handful of pebbles or dust in the direction of the adversaries, symbolically indicating their approaching defeat.

***It was not you who cast [terror into them, O Prophet] when you cast it, but God cast it. [He did all this] to test the believers by a goodly test of His own ordaining. God is all-hearing, all-knowing! (8:17)***

The above verse implies that the Muslims' victory over the large and well-equipped Quraysh army was due to God's grace alone. It reminds the faithful not to display undue pride in their achievements (which is the meaning of "test").

## FREE-FOR-ALL FIGHTING

The Prophet ordered to charge with a battle cry, *YA MANSUR AMIT* (Oh, victorious! Bring death). The whole battlefield echoed the battle cry as the men surged forward. The fighting became general, and the Meccans battled in the old Arab style, with careless bravado, each chief leading his men. The Prophet's troops, however, were disciplined and fought under his unified command. In the middle of the battlefield, the Prophet encouraged his soldiers to fight bravely.

## ANGELIC AID

***Lo! You were praying unto your Sustainer for aid, and He thus responded to you: "I shall, verily, aid you with a thousand angels following one upon another!" And God ordained this only as 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! Lo! Thy Sustainer inspired the angels [to convey this message to believers]: "I am with you!" (8:9-12)***

As regards the promise of aid through thousands of angels, it is said to have been uttered by the Prophet and confirmed by God. The spiritual nature of this angelic aid is clearly expressed by the words, "and God ordained this only as glad tidings." The phrase "I am with you" is addressed (through the angels) to the believers to allay their fear of the denier of the truth. The aid of the angels was purely spiritual in nature, and there is no evidence anywhere in the Quran that they did, or were meant to, participate in the battle in a physical sense. Modern commentators reject the legend that angels physically fought in this or any other Prophet's battle. Angels were felt by all as a strength by the faithful and a terror by the infidels.

However, there are many legends associated with angels' participation in the battle reported by others. Two men of a neighboring Arab tribe climbed to the top of the hill to watch the action in progress. They saw a cloud filled with stallions neighing. Others saw angels riding on horses whose hooves never touched the ground. They were led by Gabriel wearing a yellow turban and other angels had white turbans.

#### DESTROY THEM UTTERLY

***[And He commanded the angels], “And give firmness to those who have attained 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 fingertips!” [destroy them utterly] 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—God is severe in retribution. This is [to you], O enemies of God]! Taste it now [knowing] that suffering through fire awaits those who deny the truth! (8:12-14) [Hence,] O you who have attained faith, when you meet a host in battle, be firm and remember God often so that you might attain a happy state! (8:45)***

#### CRUSHING DEFEAT FOR MECCAN FORCES

There were many examples of individual bravery and valor on both sides. However, the faithful army was carried forward by enthusiasm that the Quraysh could not withstand. In the end, the Meccan forces were completely routed.

## VICTORY AND THE POWER OF FAITH

***You have already witnessed a sign in the two hosts that met in battle, one fighting for God's cause and the other denying Him. With their own eyes, they saw the others as twice their number. But God strengthens with His succor whom He wills. In this, there is indeed a lesson for all who have eyes to see. (3:13)***

The above Quranic passage has general importance and is not specific to the battle of Badr. It alludes to an occurrence often witnessed in history—namely, the victory of a numerically weak and ill-equipped group of people, filled with a burning belief in the righteousness of their cause, over a materially and numerically superior enemy lacking a similar conviction. In this Quran verse, the believers are spoken of as being faced by an enemy “twice their number” (while at the battle of Badr, the pagans of Quraysh were more than three times the number of the Muslims), which lends great plausibility to this explanation.

## HEAVY LOSS OF LIFE OF PROMINENT LEADERSHIP

Among the dead included Abu Jahl and several of the most prominent chieftains of Mecca, whose administrative and commercial skills could hardly be replaced. Almost seventy Meccans were captured. The Muslims, on the other hand, had only fourteen martyred. The leadership of polytheists of Mecca was indeed permanently crippled at Badr. The hero was Ali. He alone killed 22 Meccans, twelve of them Banu Umayyah leaders.

## CRUSHING DEFEAT AS PUNISHMENT

***Taste then, [O unbelievers], this chastisement [crushing defeat at Badr] as an outcome of your persistent denial of the truth! Those***

***bent on denying the truth spend their riches turning others away from God's path. They will go on spending them until they become [a source of] intense regret for them, and then they will be overcome! (8:35-36)***

#### EXAMPLE OF PHARAOH'S PEOPLE

***[To those sinners shall happen] the like of what happened to Pharaoh's people and those who lived before them. They gave the lie to their Sustainer's messages—and so We destroyed them in return for their sins and caused Pharaoh's people to drown, for they were all evildoers. The vilest creatures in God's sight are those bent on denying the truth and do not believe. (8:52-55)***

Those who are bent on denying the truth and do not believe because they do not use their reason, thus showing that lack of belief in spiritual verities is a consequence of one's being "bent on denying the truth." This amounts to the statement that belief in any ethical proposition depends on one's readiness to consider it on its merits and to admit the truth of whatever one's mind judges to be in conformity with other—empirically or intuitively established—truths.

#### TORMENT AFTER DEATH

***And if you could see [how it will be] when He causes those bent on denying the truth to die. The angels will strike their faces and backs, and [will say]: "Taste suffering through fire in return for what your own hands have wrought—for, never does God do the least wrong to his creatures!" (8:50-51)***

The beating of sinners' faces and backs is an allegory of their suffering in life to come. This is because they denied the truth while

alive in this world. They have utter darkness behind them and utter darkness before them—and this is the meaning of the words, “the angels strike their faces and their backs.” Although this passage refers specifically to the pagan Quraysh, who fell in the battle of Badr, its import is not restricted to this historical event—especially in view of the subsequent passages, which refer to all who are “bent on denying the truth.”

#### HELLFIRE IN THE AFTERLIFE

***And those who [until their death] denied the truth shall be gathered into hell. God might separate the good from the bad, and join the bad with one another, and link them all together [within his condemnation], and then place them in hell. They are lost! Tell those bent on denying the truth that if they desist, all that is past shall be forgiven. However, if they return [to wrongdoing], let them remember what happened to the likes of those in times gone by. (8:35-38)***

If they do not desist from their endeavors to turn away others from God's path and from waging war against believers, remember what happened to the likes of them in times past. This is an allusion to the disasters that have overtaken and are bound to overtake, those who persistently deny moral truths.

#### MARTYRS, VICTORS, AND LOSERS

***[The battle was brought about nonetheless], 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. (8:42)***

***This [was God's purpose]—and [to show] that God renders vain the artful schemes of those who deny the truth. (8:18)***

The believers who fell in that battle died martyrs in God's cause. Those who survived could now clearly discern God's hand in their victory, while the dead among the deniers of the truth had given their lives for nothing. Those who survived must now realize that their crushing defeat was due, in the last resort, to something infinitely more powerful than the Muslims' valor.

#### DIVINE AID IS CONTINGENT ON FAITH

***If you have been praying for victory, [O believers]—victory has indeed come to you. And if you abstain [from sin], it will be for your good. But if you revert to it, We shall revoke [Our promise of aid]. Never will your community be of any avail to you, however great their numbers. For God is [only] with those who believe! [Hence], O you who have attained faith, pay heed to God and His Apostle, and do not turn away from him now that you know [his message]. And be not like those who say, "We have heard," while they fail to listen. The vilest of all creatures ["animals that walk or crawl," including man] in God's sight are the deaf and dumb, because they do not use reason. For, if God had seen any good in them, He would certainly have made them hear. But [as it is] even if He had made them listen, they would surely have turned away in their obstinacy. O you who have attained faith! Respond to the call of God and the Apostle whenever he calls you, which will give you life. Know that God intervenes between man and [the desires of] his heart and that unto Him you shall be gathered. (8:19-24)***

Thus, the verse must be understood as an admonition to believers that God will be with them only so long as they remain firm in faith

and righteous in action and that, however large their community may be in the future, they will be powerless unless they are true believers. "They fail to listen" is a general allusion and relates to all people who know and understand the Quran's message but pay no heed to it. God can turn man away from what his heart urges him to do. It is God-consciousness alone that can prevent man from being misled by wrong desires and, thus, from becoming like "those deaf, those dumb ones who do not use their reason," and it is God-consciousness alone that can enable man to follow the call "unto that which gives life"—that is, spiritual awareness of right and wrong and the will to act accordingly.

#### THE GRUESOME DEATH OF ABU JAHL

Only fourteen Muslims were martyred. Some seventy Meccans were killed, including several of Mecca's most prominent chieftains. Some of the Prophet's bitterest opponents were killed, including Abu Jahl. He fought on with unabated ferocity until Muadz ibn Amr brought Abu Jahl to the ground with a blow that cut his leg in two. Muadz, in his turn, was attacked by Ikrimah, the son of Abu Jahl, and his arm was nearly severed from his shoulders. As the mutilated arm hanging from the skin impeded his actions, Muadz put his foot upon it and pulled it off. He continued fighting with one arm. Such were Badr's heroes.

The Prophet ordered Abu Jahl's body to be searched for. Abd Allah ibn Masud ventured to the battlefield, found the man who stirred up more hatred for Islam than anyone else and shed Muslim blood. Abu Jahl tortured ibn Masud for converting to Islam. He still had enough life to recognize ibn Masud and taunted him: "Thou hast climbed high indeed, little shepherd." Then he asked him which way the

fortunes of war had swung that day, his implication being that they would swing in the opposite direction the next time. "God and his Apostle have won," ibn Masud answered, and then he cut off Abu Jahl's head as a fitting end for this torturer and murderer and presented it to the Prophet.

## THE ASSASSINATION OF UMAYYAH IBN KHALAF

**Umayyah ibn Khalaf** was an Arab slave master and Banu Jumah chieftain. He was one of the Muslims' chief opponents. Umayyah is best known as the master of Bilal ibn Rabah, a slave he tortured for embracing Islam. Umayyah tortured Bilal by making him lie on his bare back in the desert heat, with a large block of stone placed on his chest. Abd ar-Rahman ibn Awf passed by Umayyah, who called out to take him captive. He lost his mount and could not escape. Abd ar-Rahman agreed and led them to the camp. Bilal saw them and recognized his former master and torturer. Umayyah, he cried, "the head of disbelief." "May I not live if he survives!" Men came running from all sides and, pushed aside Abd ar Rahman and killed Umayyah and his accompanying son.

## GOOD AND BAD NEWS

The Prophet ordered that the bodies of all infidels slain in the battle be thrown into the pit for mass burial. When it became clear that eight hundred or more Meccan troops were not rallying back to seek revenge, the Prophet sent Abd Allah ibn Rawahah. He brought the glad tidings of victory to the people of Upper Medina and Zayd to the people of Lower Medina. By that time, Zayd and Abd Allah ibn Rawahah had reached Medina. There was great joy among all except the Jews and the hypocrites. But Zayd heard the sad news of Ruqayyah's death. Uthman had just returned after burying her. Zayd

told Afra of the death of her two sons, Awf and Muawwidh. When Afra learned of the glorious martyrdom of her sons, she felt both sadness and joy.

Zayd also had to tell Rubayyi about her son Harithah ibn Suraqah's death. His neck was pierced with an arrow as he drank water from the well. When the Prophet returned a few days later, Rubayyi asked him about her son. She was troubled by the thought that her son was slain before the battle started. And before he had a chance to strike a blow for Islam. Is he still considered a martyr worthy of paradise? The Prophet answered emphatically yes.

The Prophet himself stayed with the army at Badr. Early the next morning, he left for Medina with the army and the spoils of the war. While on their way home, Uqbah bin Muayt and Al-Nadir Ibn al-Harith's fate was sealed.

## DEATH OF UQBAH BIN MUAYT

Uqbah was one of the vilest antagonists of the Prophet and the Muslims. Despite being a neighbor to the Prophet, his acts of hatred include insults, mockery, and stepping on the Prophet's neck while he prostrated. He also spit in the Prophet's face, attempted murder by strangulation, and more. Uqbah brought the waste of a slaughtered camel (intestines, blood, dung, etc.) and placed it upon the Prophet's back while in prostration. He could not get up from prostration until his daughter came and removed it. Uqbah was killed during the Battle of Badr and was among the Quraysh leaders buried in a pit. However, according to Ibn Hisham's biography, Uqbah was executed on the Prophet's orders after the Battle of Badr.

## AL-NADIR IBN AL-HARITH

Al-Nadir, also known as Mansur b. Ikrimah was one of the main proponents who wrote a document to boycott the small Muslim minority by not selling them anything, including food. The boycott was intended to starve the Muslim community and force them to give up the Prophet's protection. The boycott lasted two or three years and caused enormous hardship for the small, beleaguered Muslim community. Due to poor nutrition and sometimes outright starvation, the Prophet's wife, Khadijah's health was adversely affected, and eventually, she lost her life. Some people ate leather to alleviate hunger pains. Children were given water boiled with tree leaves, and their hunger cries could be heard late at night. Nadir persecuted and tortured the Muslims, and he was one of the assassins who tried to kill the Prophet before he migrated to Medina. Al-Nadir was a war criminal, and he was executed on the Prophet's order.

On the other hand, there are reports that Nadir was present at the battle of Hunayn, six years after Badr, and was presented with one hundred camels by the Prophet. Sir W. Muir mentions Nadir Ibn al-Harith in a footnote (Vol. IV, page 151) as the recipient of one hundred camels at Hunayn. Due to these discrepancies, Nadir's execution story becomes doubtful.

## THE PRISONERS OF WAR

Almost seventy Meccans were captured. The most eminent captive was Amir's chief, **Suhayl ibn Amr**. Umar ibn al-Khattab approached the Prophet and said: "Messenger of God! Let me pull out Suhayl's two middle incisors so he cannot speak out against you." "Certainly not, Umar," cautioned the Prophet. "I would not

mutilate anyone lest God mutilates me.” Suhayl ibn Amr was a prominent, articulate opinion-maker. He was known as the Quraysh khatib or spokesman and orator. He was the cousin of Sawdah, the Prophet's wife. Sawdah was surprised to see Suhayl, her clan chief, sitting in the corner of the room. He had his hands tied to his neck. She remarked, “why do you so readily surrender? Thou should have died a noble death.” “Sawdah!” exclaimed the Prophet, with reproof in his voice: “Wouldst thou foment trouble against God and His messenger?” Later on Suhayl played a major role in concluding the famous truce of Hdaybiyyah.

Other prisoners were more closely related to the Prophet: his Uncle **Abbas**, son-in-law **Abu l-As**, husband of Zaynab, and cousins **Aqil** and **Nawfal**. Helpers who owned Abbas offered to forgo the ransom. But the Prophet said no and made him pay the full ransom.

#### POLITICAL RAMIFICATIONS OF THE BATTLE OF BADR

Badr is the most pivotal battle in the entire history of Islam and one of the most significant in world history. Victory guaranteed Islam's existence and the physical survival of the Muslim community of Medina. This had, at best, seemed precarious.

The first encounter between monotheism and polytheism ended in victory, a divine sanction of the new faith. There is no doubt that victory became possible due to Muslims' heightened morale because of their religious faith and conquering their fear of death. God vindicated the Muslim cause and proved the Prophet's mission true.

The outcome of the battle of Badr made the Quraysh realize that Muhammad's movement was not an ephemeral dream. Instead, it

was the beginning of a new era of political power , unlike anything the Arabian past knew. The Meccans' apprehensions, which had already been aroused by the exodus of the Prophet and his Companions to Medina, found shattering confirmation on the day of Badr. Although the power of Arabian paganism was not finally broken until years later, its decay became apparent from that historic moment.

Muslims, too, found Badr a turning point. It sealed the Muslim community's independence and survival. In later years, to have been present at Badr, Islam's first triumph, was like a patent of nobility. It is safe to assume that, until then, only very few of the Prophet's Companions fully understood the political implications of the new Islamic order.

To most of them, their exodus to Medina meant, in those early days, no more than a refuge from the persecutions they endured in Mecca. After the battle of Badr, even the most simple-minded among them became aware that they were on their way toward a new social order.

#### STRENGTH IN UNITY

***And pay heed to God and his Apostle, and do not be at variance with one another. This is lest you lose your heart and your moral strength desert you. And be patient in adversity. God is with those who are patient in adversity. (8:46)***

## **CHAPTER 18**

### **THE EXPULSION OF BANU QAYNUQA (FACT OR FICTION)**

#### **NOTE OF CAUTION**

The prophetic biography by Ibn Ishaq lacks a chain of transmission, stating he narrated directly from his teacher's teacher. The most notable and widely discussed criticism was his contemporary, Malik ibn Anas, who leveled many accusations against Ibn Ishaq. Malik rejected the stories of Muhammad and the Jews of Medina because they were solely based on biased accounts by the sons of Jewish converts. Later, Ibn Hajar denounced these stories as "odd tales." In addition, they were documented 140 years after the Prophet's death. However, the entire sira should not be rejected, and a dose of skepticism while reading these accounts is recommended.

#### **THE AFTERMATH OF THE BATTLE OF BADR**

The followers of the Prophet Muhammad showed a willingness to conform to several Jewish rituals. Therefore, there was no reason why the two communities should not live peaceably together in theory. However, the Jewish tribes of Medina had not abandoned the idea of exerting considerable political influence over the oasis. To them, Muhammad's success and prominence were likely to interfere with their political goals.

While the anti-Islamic Jewish poets conducted a campaign of vulgarity and abuse, in this atmosphere of unrest in Medina, the Battle of Badr took place. With odds heavily against the Muslims, Medina's Jews and hypocrites waited for Muslim defeat and

expulsion from the city. The following is the traditional description of events that led to the expulsion of the Jewish tribe of Qaynuqa. The narrative consists of many historical inconsistencies that raise questions about the whole story.

#### AN ARAB WOMAN IS DISHONORED?

During this period, an incident occurred in Medina, creating friction between Muslims and the Jewish tribe of B. Qaynuqa. In the marketplace of B. Qaynuqa, a local woman claimed that a Jewish goldsmith exposed her immodestly. She uttered a loud cry, and one of the Muslims leapt upon the goldsmith and killed him. So, the Jews fell upon the Muslim killing him in revenge. The Muslim family called on other Muslims for help against the Jews, and hostile feelings sprang up between the two parties.

#### THE WAR OF WORDS

Whatever the incident or the immediate cause of conflict, relations between the B. Qaynuqa and the Muslims had reached a boiling point. The Apostle was compelled to meet the B. Qaynuqa in their market for a warning. He allegedly warned them in the following words: "O Jews, beware lest Allah bring you the vengeance He brought upon the Quraysh and become Muslims. "I am a prophet sent - you will find that in your books and Allah's covenant with mankind." The Jewish response was a challenge. They said: 'O Muhammad, you seem to think we are your people (namely, the defeated Quraysh). Do not deceive yourself because you encountered a people with no knowledge of war and got the better of them, for by God, if we fight you. You will find we are real men.' The Qaynuqa were seven hundred strong, three hundred with armor, compared to some three hundred Muslims without armor. They

could have settled with the Apostle without the help of other powerful Jewish tribes and Medina's hypocrites. They also had their well-provided strongholds. Instead of confronting Muslims, they shut themselves inside their forts.

## SIEGE OF B. QAYNUQA

The Apostle sat down outside with his men. Only after a fifteen-day siege did the B. Qaynuqa surrender. The other two most powerful Jewish tribes, al-Nadir and Qurayzah, did not intervene or help. Intervention by Abd Allah b. Ubayy, the hypocrites' leader, also did not help the besieged Jews. The B. Qaynuqa were his confederates; they had fought by his side before the Hijrah. Only after their surrender, Abd Allah b. Ubayy came to the Apostle and asked him to "deal kindly with my clients." The Apostle replied, "Confound you; let me go." Ibn Ubayy answered, O, by God, I will not let you go until you deal kindly with my clients. Four hundred men without mail and three hundred with mail protected me from all my enemies. Would you cut them down in one morning? By God, I am a man who fears circumstances may change. The Apostle said, "You can have them." Ibn Ishaq and al-Waqidi reported this story, and they all left the impression that Abd Allah b. Ubayy had some influence on the Apostle.

## HISTORICAL INCONSISTENCIES

- It is rather curious that the Qaynuqa, as dealers in arms and armor, could be trusted not to use them. They had more fighters with combat experience than Muslims, and they still chose to surrender.

- Ibn Ishaq and al-Tabari did not report the Arab woman's dishonor, but Ibn Hisham and Al-Waqidi did.
- Al Waqidi reports being "men of war" and "the bravest of the Jews", and Ibn Ishaq's language is more cautious. He does not mention their bravery.
- Ibn Ishaq and Tabari had not reported that the Apostle had indicated that he intended to order the execution of the B. Qaynuqa. Instead, they reported that they should be expelled. It was al-Waqidi who mentioned it and added the phrase "and ordered them to be expelled from Medina."
- Since Ibn Ishaq did not report their expulsion, he did not refer to their property's disposal either. Even al-Waqidi does not tell us what happened to their market.
- Yahya B. Adam reports that the B. al-Nadir were the first to be deported from Yathrib and not Qaynuqa.
- Imam Shafi (767-820) mentions that the Apostle employed Jewish auxiliaries of B. Qaynuqa against the Jews of Khaybar (628).
- There is no mention of B. Qaynuqa in the Quran. It documents the expulsion of al-Nadir and does not mention the alleged expulsion of B. Qaynuqa when both events were similar in importance.
- Surat al-Hashr was revealed after the Battle of Uhud in the fourth year of the Hijrah. It deals with the banishment of the Jewish tribe, the B. al-Nadir, from Medina and refers to their expulsion as "the **first** gathering."

## CONCLUSION

The historical inconsistencies and lack of documentation in the Quran cast serious doubt on the authenticity of this story. The question of Banu Qaynuqa's expulsion is much more complicated. The preponderance of the evidence is against the general expulsion of the Jewish tribe of b. Qaynuqa. It is possible that only the leaders of Banu Qaynuqa were exiled.

**[Malik]** was a jurist, theologian, and hadith traditionist. He became the premier scholar of prophetic traditions and created a systematic Islamic jurisprudence method. His views on jurisprudence were highly cherished both in his own life and afterward. He became the founder of one of the four schools of Sunni law.

**Ibn Hajar** was a classic Islamic scholar. His life work constitutes the final summation of the science of hadith. He authored 150 works on hadith, history, biography, tafsir, poetry, and Shafi's jurisprudence; the most valued is his commentary on Sahih al-Bukhari, titled Fath al-Bari.

Muhammad b. Umar **al-Waqidi** was a Muslim scholar born in Medina in the 1st Century. Of his several writings, the most significant is the life of the Prophet. Ibn Ishaq and Al-Waqidi's works were recorded more than 140 years after the Prophet's death.

**Ibn Hisham** was the editor of Ibn Ishaq's Prophet biography. 'The Life of God's Messenger' by Ibn Ishaq, now lost work, survives only in Ibn Hisham's [Died: 833] and Tabari recensions. However, fragments of several others survive, and Ibn Hisham and al-Tabari share virtually the same material.

**Yahya B. Adam** (757-818) was primarily a traditionist and legist of the Orthodox school.]

## **CHAPTER 19**

### **THE BATTLE OF UHUD (625)**

The political significance of the battle of Badr was that Muhammad was a serious threat to Mecca. Their prestige was greatly diminished by the defeat with the loss of many leaders whose skills would be extremely difficult to replace. The potential threat to Meccan commerce was also considerable. Thus, the Meccans were bound to exert all their strength to destroy the Prophet or, at the very least, drive him out of Medina. The events of the next few years may be understood as Meccan efforts to meet the challenge to their very existence as a commercial state. From now on, the Quraysh will initiate all battles to kill the Prophet and decimate the nascent Islamic state.

#### **THE QARADAH DISASTER**

Badr also meant that the tribes along the Red Sea were now firmly allied with Medina. The coastal road to Syria was closed for Meccan caravans, and they keenly felt the loss of their major route. The only alternative was through Nejd's plains. The Meccans sent a rich caravan to Iraq consisting of silver bars and silver vessels under Safwan's leadership. One of the Helpers overheard some Medina Jews discussing this caravan in secret. The Prophet sent Zayd with a hundred horses to intercept the caravan at a watering place near Qaradah. Zayd ambushed the caravan with such a sudden and ferocious onslaught that Safwan and his men fled. He safely reached Medina with the merchandise.

## SECRET LETTER FROM ABBAS

In Mecca, the disaster of Qaradah intensified the preparation to attack Medina, which had been in progress since their defeat at Badr. One day a sealed letter arrived brought to the Prophet by a horseman who had ridden from Mecca to Medina in three days. His uncle Abbas warned the Prophet that an army of three thousand was on the way to attack Medina.

After Abu Jahl's death in the battle of Badr, the Meccan leadership was passed on to his compeer, Abu Sufyan. He was the Umayyad clan chief. The pagan Meccans—supported by several tribes hostile to Muslims—mustered an army comprising three thousand men under Abu Sufyan's command and marched against Medina. Seven hundred men were mailed, and a troop of horses two hundred strong.

## WARRIOR WOMEN ACCOMPANIED THE MECCAN ARMY

Accompanying the Meccan army was a band of war-like women. Their duty was to wage “psychological warfare” against the Muslims by reading poetry and singing amatory songs to spur the courage and will to fight off the soldiers. No insult terrified Arab men's ego as jibes of cowardice from women. They also knew that nothing was so powerful to turn them into utterly reckless fighters as the promise of physical love.

## HOLY WAR AGAINST MUSLIMS

As if the heavy sex overtones introduced by the Quraysh women were not enough, Abu Sufyan invested his campaign in “religious sanctity” as well. To leave no doubt in anyone's mind that he was engaged in a holy war against Muslims, he placed Hubal, the idol

that the clan of Banu Umayyad worshipped as its supreme deity, on a camel and carried it with him into battle. Hubal's duty was to boost idolaters' morale through his presence on the battlefield. Therefore, sex and religion were the two novel components mobilized by the Quraysh in their war against the Muslims.

The Quraysh army camped on a strip of cultivated land below Mount Uhud, which overlooks Medina. The Prophet sent out scouts, who returned the next morning with the information that the enemy number was true, as the letter stated. The three thousand or more camels and two hundred horses ate all the pasture and unharvested crops to the city's north.

#### THE DEMOCRATIC DECISION BY THE COUNCIL OF WAR

On hearing of their approach, in Shawwal 3 H., the Prophet held a council of war where the tactics to be adopted were discussed. In view of the overwhelming cavalry forces at the enemy's disposal, the Prophet himself believed that Muslims should fight from behind Medina's fortifications in its narrow streets and lanes.

**Ibn Ubayy's Plan:** Ibn Ubayy was the first to speak. He said, "Our city is a virgin that has never been violated. "No enemy has ever entered the city against us without suffering severe losses. Let them be. Their plight will be miserable for as long as they remain. Upon returning, they will feel dejected and frustrated, with nothing to be gained." Many older Companions of Emigrants and Helpers supported this plan.

**Youth supported confronting the enemy in the open.** However, most of the younger men who participated in the council strongly insisted on meeting the enemy in the open field. They argue that by

adopting a defensive position, the enemy would think we are weak and afraid of them. At Badr, God gave us victory with only three hundred men; now, we are many. In obedience to the Quranic principle, all public affairs must be transacted democratically. The Prophet sorrowfully gave way to the majority's will and set out with one thousand followers towards the plain below the mountain of Uhud. This is about over three miles from Medina. The verses below reference the battle of Uhud, to which many verses of the third surah are devoted.

#### THE DEFECTION BY IBN UBAYY

On the way to Mount Uhud, some three hundred men, led by the hypocritical Abd Allah ibn Ubayy, defected to the utter shame of his son Abd Allah, who was a true believer.

***When they were told, "Come, fight in God's cause" or "defend yourselves," they answered, "if we but knew [that it would come to a] fight, we would indeed follow you." Unto apostasy were they nearer on that day than unto faith, uttering with their mouths something which was not in their hearts, all the while God knew full well what they were trying to conceal. (3:167)***

Only a fight in self-defense, in the broadest sense, can be considered a "fight in God's cause" (2:190-194). They forsook the Prophet on the specious pretext that the Muslims did not really intend to fight, and the Prophet accepted the advice of men with poor judgment. But since they knew in their hearts that it would come to a fight, their defection from God's cause amounted to a denial of Him (kufr, here rendered as "apostasy").

## NEAR-DEFECTION OF THE TWO TRIBES

***And [remember, O Prophet, the day] when you set out from your home in the early morning to place the believers in battle arrays, and God was all-hearing and all-knowing. When two groups were about to lose heart, God was near them. It is in God that believers must trust: for, indeed, God succored you at Badr when you were utterly weak. Remain, then, conscious of God so you can be grateful. (3:121-123)***

Shortly before the battle, the clans of Salamah (of the tribe of Al-Aws) and Harithah (of the tribe of Khazraj) almost lost heart, since Muslims were in small numbers, they should avoid combat. However, at the last moment, they decided to follow the Prophet instead of the defectors.

## DIVINE AID AND INSPIRATION

***[And remember] when you said unto the believers: "Is it not enough [to know] that your Sustainer will aid you with three thousand angels sent down [from on high]? But if you are patient in adversity and conscious of him, and the enemy falls upon you suddenly, your Sustainer will aid you with five thousand angels swooping down!" And God ordained this [to be said by His Apostle] only as a glad tiding for you, and that your hearts should be set at rest. Since no succor can come from anyone save God, the Almighty, the truly Wise. [And] that [through you] He might destroy some of those who were bent on denying the truth and so abase the others that they would withdraw into utter hopelessness. (3:124-127)***

The Prophet's allusion to God aiding believers with thousands of angels signifies a strengthening of believers' hearts through spiritual

forces coming from God. The Prophet made this promise to his followers under divine inspiration. A very similar announcement relating to the battle of Badr occurs in 8:9-10, where "one thousand" angels are mentioned. These varying numbers (one, three, and five thousand) indicate the unlimited nature of God's aid to those who are "patient in adversity and conscious of Him."

## ABU DUJANAH

The Prophet put on a coat of mail, picked up the sword, and asked, "Who will take this sword together with its right?" Umar and Zubayr responded, but the Prophet said no to them both. Abu Dujanah, a man from Khazraj, asked, "What is its right?" The Prophet said, "You should strike it until its blade is bent." I will take it together with its right, Abu Dujanah replied. The Prophet gave his sword to Abu Dujanah, an Ansari, who justified the Prophet's confidence in him. He was a valiant man who gloried in battle. His red turban was called the death turban. Abu Dujanah lived up to his red turban promise. He killed every man he encountered easily, as if he was a reaper, and his sword was a scythe.

## PLACEMENT OF THE ARMY AND THE ARCHERS

Having less than seven hundred men, the Muslim army advanced under the cover of darkness between the enemy and Uhud Mountain. They halted with the ground slope in their favor. The bulk of the forces had their backs on the mountain. This would give his army an advantage and an element of surprise to the enemy. Having now achieved his first objective, the Prophet now chose his most skilled archers and put fifty on a hillock left of his main force. This was to provide cover against an outflanking maneuver by the enemy cavalry. He put over them Abd Allah ibn Jubayr and gave

them orders: "Keep their cavalry away from us with your arrows. Let them not attack us from behind. If the tide of battle is for us or against us, stay at your post. If you see us plundering the enemy, do not try to share it. If you see us being slain, come not to our aid." In other words, the archers were ordered not to leave their posts under any circumstances.

## THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE BATTLE

The battle began on 23 March 625. The sun was now up, and the Quraysh were already in line, with a hundred horses on each wing. Commanded on the right by Khalid ibn al-Walid and on the left by Ikrimah, son of Abu Jahl. From the center, Abu Sufyan ordered to advance. As soon as the two hosts were within earshot of each other, Abu Sufyan halted his advance. He said, "Men of Aws and Khazraj, quit the field and leave me, my cousin (Muhammad). For we have no reason to fight you." The Helpers replied with a thunderous abuse roll. The Meccans were ordered to advance. When the two armies were very close, the archers shot volleys of arrows into Khalid's cavalry. The horses' neighing echoed throughout the battlefield.

## COMBAT BETWEEN TALHAH AND ALI

In front of Abu Sufyan was Talhah ibn Abu Talhah, who carried the Meccan flag – the standard-bearer of the Meccan army. Two of his brothers and four of his sons were nearby. Talhah advanced and challenged the Muslims to single combat. Ali stepped forward, and the two men met in 'no man's land.' Without any words spoken, the duel began. Talhah never stood a chance. Ali's scimitar flashed in the morning sun, and the standard-bearer's head leaped from his shoulder and rolled away on the sand. When Ali returned to his line,

Talhah's brother, Uthman ibn Abu Talhah, attempted to retrieve the Meccan banner. However, Hamza came out of the Muslim line and killed him. Then Sad ibn Abi Waqqas (Sad of Zuhrah) put an arrow through Talhah's second brother's neck. His four sons were slain by Ali, Zubayr ibn al Awwam and Asim ibn Thabit of Aws. When the mother of Talhah's sons found out who killed her sons, she vowed to drink wine out of Asim's skull. At the outset, events unfolded as the Prophet had imagined. The champions of Badr, Ali, and Hamza dealt with death mercilessly.

#### MECCAN WOMEN INCITING THEIR WARRIORS TO KILL

Meanwhile, the Meccan women squatted on their camels and watched the swift action. They also moved into action when their army advanced to charge the Muslims. They incited their warriors to kill the Muslims. They sang songs full of invitation and scorn - invitation to the heroes and scorn for the cowards. With their music and highly suggestive poetry, they whipped up the impetuous sons of the desert into fighting furies.

*“Daughters of the shining morning star,*

*Watching you from silken beds, we are,*

*Thrash them! In our arms, we'll fold you.*

*Run, and never more. We'll hold you.”*

Hind, the wife of Abu Sufyan, a large woman with an imposing appearance, stood among the men, urging them to fight. She narrowly escaped being cut down by Abu Dujanah, who thought she was a man. His sword was above her head when she shrieked

and realized she was a woman; he spared her because of her gender and turned against the men at her side.

#### INITIAL ROUTING OF THE MECCAN ARMY

***God loves [only] those who fight in his cause in [solid] ranks, as though they were a building firm and compact. (61:4) And, indeed, God made good his promise unto you when, by His leave, you were about to destroy your foes. (3:121)***

The charge of Ali, Hamza, Abu Dujanah, Zubayr, and other Emigrants and Helpers fought like incarnations of the Muslim battle cry, Amit, Amit. This means “kill, kill.” Ali had broken the Quraysh ranks, and he was already deep inside their lines. Not far from him, his uncle, Hamza, was busy hacking his way through the enemy's dense mass. Between them, they ground down the Quraysh army. Ali's white plume, Abu Dajanah's red turban, Zubayr's yellow turban, the Ostrich plume of Hamza, and the green turban of Hubab were like flags of victory that strengthened the ranks behind them. In their death-defying assault upon the greatly superior pagan Quraysh, the Muslims gained a decisive advantage over the former. Muslims pressed to their advantage and almost routed them. This spread panic and consternation across the ranks of the Meccans, and they began to waver and lose ground.

At this time, two incidents occurred, which reversed Muslims' fortunes and wrested victory from their grasp. The first was Hamza's death, and the second was the abandonment of the position by archers, contrary to the Prophet's orders.

## MARTYRDOM OF HAMZA

Accompanying the Meccan army was an Abyssinian slave named Wahshi, who was an expert at throwing the javelin. He had seldom missed his mark. He was promised freedom if he could slay Hamza. Hind, the wife of Abu Sufyan, promised to give him gold, silver, and silk in the event of success. Hamza was unmistakable for his powerful stature and ostrich plume. Washi hid behind a rock, waiting for an opportune moment, and it soon came. Hamza was now face to face with Abd ad-Dar's last standard bearer. He lifted his sword to strike and momentarily exposed a chink in his armor. Wahshi saw his chance, and he launched his javelin with precise aim. Hamza staggered a few steps and fell to the ground in his death throes.

## THE ABANDONMENT OF THE POSITION BY THE ARCHERS

***The moment when you lost heart and acted contrary to the [prophet's] command and disobeyed after he had brought you within reach of that [victory] for which you were longing. There were among you who cared for this world [alone]. (3:152)***

They “acted contrary to [Prophet's] command and disobeyed” and those who “cared for this world alone”, referring to the abandonment of their position by the archers. Archers posted at the strategic pass also imagined that the enemy had already been beaten and was in retreat. They thought that if their comrades on the battlefield captured the rest of the enemy, they would lose their share of the booty. This fear prompted them to descend into the plain below – against the Prophet's explicit orders. Their captain,

Abd Allah ibn Jubayr, warned them not to abandon the pass, but they paid no heed and swept into the valley.

#### SATAN IS NOT THE PRIMARY CAUSE OF SIN

***Those of you who turned away [from their duty] on the day when the two hosts met in battle - Satan caused them to stumble only because of something they [themselves] had done. But now God has effaced this sin of theirs: God is much forgiving, forbearing. (3:155)***

The above verse illustrates a significant Quranic doctrine, which can be summarized: Satan's influence on a man is not the primary cause of sin, but its first consequence – that is to say, a consequence of a person's attitude of mind. Moments of moral crisis may lead him to choose easier and more pleasant alternatives. This may make him guilty of a sin, whether by commission or omission. Thus, God's "causing" a person to sin is conditional upon the existence, in the individual concerned, of an attitude of mind which predisposes him to commit such a sin. This, in turn, presupposes man's free will – that is, the ability to make, within certain limitations, a conscious choice between two or more possible courses of action.

#### ATTACK FROM THE REAR BY KHALID BIN AL-WALID

So far, the Meccan cavalry had been ineffective because the two armies were so interwoven together in hand-to-hand combat that a charge of a horse would have endangered their own men.

Presently, a Meccan general, Khalid bin al-Walid, noticed that the strategic pass to the left of Medina's army was unguarded. With his cavalry, he immediately attacked the ten archers still at the pass.

The archers fought bravely but were overpowered and killed, including Abd Allah ibn Jubayr.

***Just as there were among you such as cared for the life to come.  
(3:152)***

Those who “cared for the life to come” refer to those ten archers who gave their lives and did not defy the Prophet’s orders.

Once Khalid captured the pass, he led his men to the rear of their enemy’s main force. Ikrimah followed his example, attacking Medina’s army from the rear and causing havoc. Meanwhile, the army of Medina was unguarded, busy gathering booty, utterly oblivious to everything else. Suddenly, it was startled by the Meccan cavalry charge in its rear.

## FRONTAL CHARGE

Abu Sufyan also noticed Khalid’s maneuver and the Muslims’ bewilderment. He rallied his troops returned to the scene of action and launched a frontal attack. The idolaters who had been put to flight rallied and returned to the fray. The Quraysh war cry was heard all over the battlefield: “O Uzzah, O Hubal.” Deprived of the cover of the archers and caught between two fires, the Muslims now found themselves caught in the pincer movement of the enemy. It was now their turn to be routed, and they panicked. They ran everywhere , with many of their men dead. Those who had escaped being cut down by the horse riders fled towards the mountain, where they knew they could find refuge.

## THE MUSLIM ARMY RETREAT

***[Remember the time] when you fled, paying no heed to anyone, while at your rear, the Apostle was calling out to you. Wherefore he requited you with woe in return for [the Apostle's] woe, so that you should not grieve [merely] over what had escaped you, nor over what had befallen you. God is aware of all that you do. (3:153) He might put you to the test, He prevented you from defeating your foes. But now He has effaced your sin, for God is limitless in his bounty for believers. (3:152)***

The tables turned, and victory was wrenched from their hands. The realization of how shamefully they had behaved at Uhud would be, in the end, more painful for them than the loss of victory and the death of so many of their comrades. He prevented you from [defeating] them as a punishment.

Some of the companions praised for their bravery and loyalty turned their backs and fled. As the Muslims ran past the Prophet, he tried to stop them, but no one listened. However, most Muslims fought on, but the initial impetus was lost. They were driven back step by step towards Uhud in the direction of the Prophet.

## PARDON AND PRAY FOR FORGIVENESS

***And it was by God's grace that you [O Prophet] dealt gently with your followers. If you were harsh and hardhearted, they would indeed have broken away from you. Pardon them, then, and pray for their forgiveness. If God succors you, none can overcome you. But if He forsakes you, who could succor you thereafter? In God, then, let believers place their trust! (3:159-160)***

Per all available accounts, the Prophet did not reproach those of his followers who failed in their duty before and during the Uhud disaster.

#### DEEDS FALL SHORT OF FAITH ASSERTIONS

***O you who have attained faith! Why do you say one thing and do another? Most loathsome is it in God's sight that you say what you do not do! (61:2-3) For, indeed, you long for death [in God's cause] before you came face to face with it; and now you have seen it with your own eyes! (3:142-143)***

The above refers to the Prophet's Companions who, on their insistence, against the Prophet's advice, wanted to fight the enemy in the open field. Thereby unnecessarily courting deadly danger. They failed to live up to their faith during the earlier part of the battle and retreated in disorder from their battle station at Uhud. This is despite their previous assertions that they were ready to lay down their lives for God and His Apostle. In other words, their actions did not correspond to their faith assertions.

#### MARTYRDOM OF WAHAB BIN QABUS

A handful of defenders surrounded the Prophet himself. One of them was Wahab bin Qabus, a shepherd who came to Medina to see the Prophet, who had already left for Uhud. Wahab traveled to Uhud, and the situation was critical when he arrived. A small group of enemy horses approached from the left to attack the Prophet. Wahab shot arrows with such speed and dexterity that the attacker fled. Another group of enemy soldiers advanced toward the Prophet. Wahab rose joyfully as he drew his sword. Single-handedly, he fought through them and got to the other side. He

fought valiantly until the enemy surrounded him, and Wahab met martyrdom.

### UMM AMMARRA, A MUSLIM WARRIOR WOMAN

Nusaybah Umm Ammarra, a woman from Medina, was noted for her skills as a nurse who assisted Medina's army in Uhud. Her husband, Ghaziyyah, and two of her sons were also there. At the beginning of the battle, Umm Ammarra brought water for the soldiers and tended to them if they were wounded. But when the Muslims were defeated and they fled the battlefield, her role changed from that of a nurse to that of a warrior. At one point, the enemy brought archers to shower arrows upon the Prophet. Umm, Ammarra seized an enormous shield and held it before the Prophet to protect him from flying missiles. When the Meccans charged with swords and spears. Umm, Ammarra threw away the shield and attacked them with a sword. One enemy soldier came dangerously close to the Prophet, but she blocked him and was shot in the shoulder. Though wounded, she remained between the Prophet and his enemies, defying them and death. She was wounded thirteen times during the battle and was treated for her shoulder wound for a year. Later, the Prophet said, "Whether it was to the right or the left, in whichever direction I turned, I saw her (Ummu Ammarra) fighting in my defense."

### MARTYRDOM OF THE FIVE HELPERS

Another body of horses broke through the Muslims' rear. Five of the Helpers drew their swords and threw themselves at the enemy. They fought until they were killed, except for one mortally wounded. Help was at hand. Ali, Zubayr, Talhah, Abu Dujanah, and others who had been at the forefront of the battle had fought their way back

through the host. They had now reached the Prophet's side and were joined by Sad of Zuhrah and Harith ibn Simmah. Together with the newly arrived reinforcements, they pushed back the enemy.

## ALI TO THE RESCUE

Ali carried Islam's banner in one hand and a sword in the other. The battle cries of this small group of defenders led by Abu Dujanah caught Ali's attention. He tore his way through the enemy lines and came up to his comrades-in-arms. Meanwhile, the Meccans renewed their attacks, so Ali beat them back. They charged repeatedly, but he repulsed them each time.

**Talhah ibn Ubayd Allah** carried his sword and dashed here and there in front of the Prophet or behind him, beating off whatever danger was approaching. He made his own body a shield, protecting the Prophet from his attackers' swords and spears. He continued to do so until the Quraysh attack was beaten off.

## INJURIES TO THE PROPHET

A sharp stone from the enemy struck him in the face, breaking one of his teeth and causing bleeding from his mouth. He reassured Ali that his injury was not serious. Suddenly, a single horseman attacked the Prophet. "Where is Muhammad?" he shouted. "May I not survive if he survives?" With a glance at the group, he recognized his intended victim. Urging on his horse, he tried to strike the Prophet with his sword. But Talhah, standing next to the Prophet, deflected the sword and lost his fingers. The blade grazed the temple, driving two of his helmet rings into the Prophet's cheek. The impact stunned him, and he fell to the ground. Other enemy soldiers closed in to attack, and **Shammas ibn Uthman** of the

Makhzum clan of the Quraysh defended the Prophet well. Every time the Prophet looked in either direction, he found Shammas fighting in that direction until he was cut down.

When the Prophet was lying on the ground, he exclaimed, "How could those people prosper after doing this to their Prophet, who invites them to acknowledge their Sustainer?"

#### THE ADMONITION TO THE PROPHET

***It is not up to you [O Prophet] to decide whether He will accept their repentance or chastise them, for they are wrongdoers. While to God belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth. He forgives whom He wills, chastises whom He wills, and God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace. (3:128-129)***

The Prophet was admonished for invoking God's curse upon the pagan Quraysh leaders and was told that it is only God who accepts repentance or chastises the wrongdoers.

#### MUHAMMAD IS DEAD?

The cry immediately arose, "Muhammad has been killed!" The cry was heard all over the field, interspersed with the glorification of al-Uzzah and Hubal. Many Muslims fled; some were even prepared to surrender to the enemy. However, there were many exceptions. One of them was **Anas ibn Malik**, from the Najjar clan of the Khazraj tribe. Anas came upon two of his fellows for whom life seemed to have lost meaning. They could not continue fighting or climb up the mountain to safety. This is because they thought God's messenger had been slain. Said Anas, "Rise and die, even as he died." And he set off where the fighting was most intense. There, he found Sad ibn Muadh, who told the Prophet afterwards that "I could not fight as

he (Anas) fought.” Anas was found dead with more than eighty wounds, so disfigured that his sister recognized him by his peculiar fingers.

#### ADORATION IS DUE TO GOD ALONE

***Muhammad is only an Apostle; all the previous Apostles passed away before him. Then, if he dies or is slain, will you turn on your heels? But he who turns back on his heels cannot harm God, whereas God will reward all who are grateful [to him]. (3:144)***

Verse (3:144) re-states the fundamental Islamic doctrine that adoration is due to God alone and that no human being, not even a prophet, may share in it. Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, recited this Quran passage immediately after the Prophet's death. This was when many faint-hearted Muslims thought Islam had ended. But as Abu Bakr added, "Whoever worships Muhammad may know that he has died; but whoever worships God may know that God is ever living, and never dies," all confusion was dispelled.

***And how many prophets fought [in God's cause], followed by many God-devoted men? They did not become faint of heart for all they suffered in God's cause. Neither weakened nor abase themselves [before the enemy]. God loves those who are patient in adversity. All they said was: "O our sustainer!" Forgive us our sins and lack of moderation in our doings! And make firm our steps, and succor us against those who deny the truth!" Whereupon God granted them the rewards of this world and the best rewards of life to come, for God loves the doers of good. (3:146-148)***

The rumor of the Prophet's death caused many Muslims to abandon the fight and even drove some to apostasy. According to circumstances, the expression "turning about on one's heels" denotes either actual apostasy or a deliberate withdrawal from efforts in God's cause.

## COUNTERATTACK

A few of the companions - Umar ibn al-Khattab and Talhah - called out, "What good are your lives without him, O believers? Let us die as he has died!" They threw themselves in despair at the Meccans. Their example found an echo among the rest of the Muslims, and they rallied and counterattacked the enemy, saving the day.

After achieving their aim, the Meccans suddenly relaxed their efforts. They amply avenged those who died at Badr and killed the man who was the sole cause of all the strife. They ended the new religion and re-established the old order.

When the enemy retreated, the Prophet arose to his feet and led his companions into a glen. This was to find safety and watch the enemy. As the party moved up the glen, they were seen by those who had already taken refuge in Uhud. Kab ibn Malik was one of them. He recognized the Prophet, and he turned and shouted to those behind him: O Muslims, be of good cheer! This is the Messenger of God!" So great was the celebration that it was as if defeat had been transformed into victory.

## THE ONLY PERSON SLAIN BY THE PROPHET

But Kab's joyful shout was heard by a solitary Quraysh horseman. It was Ubayy ibn Khalaf, the brother of Umayyah ibn Khalaf. He had sworn to kill the Prophet. When he heard Kab's shout, he rode

up the glen and called out, "If thou escape, may not I escape?" Ubayy approached the Prophet with his sword drawn, but before he could strike a blow, the Prophet thrust a spear into his neck. Ubayy ibn Khalaf was the only person slain by the Prophet.

## VENGEANCE AND MUTILATION OF DEAD BODIES

The Quraysh were now counting their dead. Out of three thousand, only twenty-seven were killed. In vain, they searched for Muhammad's body. Meanwhile, Washi returned to Hamzah's body, ripped open his belly, cut out his liver, and brought it to Hind. She bit a piece of liver, chewed it, swallowed a morsel, and spat out the rest. Hamza, the Prophet's uncle, killed Hind's father in the Battle of Badr. Mecca pagan women mutilated the dead. They cut their ears and noses off, and Hind made them into anklets and collars. They all made ornaments of vengeance. So, when they buried their dead and took revenge on the enemy dead, they returned to Mecca. The cold-blooded cruelties of these killings in the battle of Uhud illustrate the extraordinary contrast between the easy-going and often chivalrous warfare of the Arabs and the brutalities of their blood feuds.

## DIALOGUE BETWEEN ABU SUFYAN AND UMAR AL KHATTAB

Before leaving, Abu Sufyan mounted his horse at the foot of the mountain where the Prophet and his companions were located. 'War comes in cycles, and today is a day for a day!' He shouted. Exult thyself, O Hubal! Make thy religion prevail!" The Prophet told Umar to answer him. "God is All-Highest, Supreme in His Majesty. Our slain are in paradise, and yours are in fire," said Umar. Abu Sufyan recognized Umar's voice: I adjure thee, Umar, by God, have

we slain Muhammad? "No, by God," said Umar; he is listening to you now." Abu Sufyan rode to where his army was waiting for him, and they headed toward the south.

## MARTYRDOM OF RABBI MUKHAYRIQ FOR ISLAM

The Prophet led his companions down to the plain. Among the dead, they found a stranger until someone recognized him as Mukhayriq, a learned rabbi of the Jewish clan of Thalabah, allied with one of the three major Jewish tribes that lived in Medina for centuries. Rabbi Mukhayriq fought alongside Prophet Muhammad in the battle of Uhud and was martyred. As it happened, Rabbi Mukhayriq addressed the people of his tribe and urged them to come with him to fight together with Muhammad. The tribe's men protested, saying it was a Sabbath day. "We are not supposed to go to war on the Sabbath unless we are attacked. The pagan Arabs from Mecca will not attack us; they only want to persecute the Muslims in Medina – as they have done for many years in Mecca." Rabbi Mukhayriq chastised the men of his congregation for not understanding the deeper meaning of what was happening. Coincidentally, Mukhayriq died that day in the battle against the Meccans. When Muhammad, who was seriously injured during the battle, was informed about the death of Rabbi Mukhayriq, the Prophet said, "*HE WAS THE FINEST OF JEWS.*" Perhaps Rabbi Mukhayriq's supreme sacrifice and example of brotherhood in the name of monotheism can inspire Islamic and Jewish religious leaders today to heal past wounds and to make Jerusalem and the Middle East an exemplary land of peace in the world.

## DEATH IS PREORDAINED

***No human being can die save by God's leave, at a term pre-***

***ordained. (3:145) They who, having themselves held back, [later said of their brethren], "had they but paid heed to us, they would not have been slain." say: "Avert, then, death from yourselves, if what you say is true!" (3:168)***

## **DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN RIGHTEOUS AND EVILDOERS**

***If misfortune touches you, [know that] similar misfortune has also touched [other] people. For it is by turn that We apportion men such days [of fortune and misfortune]. And [this] to the end that God might mark out those who have attained faith and choose from among you such as [with their lives] bear witness to the truth. God does not love evildoers, and God might purify all dross from those who have attained faith and bring to nothing those who deny the truth. (3:140-141)***

## **YOU HAVE TO STRIVE HARD TO ENTER PARADISE**

***Do you think you could enter paradise unless God takes cognizance of you having strived hard [in his cause], and been patient in adversity? For, indeed, you long for death [in God's cause] before you came face to face with it, and now you have seen it with your own eyes! (3:142-143)***

His decision to let some of you die as martyrs in His cause and thus bear witness to the truth is not due to the love of the sinful enemies who oppose you but to His love for you. Since God is all-knowing, His "not taking cognizance" implies that the thing or happening referred to has not come about or is non-existent.

## MARTYRS ARE ALIVE, AND JOY FOR THE SURVIVORS

***Do not think of those slain in God's cause as dead. No, they are alive! With their Sustainer have they their sustenance, exulting in [martyrdom] which God has bestowed upon them out of his bounty. They rejoice in the glad tidings given to those [of their brethren] who have been left behind and have not yet joined them. This is because no fear they have, and neither shall they grieve. They rejoice in the glad tidings of God's blessings and bounty. In addition, [the promise] that God will not fail to requite the believers who responded to the call of God and the Apostle after misfortune befell them. (3:169-172)***

The "misfortune" refers to the losses sustained by the Muslims at the battle of Uhud and connects directly with the preceding verses, which speak, in general terms, of martyrs who die for God's cause. The above verse also expresses a general moral summary, historical references to the battle of Uhud, and lessons to be drawn from it.

## VICTORY FOR MUJAHIDIN AND ETERNAL LIFE FOR MARTYRS

***And if one desires the rewards of this world, We shall grant him thereof. If one desires the rewards of life to come, We shall grant him thereof. We shall requite those who are grateful [to us]. (3:145)***

The warriors (mujahidin) will be rewarded in this life with victory. Those who fall in battle will be rewarded with eternal life as martyrs (shahid or witness) for their faith.

## EVIL ABODE FOR EVILDOERS

***O you who have attained faith! If you pay heed to those bent on denying the truth, they will cause you to turn back on your heels, and you will be the losers. God alone is your Lord supreme, and He is the best Succor. Into the hearts of those who are bent on denying the truth, We shall cast dread in return for their ascribing divinity, side by side with God, to other beings - [something] for which He has never bestowed any warrant from on high. Their goal is fire, and how evil abode of evildoers! (3:149-151)***

## BELIEVERS WILL NOT BE ABANDONED TO PAGANISM

***It is not God's will [O you who deny the truth] to abandon believers to your way of life, [and] to that end, he will set apart the bad from the good. (3:179)***

"It is not God's will [O you who deny the truth] to abandon the believers to your way," and that the believers would, in time, differ from the unbelievers not only in their convictions but also in their social aims and their manner of living.

## THE MARTYRS' BURIAL

Aside from Hamza, three other Meccan Muslims were martyred in Uhud. Ansar's losses were heavy. They left seventy-one dead on the field and many more wounded. As soon as it was clear that the Meccans intended to return home, Medina's women set out for the battlefield. They came to tend to the wounded and recover the dead. Among the first to arrive were Safiyyah, Aishah and Umm Ayman. The Prophet was distressed to see Safiyyah and tried to stop her from approaching her brother Hamza's mutilated body. But Safiyyah already knew about the mutilation and said, "If it was for

God's sake, and for His sake do we fully accept. So, she looked at her brother's body and prayed over him:

***O you who have attained faith! Seek aid in steadfast patience and prayer. For, behold, God is with those who are patient in adversity. And say not of those who are slain in God's cause, "They are dead." Nay, they are alive, but you perceive it not. And most certainly shall We try you by means of danger, hunger, loss of worldly goods, lives and fruits of [labor]. But give glad tidings unto those who are patient in adversity, who, when calamity befalls them, say, "Verily, unto God do we belong and, verily, unto Him we shall return." It is they upon whom their Sustainer's blessings and grace are bestowed, and it is they, they who are on the right path! (2:153-157)***

Fatimah soon joined Safiyyah. The two women and the Prophet wept over their dead. Their cousin Hamnah was approaching, and their sorrow increased by telling her of Musab bin Umayr's death. Graves were dug for martyrs' burials, and two or three bodies were buried together. The Prophet presided over every burial, seventy-five and all. The Prophet called for his horse to head home when the last grave had been filled. Before he reached Medina, he stopped before the lava tract and offered a thanksgiving prayer.

## LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE BATTLE OF UHUD

The battle of Uhud was a setback for Muslims but not a complete defeat. Seventy-five Muslims had indeed been killed compared to twenty-seven Meccans, but the Meccan army had failed in their strategic aim of destroying Muhammad. In the days following Uhud, the Prophet received many revelations concerning the battle.

***Be not, then, faint of heart, and grieve not, for you are bound to rise high if you are [truly] believers. (3:139)***

This passage may have more positive implications, namely, a reference to the lesson that believers should draw from their near-defeat and a reminder that their future depends on the strength of their faith in God and not on a fleeting desire for self-sacrifice. The passage addresses all those who claim they are willing to live up to anything the divine writ declares and then fall short of this determination.

#### INNER CALM FOR SOME

***Then, after this woe, He sent down a sense of security, an inner calm that enfolded some of you. (3:154)***

"The drowsiness that precedes sleep" is a metaphor and denotes inner calm, which came upon those who remained steadfast throughout the battle.

#### LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY FOR OTHERS

***The others, who cared mainly for themselves, entertained wrong thoughts about God - thoughts of pagan ignorance - saying, "Did we, then, have any power of decision [in this matter]?" say: "All power of decision does rest with God." [But as for them,] they are trying to conceal within themselves that [weakness of faith] which they would not reveal unto you, [O Prophet, by] saying, "If we had any power of decision, we would not have left so many dead behind." Say [unto them]: "Even if you had remained in your homes, those [of you] whose death had been ordained would indeed have gone forth to the places where they were destined to lie down." And [all this befell you] so that God might put to the***

***test all that you harbor in your bosoms and render your innermost hearts pure of all dross: for God is aware of what is in the hearts [of men]. (3:154)***

The thought of pagan ignorance is an allusion to the initial reluctance of those faint-hearted people to admit their moral responsibility for what had happened and to their excusing themselves by saying that their failure to live up to their faith had been predestined and they had no power over victory or defeat. While it is for God alone to apportion actual success or failure to whomever He wills, "nothing shall be accounted unto man but what he is [or was] striving for" (53:39).

#### SELF-RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SETBACK

***Now that a calamity has befallen you after you had inflicted twice as much [on your foes], do you ask yourselves, "How has this come about?" Say: "It has come from yourselves." God has the power to will anything and all that befell you on the day the two hosts met in battle happened by God's leave so that he might mark out the [true] believers and those tainted with hypocrisy. (3:165-167)***

At the battle of Badr, in the year 2 H, the Muslim army inflicted heavy casualties. Many of the Prophet's followers were convinced that, whatever the circumstances, God would grant them victory because of their faith alone. The bitter experience at Uhud shocked them, so the Quran reminds them that this calamity resulted from their doings.

## VICTORY AND POWER OF FAITH

***A magnificent requital awaits those who have persevered in doing good and remained conscious of God. Those who have been warned by other people, "A host has gathered against you, so beware of them!" This only increased their faith, so they answered, "God is enough for us, and how excellent a guardian is he!" And they returned [from the battle] with God's blessings and bounty, without having been touched by evil, for they had been striving after God's goodly acceptance, and God is limitless in his great bounty. (3:172-174)***

“Without having been touched by evil,” arising out of weakness of faith and loss of courage, is an allusion to what happened to many Muslims at Uhud.

## BETWEEN UHUD AND TRENCH

After the setback at Uhud, many hostile tribes were emboldened to attack Muslims, as they were now perceived as weak. On receiving the information that the Banu Asad was preparing for war, Prophet Muhammad sent an expeditionary force of a hundred and fifty men, quickly overcoming the enemy. In 625, the tribe of Hudhayl treacherously ambushed six Muslim missionaries. Four of them were killed in the struggle to capture them; the other two were brought to Mecca and executed.

## **CHAPTER 20**

### **TREASON BY BANU AL-NADIR**

#### **MASSACRE OF MUSLIM MISSIONARIES**

Four months after the battle of Uhud, a delegation of Banu Amir headed by Abu Bara came to Prophet Muhammad and presented him with a gift. The Prophet declined to accept that gift because it was from a polytheist and asked Abu Bara to embrace Islam. He requested the Prophet to send some Muslims to Najd to call them to Islam. At first, Prophet Muhammad was quite apprehensive, fearing harm might befall these Muslim missionaries. Despite the Prophet's hesitation, Abu Bara guaranteed the emissaries' safety. At Bir Mauna, Muslim missionaries were brutally attacked and killed. Only one Muslim escaped the massacre. On his way home, he saw two men from B. Amir lying asleep. Not knowing that B. Amir had taken no direct part in the massacre, he killed both to avenge his companions.

#### **ATTEMPT TO ASSASSINATE THE PROPHET**

Under a pact with B. al-Amir, the Apostle and the Jewish clan of B. al-Nadir were obliged to pay blood money or monetary compensation. The Apostle, accompanied by several prominent community members, appeared before the B. al-Nadir Council. After requesting a contribution towards the payment of blood-money due, the Prophet had dinner with B. al-Nadir in their settlement. Its leader, Huyayy b. Akhtab decided to take advantage of the situation. He suggested to his tribesmen that one of them climb to the top of the house and drop a stone on Muhammad. This would free them once and for all of the Muslim prophet. One of the

Jews urged against betraying Muhammad, but his arguments were not heeded. Amr b. Jhash volunteered to do what Huyayy suggested. However, just as he had the stone in position above Muhammad, the Prophet received a revelation telling him what the B. al-Nadir planned to do . The Apostle also noticed some movements that made him suspicious.

The Prophet immediately stood and left the house, heading for the city. The companions caught up with him on the way back. In reply to Abu Bakr's questions, the Prophet told them of the Jews' plans to kill him and of God's message of warning.

After the abrupt departure of the Apostle and his party, the men of B. al-Nadir realized that through their unsuccessful assassination attempt, they had placed their tribe in a very dangerous position. Through their actions they themselves provided the Prophet with justification for stern measures against them. One of the Jews, Kinanah b. Suwayra argued for Muhammad's acceptance as a true prophet. He argued that only a true messenger of God could have received a warning of the attempt on his life.

## VIOLATIONS OF THE TREATY

Shortly after his followers' exodus from Mecca to Medina, the Prophet concluded a treaty with the Banu al-Nadir of mutual non-interference. They pledged neutrality in hostilities between Muslims and Quraysh. B. al-Nadir repeatedly violated the treaty. The crime of treason is defined as betraying one's country, especially by attempting to kill the sovereign or overthrow the government.

- Within three months of the battle of Badr, the Nadir chief had secretly entertained Abu Sufyan and two hundred Meccan riders in their abortive attempt to attack Medina.
- In a year, the Meccans were ready to take to the battlefield again. The Apostle had already been informed of al-Nadir's secret contacts with Mecca's Quraysh when they encamped at Uhud before the battle. They incited them to fight and informed them of Muslims' shortcomings.
- One year later, after the Muslims' setback at Uhud, the al-Nadir treacherously broke their contract with the Prophet Muhammad and allied with the Meccan Quraysh to destroy the Muslim community.

On 22 March 625, the battle of Uhud occurred. The Apostle lost the battle, and seventy Muslims were killed against twenty-two Quraysh. Though the Meccans did not fully take advantage of the Muslim loss, Muslim prestige plummeted.

### **Surah 59** **Al-Hashr (The Gathering)**

Most of the fifty-ninth surah, Al-Hashr (The Gathering), refers directly or indirectly to the conflict between the Muslim community and the Jewish tribe of Banu al-Nadir of Medina. The conventional title of the surah echoes the mention of "gathering (for war)" in verse 2, although some of the Prophet's companions, e.g., Ibn Abbas, called it Surat Bani al-Nadir.

## WAR OR DEPARTURE WITH ALL THEIR POSSESSIONS

The Prophet sent Muhammad b. Maslamah to the Jews with a command to leave the oasis within ten days on penalty of death. When the Jews reproached Muhammad b. Maslamah for undertaking such a mission against the allies of his own tribe, he replied, "Hearts are changed."

The Prophet gave them an alternative: war or departure from Medina with all their possessions. If they accepted the proposition, they would be allowed to return yearly to gather the produce of their date groves, which would thus remain their property. The Banu al-Nadir agreed to the second alternative but asked for – and was granted – ten days of respite. In the meantime, they secretly conspired with the hypocrites among the Arabs of Medina, led by Abd Allah ibn Ubayy.

## THE FUTILITY OF AN ALLIANCE WITH HYPOCRITES

***Are you not aware of how those who always dissemble [their real feelings] [such as the hypocrites of Medina] speak to their truth-denying brethren from among the followers of earlier Revelation? [the tribe of al-Nadir] "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 aid." But God bears witness that they are most flagrantly lying [for] if those [to whom they have pledged themselves] are indeed driven away, they will not go forth with them. If war is waged against them, they will not come to their assistance. Even if they [try to] help them, they will turn their backs [in flight]. In the end, they will find no succor. (59:11-12)***

Abd Allah ibn Ubayy promised them the armed support of two thousand warriors if they decided to remain in their fortified settlements on the outskirts of the town. So, do not leave your homes. If the Muslims fight against you, we shall fight side-by-side with you, and if they succeed in driving you away, we shall leave Medina together with you.” The Banu al-Nadir followed hypocrites’ advice, defied the Prophet, and took up arms. The passage above was revealed before the Muslims’ actual advance against Nadir strongholds. It applies to the futility inherent in all “alliances” between people who openly deny the truth and half-hearted believers who have neither the will to commit themselves to a spiritual proposition nor the moral courage to declare their lack of belief openly.

#### SIEGE OF JEWISH FORTS FOR TWENTY-ONE DAYS

***It is He who expelled them from their homes, at the time of [their] first gathering [for war], such of the followers of earlier revelation as were bent on denying the truth. You did not think [O believers] they would depart [without resistance]. Just as they thought their strongholds would protect them from God. But God came upon them in a manner they had not expected and cast terror into their hearts. They destroyed their homes with their own and believers' hands. Learn a lesson, then, O you endowed with insight! (59:2)***

The tribe of al-Nadir, who as Jews are termed *ahl al-Kitab* (followers of earlier revelation), are characterized as “bent on denying the truth” because they treacherously turned against the Prophet. The “first gathering” of the Jewish tribe of al-Nadir for war refers to the first conflict with the Islamic State and subsequent expulsion. Their forts were besieged by Muslims in the ensuing

conflict without fighting for twenty-one days. After Abd Allah ibn Ubayy's help failed to materialize, the Nadir surrendered. No other Jewish tribe offered help. It is only through God's will that they were forced to leave, as they were terror-stricken by Abd Allah ibn Ubayy's unexpected last-minute failure to come to their aid.

#### EMIGRATION PERMITTED WITH A MOVABLE PROPERTY ONLY

Their plea for peace was granted on much less generous conditions that they would leave Medina, taking with them all their movable properties but not their arms. When their hostility to the Muslims became apparent, they were ordered to emigrate but were allowed to retain ownership of their plantations. Subsequently, by their betrayal, they forfeited their citizenship and the rights to their landed property and thus “destroyed their homes by their own hands.” Their fields and plantations were forfeited; most of them were divided among needy Muslims, and the remainder was reserved for the needs of the Islamic community. Most of them immigrated to Syria in a caravan of about six hundred camels; only two families chose to settle in the oasis of Khaybar, while a few individuals ventured as far as Al-Hirah in lower Mesopotamia.

#### SUFFERING IN THE AFTERLIFE

***And had it not been for God's having ordained banishment for them, He would indeed have imposed [yet additional] suffering in this world. Still, in the afterlife, they will suffer through fire. This is because they cut themselves off from God and His Apostle. For someone who cuts themselves off from God and His Apostle, God is severe in retribution! (59:3-4)***

## CUTTING DOWN TREES TO FACILITATE MILITARY OPERATION

***Whatever [of their] palm trees you may have cut down, [O believers] or left standing on their roots, were done by God's leave. This was so that He might confound the iniquitous. (59:5)***

As an exception to the rule, trees were cut to facilitate military operations against Banu al-Nadir's strongholds. Otherwise, destruction of enemy property, particularly trees and crops, was and continues to be prohibited by the Prophet. It has thus become an integral part of Islamic Law.

## HYPOCRITES FEAR MORE WORLDLY DANGER

***[O believers] you stir in their hearts a fear more intense than [even their fear of] God: this is because they fail to grasp the truth. Never will they fight you, not even in unison, except from within fortified strongholds or behind walls. Severe is their warlike discord among themselves: you would think they are united, whereas [in fact] their hearts are at odds [with one another]: this is because they are people who will not use their reason. (59:13-14)***

They do not fear God as they do not believe in God or, at most, only half-heartedly believe in God. The material dangers facing them in this world arouse far greater fear than His ultimate judgment. Even if they fight from a united front, they will always fight from well-established positions of strength. The above passage might be prophetic, predicting what was yet to happen. People with no real faith and moral convictions can never attain true unity among themselves. Instead, they are impelled to commit acts of aggression against one another.

## PREDICTION OF DEFEAT AND SUFFERING IN THE AFTERLIFE

***[To both kinds of your enemies, O believers, is bound to happen] the like of [what happened to] those who a short while before them tasted evil. (Defeat of the Pagan Quraysh at the battle of Badr). It came from their doings, with [yet more] grievous suffering awaiting them [in the life to come]: the like of [what happens] when Satan says unto man, “Deny the truth!” But as soon as [man] has denied the truth, [Satan] says, “I am not responsible for you: I fear God, the Sustainer of all the worlds!” Thus, in the end, both [the deniers of the truth and the hypocrites] will find themselves in the fire; therein to abide for such is the recompense of evildoers. (59:15-17)***

“Both kinds of your enemies” refer to the outright deniers of truth and hypocrites. They will suffer the same fate as the pagan Quraysh at the battle of Badr.

## CHAPTER 21

### THE BATTLE OF TRENCH (627)

The battle of the trench is commemorated in the Quran in surah thirty-three (Al-Ahzab). Verses 9-27 relate to the War of the Confederates, also called the War of the Trench (al-khandaq). The Meccans had spent these two years preparing for a supreme effort to destroy the Muslims once and for all. Although they won at Uhud, they did not achieve their main goal of killing the Prophet.

#### JEWISH LEADERS FOMENT REVENGE WAR

A group of Jewish leaders secretly traveled to Mecca, where they met with Quraysh leaders and encouraged them to make war against the Prophet. It included the Banu Nadir leaders: Salaam bin Abu Al-Huqayq, or **Abu** Rafi, Salaam bin Mishkam, and Kinanah bin Ar-Rabi. They had settled in Khaybar and were determined to recover their lost land in Medina.

#### OATH IN THE KABAH

Huyayy ibn Akhtab, some Jewish leaders from Khaybar and Meccan chiefs took an oath inside the Kabah. They promised not to fail one another until they destroyed Muhammad. After securing a definite date from the Meccans for the attack against Muhammad, the same leaders reached out to all those tribes who fought against Muslims. They called for general mobilization in a revenge war. They roused all the nomads in Najd who had grievances against Medina. Where the desire for revenge was not sufficient, the matter was clinched by bribery. In case of victory, the Jewish leaders promised half of the year's crop of the Khaybar farms as a prize for

the Ghatafan tribe fighters. They agreed to join the Confederacy, and that increased the army by two thousand men.

At the instigation of Jewish leaders, several of the most powerful Arabian tribes formed a confederacy. This was to overcome the threat posed by Islam to pagan Arabia's beliefs and customs. The following are approximate figures of this confederacy:

- The Meccans mobilized approximately 4,000-foot soldiers, 300 horsemen, and 1,000–1,500 camel riders.
- The Jewish leaders procured mercenaries from the tribe of Ghatafan by promising half of the year's crop from Khaybar's orchard as a prize. This second-largest contingent added approximately 2,000 men and 300 horsemen.
- From the Banu Sulaym, the Nadir secured 700 men. Other tribes included the Banu Murra (400 men) and the Banu Shuja (700 men).
- Other groups included the allied Jews, the pagan Arabs of Banu Kinanah, Banu Asad, and the coastlands (the Tihamah); the Hawazin, mercenary Bedouins, and Black slaves.

During Shawwal, 5 H., a force of over 10,000 men, composed of Meccans, allied Jews, and other pagan Arab tribes set out to extinguish Islam's light forever. They converged upon Medina in two streams. The Meccan army marched out along the west coastal route to Medina, the same route they took to Uhud. The second army closed in on Medina from the east, from the Najd plain.

## THE PROPHET WARNED OF A COMING ATTACK

At the same time, with the help of Abbas, the Prophet's Uncle, several horsemen from the Bani Khuzaah set out for Medina. They were to warn the Prophet of an impending attack. They reached Medina in four days, and that gave the Prophet one week to prepare. He alerted the city and spoke words of encouragement and the promise of victory if they had patience, feared God, and obeyed orders. Arabia's mobilization against Muslims instilled fear and panic as they were faced with the prospect of being defeated and wiped out. The people of Medina harvested all their crops early so the Confederate armies could rely on their own food reserves.

## THE COUNCIL OF WAR'S DEMOCRATIC DECISION

The Prophet summoned his companions for consultation, and many opinions were expressed about what to do. Finally, Salman rose to his feet and said: "O Messenger of God, in Persia, when we fear an attack by horses, we surround ourselves with a trench." Everybody agreed with the plan to dig a trench.[Salman al-Farsi was a Persian companion of Muhammad. He was raised as a Zoroastrian in Persia, attracted to Christianity, and later converted to Islam after meeting Muhammad in Medina.] The loss at the Battle of Uhud taught Muslims the significance of strategic planning. The trench around Medina's northern boundary would render the Meccan cavalry ineffective.

## DIGGING OF THE TRENCH

The trench did not need to be continuous. In many places, a long stretch of fortress-like houses was adequate protection. To the northwest, there were masses of impassible rocks. The trench was

located across the open north side of the oasis, as Medina was surrounded by rocky hills, lava flows, and trees, impenetrable to large armies (especially cavalry).

As the strategy's originator, Salman knew exactly how wide and deep the trench should be. The trench was about two kilometers long, 13 feet wide, and 7-8 feet deep-it was designed to prevent riders from jumping across it.

Having worked with Banu Qurayzah, Salman knew they possessed all the necessary equipment to get the job done. They borrowed all the equipment from them, and the Prophet assigned each section of his community responsible for digging a part of the trench. Time was short, and all efforts must be made to close all gaps in the defenses.

They left at dawn after morning prayers and came home at twilight. All the able-bodied men worked day and night, including the Prophet, under extremely difficult conditions. Excavated rocks and stones that might serve as missiles were piled up close to the trench.

The temperature was close to freezing, and food shortages caused famine-like conditions. To curb hunger pangs, the men attached stones to their abdomens, including the Prophet. He worked side-by-side with the rest of the community, leading by example and encouraging men in the process. The trench was completed in six days, and the women and children were moved to the interior and placed within fortified walls. Three thousand men defended the city.

#### ADMIRATION FOR SALMAN

Salman was an object of admiration. Not only was he very strong and able-bodied, but he could also do the work of ten men. A

friendly rivalry started between the Emigrants and the Helpers. “Salman is ours,” the Emigrant claimed. “He one of us, Helpers retorted.” But the Prophet said, “Salman is one of us, the people of the house.”

## PREDICTION OF THE PERSIAN AND BYZANTINE CONQUEST

***And [remember how it was] when the hypocrites and those with diseased hearts said, “God and His Apostle have promised us nothing but delusions!” (33:12)***

The above verse refers to Muhammad’s prophetic vision, at the time of digging the trench, of the future Muslim conquest of the whole Arabian Peninsula and the Persian and Byzantine Empires. Several authentic traditions testify to the Prophet’s announcement of this vision at the time in question. The phrase “hearts diseased” refers to the lack of faith among believers who dismissed this prophecy as “delusions.”

## THE SIEGE

The news came that the Quraysh army was approaching the valley. They were on the Southwest side of the town while Ghatafan and the other tribes from Najd moved towards Uhud on the east side. The Quraysh were dismayed to find that the oasis crops had already been harvested. There was nothing for the horses to eat except the hay they brought. It was, therefore, imperative to defeat the enemy as quickly as possible. The two streams of armed men came together and advanced toward the city.

Abu Sufyan was the commander-in-chief, and Khalid and Ikrimah oversaw the cavalry as before. The Meccan army was surprised:

there was a broad trench between them and the archers. The Quraysh and their allies arrived at Medina and found an impassable ditch surrounding the city—a defensive measure unknown in pre-Islamic Arabia. Thus, the Confederates' assault came to a halt, and Abu Sufyan was forced to lay siege to the city. It was evident that victory would be extremely difficult if there were Muslims defending a ditch fiercely. In addition, Banu Qurayzah supplied Medina with enough food to last for many months.

### BANU QURAYZAH BROKE THEIR PACT WITH MUHAMMAD

The rest of the day was spent consulting with the Meccan leaders. Finally, they decided to force the enemy to withdraw troops from the northern side where the trench was located. They approached Banu Qurayzah, whose fortress blocked Medina's approach from the southeast. Huyayy ibn Akhtab came to the fort of Kab ibn Asad, the chief of the Qurayzah who had made the pact with the Prophet. Huyayy knocked on the gate. Kab refused to open the gate, knowing what he was up to. "I have made a pact with Muhammad, and I am not willing to break what is between him and me." Huyayy said: "I have promised thee lasting glory for all time and power like a raging sea. I have brought thee Quraysh, the Kinanah, and Ghatafan, ten thousand strong. They have sworn to me that they will not rest until they root out Muhammad and his companions. This time, he shall not escape." "By God," said Kab, "You have brought me shame for all time—a cloud without water, all thunder, and lightning." Finally, Huyayy swore by God the most solemn oath: "If Quraysh and Ghatafan return to their territories and have not smitten Muhammad, I will enter into your fortress, and my fate shall be yours." At this assurance, Kab dissolved the pact with the Prophet,

and he was convinced that there was no possibility of survival of Islam.

Banu Qurayzah had rich food stores, and Muslims would be cut off, and the road to Medina would lie open. The Jewish tribe of Banu Qurayzah, who lived on the outskirts of Medina , openly joined the Confederates. The news of betrayal by the Banu Qurayzah caused grave concern among Muslims. It was now necessary to keep a garrison in the town in case of attack by Banu Qurayzah and the Confederate army.

#### FEAR AND DOUBTS AMONG MUSLIMS WEAK IN FAITH

***[Remember what you felt] when they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when [your] eyes became dim and [your] hearts came up to [your] throats, and [when] most conflicting thoughts about God passed through your minds, [for] there and then were the believers tried and shaken with a shock severe. (33:10-11)***

Seeing men and horses as far and wide as the eye could see across the trench from the Medina side was a formidable sight. Due to fear, their hearts came up to their throats. All thoughts about God went through some Muslim defenders, i.e., whether He would save them or allow their enemies to triumph.

The Ghatafan group tried to take the trench by assault from the upper, eastern part of the Medina plain (“Came upon you from above”) while the Quraysh and their allies launched an attack from its lower, Western part (“Came upon you from below”). This was in consonance with their original lines of approach—the Ghatafan from the highlands (Najd) and the Quraysh from the coastal

lowlands (Tihamah). The above verses summarize their experiences during the critical days and weeks of the War of the Trench. They were exhorted to emulate the Prophet's faith, courage, and steadfastness in verse 21 below. Although addressed to those early Medina defenders, this verse is of timeless importance and valid in all situations and conditions.

### EMULATE THE PROPHET'S COURAGE AND STEADFASTNESS

***In the Apostle of God, you have an excellent example for everyone who looks forward [with hope and awe] to God, the Last Day, and remembers God unceasingly. And [so,] when the believers saw the Confederates [advancing against them], they said, "This is what God and His Apostle have promised us!" And "Truly God spoke and His Apostle!" And all this increased their faith and readiness to surrender to God. Among the believers are men who have [always] been true to what they vowed before God; and among them are those who have [already] redeemed their pledge by death, and such yet await [its fulfillment] without changing [their resolve] in the least. (33:21-23)***

"What God and His Apostle have promised us," refers to 29:2 and 2:155: "Most certainly shall We try you by means of danger, hunger, loss of worldly goods, of lives and [labor's] fruit." But give glad tidings unto those who are patient in adversity. "Among the believers are men" refers specifically to certain of the Companions who vowed, at the time of the early campaigns, to fight until death at the Prophet's side. In its broader sense, it relates to all efforts involving supreme sacrifices in God's cause.

## THE DUAL BETWEEN AMR AND ALI

The siege continued without much fighting, though some Quraysh horsemen found a narrow part of the trench. They beat their horses and jumped over the trench to the other side. Among them was a man called Amr ibn Abd Wudd. He fought at Badr against the Muslims until wounded, and he was not present at Uhud's battle. He was one of the most feared warriors in Arabia, so much so that even the Prophet was reluctant to send anyone to challenge him. When Amr issued his challenge to fight one-on-one, Ali got up and asked the Prophet's permission to confront him. However, he told him to sit down, for it was Amr. Then, Amr repeated his challenge, taunting them and saying, "Where is your garden, which you say those who lose in battle will enter? Can't you send a man to fight me?" Ali asked the prophet two more times, and after the third request, the Prophet let Ali go. Since Ali's father used to be a friend of Amr, he told Ali, "O son of my brother, I do not want to kill you." 'But I want to kill you,' Ali replied. This so enraged Amr that he got off his horse, hamstrung it, and beat its face; then, he advanced on Ali, and they fought each other, circling each other. The dust arose, blocking spectators' vision, and then the cry of Allah Akbar (God is great) was heard, and everybody knew that Ali, the sword of God, was victorious. Amr ibn Abd Wudd's death devastated Meccan morale.

## OFFER TO THE GHATAFAN CHIEFS

The Prophet sent word to two of the Chiefs of Ghatafan, offering them a third of the date harvest of Medina if they would withdraw from the field. Then he sent for two Sads, and they came to his tent, and he told them his plan. The wounded chief of Aws said: "O Messenger of God, is this something you would have us do, or is it

something He commanded and must be done? If this is not a command from God, we will give them nothing but the sword until He decides between us.” “Be as thou wilt,” said the Prophet. Sad responded: "Let them do their worst!"

## COUNTERINTELLIGENCE BY NUAYAM

These negotiations came to nothing with the chiefs of the two clans of Fazarah and Murrah. The third Ghatafanite was Ashja, to which Nuayam belonged. At this point, Nuayam ibn Masud, a new convert to Islam, played a major role in sowing discord among enemy forces. He asked the Prophet what he could do to help the cause of Islam. "To the utmost of thy power, set them at odds with each other," said the Prophet.

His conversion to Islam was not yet known. Nuayam approached Banu Qurayzah and counseled them not to join the Meccan ranks. This was unless the latter guaranteed they would not be left at Muhammad's mercy should the tide of battle turn against them. Therefore, they should refuse to strike one blow for the Quraysh until they have given up their leading men as hostages. His advice was accepted with enthusiasm, and Banu Qurayzah promised not to tell anyone that it was he who had given them this counsel. He then proceeded to the Quraysh camp to see Abu Sufyan. He told him that he had very serious information to impart, provided they swore to keep it confidential, which they agreed to. He intimated to their leaders that the Banu Qurayzah had repented of their violation of Muhammad's covenant and sought to befriend him. He also counseled them not to send their leaders to the Banu Qurayzah for fear that the latter might seize them and give them up to

Muhammad. Nuayam then proceeded to Ghatafan and repeated the same warning.

After consultation, the leaders of the two invading armies decided to say nothing to Huyayy. Instead, they tested what Nuayam had said. The planting of false information created doubts in the minds of Quraysh leaders. Abu Sufyan sent a message to Banu Qurayzah leaders, asking them to attack Muslims the next morning. He promised to follow up with their attack. As tomorrow was a Saturday, the Jews would not fight on the Sabbath. His messenger was turned back. Angry at their refusal, Abu Sufyan believed Nuayam's words. Based on mutual distrust, the dissensions gradually undermined the much-vaunted alliance between Jewish and pagan Arab tribes. The encounter of the battle of the trench was a match between numbers and wits. Muslim leadership was more intelligent but also had a better intelligence agency.

## COWARDICE OF HYPOCRITES

The siege lasted two weeks, and all attempts to cross the trench—manned by numerically weaker and less well-armed Muslims—were repulsed. Winter was here, the cold was unbearable, and storms threatened to rain. The question arose in everyone's minds: how many more days could be endured? Food was running low, and the nights were exceptionally cold. Many of the weak faith, unnerved by hunger, cold, and lack of sleep, were ready to join the hypocrites. They said that it was impossible to stop the enemy in a trench and that we should withdraw behind the city's walls.

## THEY WANTED TO FLEE

***And when some of them said, “O you people of Yathrib! You***

*cannot withstand [the enemy] here, hence, go back [to your homes]!” [You cannot defend the trench outside the city, hence go home.] A party from among them asked leave of the Prophet, saying, “Our houses are exposed [to attack]!” While they were not [really] exposed, they wanted nothing but to flee. (33:13)*

#### COMMIT TO APOSTASY

*Now, if their town had been stormed, and they had been asked [by the enemy] to commit apostasy, [the hypocrites] would have done so without much delay—although before, they had vowed before God that they would never turn their backs [on His message], and a vow made to God must surely be answered for! (33:14-15)*

#### LIFE IS ONLY A BRIEF ENJOYMENT

*Say: “Whether you flee from [natural] death or from being slain [in battle], the flight will not profit you—however, you are not [allowed] to enjoy life for more than a short while!” (33:16)*

#### WHO CAN PROTECT YOU FROM GOD?

*Say: “Who is there that could keep you away from God if it be His will to harm you, or if it be His will to show you mercy?” For, [do they not know that] besides God they can find none to protect them, and none to bring them succor? (33:17)*

#### DISCOURAGING OTHERS NOT TO FIGHT FOR GOD’S CAUSE

*God is indeed aware of those of you who divert others [from fighting in His cause]. They say to their brethren, “Come hither to us [and face the enemy]!” While they [hypocrite] join the battle*

*but seldom, begrudging you help. But then, when danger threatens, you can see them looking to you [for help, O Prophet], their eyes rolling [with terror] like [the eyes of] one overshadowed by death. Yet as soon as danger passes, they will assail you [believers] with sharp tongues, begrudging you with all that is good! [People like] these have never known faith, and therefore God will cause all their works to waste. This is indeed easy for God. (33:18-19)*

#### TRIALS FOR WHAT?

*[Such trials are imposed upon man] so that God may reward the truthful for being true to their word and cause the hypocrites to suffer—if that be His will—or [if they repent], accept their repentance, for God is indeed much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace! Thus, for all their fury, God repulsed those who were bent on denying the truth. No advantage did they gain since God was enough to [protect] believers in battle—seeing that God is most powerful, almighty. (33:24-25)*

#### LET LOOSE THE STORM WIND AND HEAVENLY HOSTS

The Prophet had uttered a ritual prayer for the defeat of the Quraysh: “O God, Revealer of the Book, Swift caller to account, turn the confederates to flight and cause them to quake.” When all was over, this verse was revealed:

*O you who attained faith! Call to mind the blessings God bestowed on you [at the time] when [enemy] hosts came down upon you. We let loose against them a storm of wind and [heavenly] hosts that you could not see yet God saw all that you did. (33:9)*

It was winter, and the cold was unbearable, while wind and a storm threatened rain. The Confederates were not prepared for a long siege and expected an easy victory. The whole affair was intended to last a day or two, as it did in the battle of Uhud. It became evident that victory would be extremely difficult if Muslims fiercely defended a ditch.

Nearly two weeks had passed, and nothing had been achieved. The Meccan army was running out of its provisions. Many of their horses and camels were dying. The Quraysh perceived that Ghatafan and other Bedouin tribes were, at best, reluctant allies, more interested in booty and plunder than fighting for a cause. The expedition failed, and Heaven sealed its failure.

#### FEAR OF THE CONFEDERATES RETURNING

***They think that the Confederates have not [actually] withdrawn. [Or but would return and resume the siege.] and should the Confederates return, these [hypocrites] would prefer to be in the desert, among the Bedouin, asking for news about you, [O believers, from far away] and even if they found themselves in your midst, they would pretend to fight [by your side]. (33:20)***

Finally, the Confederates' frustration became complete owing to divine intervention in the form of a bitterly cold storm. This storm raged for several days, making life unbearable for even tough warriors. To make matters worse, violent winds blew out the campfires, denying the Confederate army's only source of heat. On top of this, the enemy's tents were torn up to allow sand and rain to pound their faces. The Muslim camp, however, was sheltered from such winds. Meanwhile, the Confederate army's provisions ran out, and horses and camels died from wounds and a lack of food.

Terrified by the litany of ominous events against them, the Confederate armies withdrew during the night. By morning, the ground was cleared of all enemy forces. And so, finally, the siege was raised, and the Confederates dispersed. This ended the last attempt by pagans and Jews to destroy the Prophet and his community. The Confederates left behind twenty dead and never challenged Islam. The Meccans had committed all their resources to destroying Muhammad, and there was no more they could do—their prestige was ruined, and their trade with Syria was virtually ruined.

The siege failure enabled the Muslims to establish themselves as Medina's absolute masters, and the power of hypocrites was finally broken. The battle of the Trench was a turning point, and it convinced the nomadic tribes that Muhammad was the coming man. Many of these tribes wanted to be allies of the Ummah. The Prophet built a powerful tribal confederacy whose members swore not to attack one another and fight each other's enemies. Muslims now had great political power, and Muhammad was state head.

## **CHAPTER 22**

### **THE MASSACRE OF BANU QURAYZAH**

#### **(FACT OR FICTION?)**

The Meccans had spent two years preparing to annihilate Muslims once and for all. A group of Banu Nadir leaders, whom the Prophet had expelled from Medina, played an active role in instigating and financing the final battle with Muslims. It was the mobilization of Arabia against the Prophet. Before enemy forces arrived, Muslims dug a trench surrounding Medina. The Quraysh and their allies, approximately ten thousand heavily armed men, arrived at Medina to find an impassable ditch.

#### **TREASON BY B. QURAYZAH**

The Jewish tribe of Banu Qurayzah was allied with Muslims but later broke the treaty of alliance and openly joined the Meccan army. The tribe of Qurayzah, who, despite their monotheistic faith, betrayed the Muslims and made common cause with the pagan Confederates. The Prophet besieged them for twenty-five nights. Kab b. Asad, the leader of B. Qurayza, offered his people three alternatives:

(1) Accept Muhammad as a true prophet and save yourself. They rejected this suggestion because a prophet could only arise from their tribe. However, they could have secretly remained faithful to Judaism while practicing another religion to spare their lives. Crypto-Jews have a long persecution history. Despite this, no one from B. Qurayzah tried to save his life by accepting Islam. There is

nothing intrinsically wrong with dying as a martyr, but it seems too good to be true.

(2) Kill your wives and children and fight against Muhammad till God decides between you and him. They rejected this proposal, murder being a major sin in Judaism.

(3) Tonight is the eve of the Sabbath, and let us take Muhammad and his companions by surprise. Their chances were slim under this scenario. If they will die anyway, it is better to be martyred and take some of your enemies with you. Following the Maccabean revolt (175-135 B.C.), a rule was established that overruled Sabbath observance. Even the Day of Atonement can be overridden by the sacred duty of preserving life.

#### CONSULTATION WITH ABU LUBABA

The Jews rejected all the above proposals and made a strange request to the Apostle to confer with **Abu Lubaba**, a Muslim who belonged to the tribe of Aws with whom they had a long-standing alliance. It is unclear why Abu Lubaba was consulted. He told them to surrender but pointed his hand to his throat, signifying slaughter. They submitted to the Apostle in the morning, knowing they would all die.

#### SAAD B. MUADH, AS AN ARBITRATOR

The Apostle appointed Saad b. Muadh, the leader of Aws, as an arbitrator with the consent of B. Qurayzah. Previously, B. Qurayzah and Aws were allies, and the Jews expected a lenient verdict. Saad soon announced his verdict—treason—meaning that the fighting men would be put to the sword, their wealth confiscated as war gains, and their women and children would be held as captives and

sold into slavery. Six to nine hundred men from the Jewish tribe of Qurayzah were executed. Saad would later die of his wounds from the battle of Trench. So far, the story of Qurayzah presented above is a classical description found in nearly all Islamic history books. On closer examination, many discrepancies appear, and the story unravels.

#### (1) THE QURANIC BASIS FOR REJECTING THE STORY

***And He brought down from their strongholds those followers of earlier revelation who had aided the aggressors and cast terror into their hearts. Some you slew, some you made captive, and He made you heirs to their lands, houses, their goods, and [promised you] lands on which you had never yet set foot: God has the power to will anything. (33:26-27)***

The Banu Qurayzah, anticipating the community's vengeance, which they had betrayed, withdrew to their fortresses in the vicinity of Medina. "The lands on which you have never yet set foot" is a prediction that Muslims will conquer and hold in the future with prosperous times to come.

The Quran's reference to the story is extremely brief, and there is no indication of killing a large number. Previously, the whole surah was devoted to explaining Banu Nadir's expulsion from Medina. One would think that if 600 or 900 people had been killed in this manner, the event's significance would have been much greater. There would have been a clear reference in the Quran, a conclusion drawn, and a lesson learned. But when only the guilty leaders were executed, it would be normal to expect only a brief reference. "Some you slew" refers to the guilty leaders for treason, and "Some you made captive" refers to the able-bodied adult fighters.

## (2) THE PRECEDENT OF DEALING WITH THE PRISONER OF WAR

Verse 8:68 below refers to the earlier battle of Badr, during which the Muslim army captured many enemy prisoners of war. A spirited discussion was held among the Prophet's followers about what should be done with them. Umar ibn al-Khattab believed they should be killed in revenge for their past misdeeds and persecution of Muslims earlier in Mecca. Abu Bakr asked for forgiveness and the prisoners' release in exchange for a ransom. Such an act of mercy might induce some of them to realize the truth of Islam. The Prophet adopted Abu Bakr's course of action.

### THE KILLING OF PRISONERS OF WAR, A GRAVE SIN

***Had it not been for a decree from God that had already gone forth, there would indeed have befallen you tremendous chastisement on account of all [the captives]that you took. (8:68)***

The reference to the “tremendous chastisement” that might have befallen the Muslims “but for a decree from God that had already gone forth,” i.e., a course of action foreordained in God's knowledge makes it clear that the killing of the captives would have been a grave sin. Thus, a precedent was set for dealing with prisoners of war. They can be freed by paying a ransom, accepting Islam, or grace.

### SET THEM FREE AGAINST RANSOM OR BY AN ACT OF GRACE

***When you meet [in war] those bent on denying the truth, smite their necks until you overcome them fully and then tighten their bonds. But after that [set them free] either by grace or against***

***ransom, so that the burden of war may be lifted: thus [shall it be].  
(47:4)***

FREE THEM EVEN IF THEY ARE PLAYING FALSE

***[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 forgive you your  
sins, for God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.” And should  
they but seek to play false with you—well, they were false to God  
[Himself] before this, but He gave [the believers] mastery over  
them. And God is all-knowing and wise. (8:70-71)***

To be freed from the obligation of paying the ransom, they might “play false with you” by pretending to have a change of heart and accept Islam. Muslims are enjoined to accept the captives' declarations at face value and not to be swayed by mere suspicion of their motives. The possibility of treachery on the part of those captives and even a later discovery that some of them had indeed played falsely should not induce Muslims to deviate from the course ordained by God.

(3) Let's examine the massacre story critically: If each family consists of four persons, which is a low average, then 2400-3600 men, women, and children must have surrendered. B. Qurayzah lived on the outskirts of Medina. On surrender, they were forced to walk several hours to Medina. None of these prisoners tried to escape, and Muslims seem to have no difficulty locking up these tame prisoners.

(4) Surprisingly, a general of Muhammad's astute knowledge of strategy and logistics would have brought nearly two-three

thousand captives, making them walk hours to Medina. To slay six to nine hundred men of fighting age and bury them in the middle of the town. It would have been far better, safer, and more efficient to make short shrift of them outside their forts. Then, take only the women and children to Medina.

(5) They were all confined to the house of Bint al-Harith, a woman of B. al-Najjar, and bound with ropes. The question arises: how spacious was her house? If the prisoners were only the ring leaders, placing them in one house makes sense.

(6) The following day, trenches were dug in the marketplace in the middle of town to bury the executed men. There was a ready-made trench dug outside Medina only a month ago, not far from the marketplace; why dig another trench, especially in the middle of town?

(7) If so many hundreds of people were killed in the marketplace, and trenches were dug for the operation, it is strange that there should be no trace or visible mark.

(8) Why were the Banu Qurayza targeted when the other Jewish groups who surrendered before or after them were treated leniently and allowed to leave?

(9) Islam punishes only those responsible for treason. To kill such a large number is opposed to the Islamic sense of justice and the basic Quranic principles, particularly the verse, "No soul shall bear another's burden."

## CONCLUSION

For an incident or hadith to be authentic, it must not contradict the Quran. Prophet Muhammad was “the living Quran”—the witness whose behavior and words revealed God’s will. It is inconceivable that he would violate any part of the Quran. The massacre of Banu Qurayza, if it happened, violates established principles of dealing with war prisoners. The story does not pass the test of sound reasoning. There are many holes and discrepancies in the entire story. The account of Qurayzah's demise is either fabrication or grossly exaggerated. It attempts to whitewash the gravity of Qurayzah's leadership crimes by focusing attention on allegedly excessive punishment. Thus drawing readers' sympathy for B. Qurayzah. Perhaps some anti-Jewish Muslims exaggerated the story to portray the Prophet as a tough Arab leader who humiliated the Jews or to portray the Prophet negatively as an antisemite.

The Prophet did not confuse the contentiousness of clan relations in the oasis with Judaism's religious message. Passages in the Quran that warn Muslims not to make pacts with Arabian Jews emerge from these specific wartime situations. A larger spirit of respect, acceptance, and comradeship prevailed, as recorded in a later chapter of the Quran:

***We sent down the Torah, in which there is guidance and light, by which the Prophets who surrendered to God's will provided judgments for the Jewish people. Also, the rabbis and doctors of the Law (did likewise), according to that portion of God's Book with which they were entrusted, and they became witnesses to it as well. Whoever does not judge by what God has sent down (including the Torah) they are indeed unbelievers. (5:44)***

## **CHAPTER 23**

### **THE PEACE TREATY OF HUDAYBIYYAH**

#### **(628)**

All the authorities agreed that the forty-eighth surah, Al-Fath (victory), commemorating the peace treaty, was revealed during the Prophet's march from Hdaybiyyah back to Medina.)

The Quraysh prevented Muslims from entering the Kabah for worship, and this prohibition was applicable to Muslims among all Arab tribes. After the Battle of Trench, when the Prophet humiliated Mecca and quashed the opposition in Medina, he felt it was time to begin a peace offensive. Negotiating from a position of strength, the Prophet granted many face-saving concessions to the Meccans to reach a peace treaty at al-Hdaybiyyah.

#### **NO ANTICIPATION OF VIOLENCE**

Although there had been a more or less permanent state of war for nearly six years between the Muslim community at Medina and the pagan oligarchy of Mecca, the Prophet did not anticipate actual fighting on that occasion. This was because the month of Dhu l-Qadah, in which he intended to reach Mecca, was one of the four sacred months during which, in accordance with time-honored Arabian custom, all warfare was outlawed, and particularly so in and around the Holy City.

#### **THE APOSTLE'S TRUE VISION**

Towards the end of the sixth year of hijrah, the Prophet dreamed of himself and his followers entering Mecca as pilgrims. The next day

he told his companions of this and invited them to perform Umrah (lesser pilgrimage) with him.

***Indeed, God has shown the truth in his apostle's true vision. Most certainly shall you enter the inviolable house of worship if God so wills, in full security, with your heads shaved or your hair cut short, without any fear. (48:27)***

#### LESSER PILGRIMAGE OR PIOUS VISIT

In March 628, he set in motion a daring and imaginative initiative that brought the conflict to a close. Thus, the Prophet's party, which set out for Mecca, consisted of only 1400–1500 men, all dressed in pilgrim's garb (ihram). Each man was lightly armed and carried a sword and what he needed for hunting. The Prophet took Umm Salamah, his wife, with him. There were two more women, Nusaybah and Asma bint Amr - Umm Muni, among the pilgrims. (These two women had also taken the oath in the second pledge of Aqabah).

#### HYPOCRITES WHO STAYED BEHIND

A call was also issued to some of the allied Bedouin tribes in the vicinity of Medina to join the Prophet on this pilgrimage. Most of them excused themselves on some pretext. They thought the Muslims would walk directly into the mouth of a lion, putting themselves at the mercy of the hostile and resentful Quraysh.

***Those of the Bedouin who stayed behind will say to you: "[The need to take care of] our chattels and our families kept us busy. Do then, [O Prophet], ask God to forgive us!'" [thus], they will utter with their tongues something that is not in their hearts. Say: "Who, then, has it in his power to avert from you anything that***

***God may have willed? Whether it be His will to harm you or benefit you? God is fully aware of what you do! You thought that the apostle and the believers would never return to their kith and kin, and this seemed goodly to your hearts. And you entertained [such] evil thoughts because you have always been people devoid of all good!” Now, as for those who will not believe in God and his apostle—We have prepared a blazing flame for all [such] deniers of the truth! It is God who has dominion over earth and heaven. He forgives whomever He wills and imposes suffering on whomever He wills—and [withal], He is indeed much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace. (48:11-14)***

The passage refers to the Bedouins belonging to the tribes of Ghifar, Muzaynah, Juhaynah, Ashja, Aslam, and Dhayl. These Bedouins, although allied with the Prophet and outwardly professing Islam, refused under various pretexts to accompany him on his march to Mecca. They were convinced that the Meccans would battle and destroy the unarmed Muslims. All of the hypocritical excuses mentioned in the sequence were made after the Prophet’s and his followers’ successful return to Medina. The Bedouins sympathized with the pagan Quraysh rather than Muslims. The last sentence indicates that God may forgive even the most hardened sinners if they truly repent and mend their ways.

## SACRIFICIAL ANIMALS

Between them, they purchased seventy camels to sacrifice in the sacred precinct. Their meat will be distributed among Mecca's poor. At the first halt, the Prophet called for sacrificial camels to be brought to him. He consecrated each camel by marking its right flank and placing a garland around its neck. An emissary was

dispatched to bring him news of the Quraysh reaction. The Prophet was bareheaded, wearing a traditional Ihram and uttering a pilgrim cry , *LABBAIKA ALLAH HUMMAH LABBAIKA* (here I am at your service, O God).

## HOSTILE MECCAN REACTION

On learning of the Prophet's approach, the Meccans decided—against all Arabian traditions—to oppose the entry of the pilgrims by force of arms. A detachment of two hundred horsemen under the command of Khalid ibn al-Walid (who adopted Islam less than two years later) was sent out to intercept the Prophet's party before they reached the area outside Mecca, where violence was forbidden. Since the Prophet was neither inclined nor in a position to engage in battle, he turned westwards from Bir Usfan (a place about one day's journey from Mecca) and reached the edge of the sanctuary. He camped on the plains of Al-Hudaybiyyah (nine miles north of Mecca).

The Quraysh faced a serious dilemma. Their greatness was founded on hospitality. If they do not allow more than one thousand Arabs to enter the sanctuary, this would be the most flagrant violation of their noble traditions. If they had allowed the Prophet to enter Mecca, it would have been an immense moral triumph for him. Letting them in was out of the question.

## INTERMEDIARIES FACILITATE A COMPROMISE

Negotiations were opened between Muslims and the Meccan oligarchy. Various emissaries of both parties conducted preliminary discussions.

**Budayl ibn Waraqa**, a leading man from the Khuzaah tribe. He was visiting Mecca when news came that the pilgrims were encamped at Hudaybiyyah. He came to see the Prophet to inform him of the Quraysh attitude. "They swear by God that they would do everything to stop you from entering the Sanctuary." The Prophet gave a very conciliatory reply: "We have come here not to battle. If they so desire, I can grant them some time to take precautions. This will leave the way clear for us." Budayl returned to Mecca and told the Quraysh of the pilgrims' peaceful intent. The Prophet said he was ready to give the Quraysh time to prepare for their visit.

Meanwhile, the Quraysh sent **Hulays bin Alqamah**, the chief archer and commander of the allied Bedouin tribes of Arabia. He was still at a distance when the Prophet recognized him. Hulays was known for his piety and reverence for sacred objects.

The Prophet ordered that the animals they intended to sacrifice be sent to Hulays. When the seventy camels solemnly filed past Hulays with their mark of consecration, he was so impressed that he returned to Mecca without seeing the Prophet. He proceeded straight to the Meccans and assured them of the pilgrims' peaceful intent. The Meccans were still skeptical. "O Men of Quraysh," He said sternly: "We have not concluded a pact with you to prevent the Kabah pilgrims from performing pilgrimage. Muhammad had no intention but to perform a pilgrimage. By the Almighty, who controls my life! If you prevent Muhammad from entering Mecca, I will lead my men away."

**Urwah of Thaqif** had arrived at the pilgrim camp and was already in conversation with the Prophet. He spent many hours in the camp, and what impressed him the most was the reverence displayed for

the Prophet by his companions. Addressing the Quraysh, he said: “I have been sent as an envoy unto kings, and I have not seen a king whose men so honor him as Muhammad's companions. If he commandeth aught, they almost outstrip his words in fulfilling it. When he performs his ablution, they well-nigh fight for the water thereof. When he speaketh, their voices are hushed in his presence, and they lower their gaze in reverence for him. He has offered you a reasonable deal; therefore, you should accept it from him.”

#### RUMORS OF UTHMAN IBN AFFAN'S MURDER

The Prophet sent Uthman ibn Affan (who belonged to one of the most influential Meccan clans) as his envoy for further negotiations. Shortly after Uthman arrived in Mecca, a rumor that he had been murdered reached the Muslim camp at Hudaibiyyah. Thereupon, the Prophet, expecting a treacherous attack by the Meccans, assembled his followers. He then took, amid scenes of great enthusiasm, a pledge from each of his followers that they would remain steadfast and fight to the death. This “Pledge of the Tree” became known as Bayat ar-Ridwan (“The Pledge of God’s Goodly Acceptance”).

#### PLEDGE OF FAITH AND ALLEGIANCE

***[O Muhammad], We have sent you as a witness [to the truth], a herald of glad tidings and a warner. So that you [O men] may believe in God and his apostle, honor him, revere him, and extol his limitless glory from morning to evening. All who pledge their allegiance to you pledge their allegiance to God. God's hand is over their hands. Hence, he who breaks his oath does so only to his hurt. Whoever remains true to what he has pledged to God will be rewarded supremely. (48:8-10) Indeed, well-pleased was God***

***with the believers when they pledged their allegiance to you [o Muhammad] under that tree [at Hudaibiyyah], for he knew what was in their hearts. (48:18)***

This refers to the pledge of faith and allegiance which the Muslims assembled at Hudaibiyyah gave to the Prophet. Beyond this historical allusion, the above sentence implies that one's faith in God's message-bearer is, for all intents and purposes, synonymous with a declaration of faith in God. So, obeying God implies obedience to His message bearer. The phrase "the hand of God is over their hands" alludes to the handclasp with which the Prophet's followers affirmed their allegiance to him but is also a metaphor for His being a witness to their pledge.

#### ATTACK BY THE RENEGADE QURAYSH

Shortly before the Truce of Hudaibiyyah was concluded, a detachment of Quraysh warriors—approximately thirty to eighty men—attacked the Prophet's camp. His followers overcame them and took them captive. After the treaty signing, the Prophet released them unconditionally.

#### RESTRAIN YOURSELF FROM VIOLENCE

***And he it is who, in the valley of mecca, kept their hands from you, and your hands from them. This was after He had enabled you to vanquish them, and God saw indeed what you were doing. [It was not for your enemy's sake that he stayed your hands from them, for] they were bent on denying the truth. They debarred you from the inviolable house of worship and prevented your offering from reaching its destination. [the Muslims were not allowed to approach the Kabah until the year 7 h.] And had it not been for the***

*believing men and believing women [in Mecca], whom you might have unwittingly trampled underfoot. On whose account you might have become guilty, without knowing it, of a grievous wrong. —[Had it not been for this, you would have been allowed to fight your way into the city: but you were forbidden to fight] so that [in time] God might admit to his grace whomever He wills. Had they [who deserve Our mercy and those whom We have condemned] been discernible [to you], We would indeed have imposed grievous suffering [at your hands] on such of them as were bent on denying the truth? (48:24-25)*

Muslims were not allowed to retaliate for this act of aggression. This is because some of the Meccans—both men and women—had embraced Islam but were prevented by the pagans Quraysh from emigrating to Medina. Medina's Muslims did not generally know their identities. If Muslims were allowed to fight to enter Mecca, they would have unwittingly killed some unknown Muslims and the pagan Meccans who might have embraced Islam, as happened. In other words, man never really knows whether another human deserves God's grace or condemnation.

## STIPULATIONS OF THE TREATY

A treaty was drawn up, stipulating the following:

### **1. Truce for Ten Years**

All warfare between Mecca and Medina should be suspended for ten years.

### **2. Muslims will not enter Mecca this year**

The Prophet and his followers should refrain from entering Mecca

that year. In the following year, Muhammad and two thousand of his followers made the lesser pilgrimage or Umrah, and no doubt impressed the Meccans with their discipline and orderliness.

### **3. Return of all Meccans**

Any Meccan minor or anyone under his guardianship who crossed over to the Muslims without permission will be returned.

### **4. No Muslim return if they cross to the Meccan Side**

Should any follower of the Prophet—whether minor or of age—cross over to the Quraysh of his own free will, he or she would not be returned. Although this last stipulation appeared at first glance to be disadvantageous to Muslims, the Prophet agreed to it pursuant to the principle that “there shall be no coercion in matters of faith” (2:256).

### **5. Treaty Binding on Both Parties' Allies**

**There shall be no subterfuge or treachery.** Those who wish to enter the bond with Muhammad may do so. If anyone wishes to join the Quraysh, they may do so. Men of the Khuzaah tribe leaped to their feet and declared their bond with the Prophet. The Abu Bakr tribe declared their bond with the Quraysh. Between Khuzaah and Banu Bakr, there were several old, unsettled blood feuds. The agreement stipulated that in the event of any aggression against a tribe that had chosen a particular alliance, the party to which it was allied would possess the right to take retaliatory action. Later, Banu Bakr launched a surprise attack against Khuzaah tribesmen with the help of Quraysh. This was a clear violation of the provision of a truce for ten years, and that led to the conquering of Mecca by the Muslims.)

## HONOR THE PEACE TREATY WITH PEACEFUL NONBELIEVERS

***How could they who ascribe divinity to aught beside God be granted a covenant by God and His Apostle unless it is those [of them] with whom you [O believers] have made a covenant in the vicinity of the Inviolable House of Worship? [As for the latter] so long as they remain true to you, be true to them. For, verily, God loves those who are conscious of Him. (9:7)***

The “covenant” alluded to is the truce agreement concluded in 6 H. at Hudaibiyyah, in the vicinity of Mecca, between the Prophet and the pagan Quraysh. In accordance with this peace treaty, nonbelievers who are not hostile to Muslims and keep the terms of the treaty, including peace for ten years, Muslims are expected to do the same. The specific reference to “God and His Apostle” is meant to stress that the Apostle speaks and acts in God’s name.

## UNPOPULAR TREATY

The treaty was unpopular on both sides. Many of the Prophet’s companions violently disapproved of these concessions to Mecca’s idolaters. When they realized that having reached the edge of the sacred precinct, they must return home with nothing accomplished was almost more than they could handle. But the worst was yet to come. The clank of chains was heard, and a youth staggered into the camp. It was Abu Jandal, one of Suhayl’s younger sons, imprisoned for his conversion. This was done to prevent him from joining the Muslim ranks. His elder brother Abd Allah, who was already with the pilgrims, was about to welcome his brother when Suhayl violently struck his face. Suhayl turned to the Prophet and said, “We concluded our treaty before this man came to thee.” “That is true,”

replied the Prophet. Suhayl demanded his return. Addressing Abu Jandal, the Prophet said, “Be patient. God will surely give you relief and a way out. We have agreed on the truce terms, and we will not break our word.”

At this point, Umar could not contain himself and said, “Art thou not God’s Prophet? Are we not in the right and our enemies in the wrong? So, why are we yielding so lowly against our religion’s honor?”

However, the new revelation left no doubt that the expedition was a victory. The Prophet was determined to achieve peace non-violently. By giving in to all the conditions imposed, the Prophet gave face-saving incentives to the defeated Quraysh to achieve peace. In the heat of the moment, many Muslims gave in to their base emotions. It was the Prophet’s farsightedness and broad vision that clinched peace and laid the framework to end the conflict. Why the Quran declared victory: During the next two years, the Islamic community more than doubled. Due to peace, Mecca and Medina men could meet in peace and exchange ideas.

## MANIFEST VICTORY

***[O Muhammad], We have laid open before you a manifest victory, and [thus] bestow upon you the full measure of his blessings. We also guide you on a straight way and [show] that God will succor you with [His] mighty succor. It is He who from on high has bestowed inner peace upon the hearts of 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 firmer in their faith, [and] that He might admit the believers, both men, and women, into gardens through which running waters flow, therein***

***to abide, and that He might efface their [past wrong] deeds, and that is, in sight of God, indeed a triumph supreme! (48:1-5)***

Throughout this ordeal, a few practically unarmed believers were endowed by God with “inner peace” or calm courage in the face of the much more powerful forces of the enemy.

#### THE TASK OF SPREADING TRUE RELIGION

***He has sent forth his Apostle with the [mission of spreading] guidance and the religion of truth. This is so that He can make it superior to every other false religion, and no other religion can bear witness [to the truth] as God can. (48:28)***

See also 3:19: “the only true religion in the sight of God is man’s self-surrender unto Him.” Therefore, any religion (in the broadest sense of this term) not based on the above principle is, thereby, false, and truth is always superior to falsehood.

#### VICTORY FOR PEACE

The Hudaibiyyah truce symbolized the fulfillment of the Prophet's mission. This led to Mecca's conquest and Islam's triumph in Arabia. Hudaibiyyah was thus a turning point. For the first time in six years, peaceful contacts were established between Mecca and Medina. Thus, the way was opened to Islamic ideas' penetration into the citadel of Arabian paganism. The Meccans who visited the Muslim camp at Hudaibiyyah returned deeply impressed by the spirit and unity of the Prophet's followers. Many wavered in their hostility towards his faith. As soon as the perennial warfare ended, and people on both sides could meet freely, new converts rallied around the Prophet, first in tens, then in hundreds, then in the thousands—so much so that when the pagan Quraysh broke the

truce two years after its conclusion, the Prophet occupied Mecca almost without resistance. Thus, in fact, if not in appearance, the Truce of Hudaibiyyah ushered in Islam's moral and political victory over all of Arabia.

## FULFILLING THE DREAM VISION

This dream vision was destined to be fulfilled a year later, in 7 H., when Muslims performed their first peaceful pilgrimage to the Holy City. Male pilgrims usually shave or cut their hair short before assuming the pilgrim's garb (ihram), for it is not permitted to do so while in the state of pilgrimage. A repetition of the same act marks the completion of the pilgrimage (2:196)

## **CHAPTER 24**

### **THE BATTLE OF MUTAH (629)**

#### **(The First campaign against Syria)**

#### **THE POWER STRUGGLE**

The conflict between Muslims and Byzantine Christians began during Muhammad's lifetime. After uniting the tribes on the Arabian Peninsula, the Prophet sent Muslim missionaries to Syria and Iraq. These missionaries spread Islam's good news to Arabs.

At the same time, Heraclius attempted to rebuild the Byzantine Empire after defeating Persia in 628. Byzantium also strived to reestablish tribal alliances with Syrian and northern Hijazi Arab nomadic groups. These alliances would form defensive coalitions to guard Syria from the southeast. This effort was undertaken to extend their political control over the Arab tribes, which made the Byzantines appear such a threat to the Muslims. Due to this power struggle, a conflict between the two empires was inevitable.

#### **THE MURDER OF MUSLIM MISSIONARIES AND ENVOY**

About three months after his return from Umrah (as part of the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah), the Prophet dispatched fifteen Muslim missionaries to Syria's border. They were all executed in cold blood except one. The Prophet sent his envoy Al-Harith bin Umair Al-Azdi to the Busra governor (Syria). Ghassan Arab tribesmen, mostly Christians, killed the ambassador. In response to these provocations, the Prophet sent three thousand men to Syria under Zayd ibn Harithah. However, news of their march preceded them, and Heraclius's commissioner in Syria mobilized an overwhelming

force. This encounter, near the town of Muthah, was the first conflict between Muslims and Byzantium. The Ghassanids Christian Arabs fought and won against the Muslim army. Three commanders—Zayd, Jafar ibn Abu Talib, and Abd Allah ibn Rawahah—fell in this battle. Muslims withdrew to the village of Muthah near the southern end of the Dead Sea. Ibn al Walid took command of the Muslim army, withdrew tactically, and returned to Medina.

Zayd was a former slave who entered the Prophet's household after his marriage to Khadijah. Zayd's death was a profound personal blow to the Prophet. He wept when the dead man's young daughter met him on the street and threw herself into his arms.

Muslims did not forget their defeat at the hands of Syrian Arab Christians. In 632, the Prophet appointed Usama ibn Zayd, son of Zayd ibn Harithah, as commander of an expeditionary force. The stated aim of this expedition was to avenge Muslim losses at Muthah. After the Prophet's death, the first caliph, Abu Bakr, continued his campaign against the Byzantines. Three years later, the Muslims returned to defeat the Byzantine forces led by a 20-year-old commander, Usama bin Zayd.

## CHAPTER 25

### THE CONQUEST OF MECCA (630)

#### THE PREDICTION OF FUTURE VICTORIES

*[O you who believe]! God has promised you many war gains, which you shall yet achieve. He has vouchsafed you of these [worldly gains] well in advance. And has kept you from the hands of [hostile] people. Therefore, [your inner strength] may become a symbol for believers [who will come after you]. He may guide you all the straight way. God has already encompassed [for you] other gains that are beyond your grasp, for He has the power to will anything. (48:20-21) He has [always] known what you could not know [the future]. (48:27)*

"Victory soon to come and many **war gains**" refers to the conquest of Khaybar, which took place a few months after the Truce of Hudaibiyyah and is a prophecy of the almost bloodless conquest of Mecca in the year 8 H., the victorious establishment of Islam in all of Arabia, and, finally, the tremendous expansion of the Islamic Commonwealth under the Prophet's immediate successors. This divine promise was fulfilled in the unbroken sequence of Muslim victories after the Hudaibiyyah Truce. This led to the establishment of an empire stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to China's borders. The gains "still beyond your **grasp**" refer to the achievement of final bliss in the life to come. However, this victory promise is conditional:

*You are indeed the best community that has ever been brought forth for [the good of] mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, and you believe in God. (3:110) You are*

***bound to rise high if you are truly believers.” (3:139) God does not change men’s condition unless they change their inner selves.” (13:11)***

#### **PREDICTION OF INFIDEL DEFEAT**

***And [now], if they who are bent on denying the truth fight against you, they will indeed turn their backs [in flight] and will find none to protect them and none to bring them succor. Such is God's way from the past, and you will never find any change in God's way! (48:22-23)***

#### **GOD WILL STRENGTHEN BELIEVERS**

***Muhammad is God’s apostle, and those who are [truly] with him are firm and unyielding towards all deniers of the truth, [yet] full of mercy towards one another. You can see them bowing down, prostrating themselves [in prayer], seeking favor from God and [His] gracious acceptance. Their marks are on their faces, traced by prostration. This is their parable in the Torah and the Gospel. [They are] like seeds that sprout. Then He strengthens it so that it grows stronger, and [in the end] stands firm upon its stem, delighting the sowers. Therefore, God will cause the believers to grow in strength so that through them, He might confound the deniers of the truth. [but] unto such of them as they may yet attain faith and do righteous deeds, God has promised forgiveness and a reward supreme. (48:29)***

True believers are humble towards each other and proud towards all who deny the truth. The term “prostration” stands here for the innermost consummation of faith, while its “trace” signifies the spiritual reflection of that faith in the believer’s manner of life and

outward aspect. "Face" is often used in the Quran to mean one's whole being.

The posture of humility in prayer is indicated by prostration: i.e., Moses and Aaron "fell upon their faces," Num. 16:22. The term Injil (Gospel), as used in the Quran, is not identical with the four Gospels but refers to an uncorrupted original revelation bestowed upon Jesus, and now lost in the fog of time. God has promised forgiveness and a supreme reward to those deniers of the truth who might yet attain faith and thus achieve God's forgiveness. This promise was fulfilled a few years after the revelation of this verse. Most of the Prophet's Arabian enemies embraced Islam, and many became its torchbearers. However, in a broader sense, this divine promise remains open until Resurrection Day in all cultural environments.

#### HOSTILE NONBELIEVERS WILL NOT HONOR ANY OBLIGATIONS

***How [else could it be]? If they [who are hostile to you] overcame you, they would not respect any tie [with you] or any obligation to protect [you]. They seek to please you with their words while their hearts remain hostile [to you], and most of them are iniquitous. God's messages they have bartered away for a trifling gain and have thus turned away from his path. Evil is all they want to do, respecting no tie and no protective obligation regarding a believer. It is they who transgress what is right! Yet if they repent, pray, and render their purifying dues, they become your brethren in faith. We deliver these messages to those with [innate] knowledge! (9:8-11)***

This relates to the hostility among "those who ascribe divinity to others besides God." They will not respect any tie that arises from

a compact or blood relationship, which imposes on both parties the obligation to protect each other in a “covenant of protection.”

#### CHANGE OF IDOLATERS' HEARTS

***He will soothe the bosoms of those who believe and remove the wrath in [unbelievers] hearts. And God will turn in his mercy unto whom He wills, for God is all-knowing, wise. (9:14-15)***

However, for these unbelievers with whom Muslims are at war, God, if He so wills, will "remove the wrath from their hearts," bringing about a change in them and guiding them to realize the truth. These words seemed to refer to many conversions after the peace treaty.

#### BELIEVERS STRIVE HARD IN GOD’S CAUSE

***Do you [O believers] think that you will be spared unless God takes cognizance of your hard work [in his cause] without seeking help from anyone but God and his Apostle and those who believe in him? For God is aware of all that you do. (9:16)***

Believers will not be left alone and will be tested through suffering and hardship without any helper other than God, His Apostle, and the other believers.

#### THE BREACH OF THE HUDAYBIYYAH TREATY

***But if they break their solemn pledges after concluding a covenant and revile your religion, then fight against these archetypes of faithlessness who have no [regard for their own] pledges so that they might desist [from aggression]. Would you, perhaps, fail to fight against people who have broken their solemn pledges and***

***have done all they could to drive the Apostle away? In addition, they attacked you first. Do you hold them in awe? It is God alone you should stand in awe if you are [truly] believers! Fight against them! God will chastise them with your hands, and bring disgrace upon them, and will succor you against them. (9:12-14)***

This refers to unbelievers who, without renouncing their beliefs, have concluded treaties of friendship with Muslims. Their subsequent “breaking of the solemn pledges” alludes to the breach of the Hudaibiyyah truce by the pagan Quraysh. This breach led to the conquest of Mecca by the Muslims in 8 H. They drove the Apostle away from Mecca, bringing about his and his followers’ exodus (hijrah) to Medina. Do not hold them in awe. God is more worthy, and you should stand in awe of Him.

#### **MASSACRE OF KHUZAAH BY THE BAKR**

The treaty of Hudaibiyyah prescribed that any non-Meccan wishing to join the Quraysh or Muhammad camp may do so without obstruction. The Khuzaah tribe joined Muhammad, and Banu Bakr joined the Quraysh. Between Khuzaah and Banu Bakr, there were several old, unsettled blood feuds. Banu Bakr launched a surprise attack against Khuzaah tribesmen. In the fighting that ensued, some took place inside sacred territory. Banu Bakr's raid resulted in the massacre of the Khuzaah tribe. The Quraysh helped their ally, Banu Bakr, with weapons and secretly provided fighters. Banu Khuzaah members sought refuge in the Holy Sanctuary; however, they were not spared, violating established customs. The tribal chief of Khuzaah sent a delegation to Medina to inform the Prophet and request his help.

## THE MARCH ON MECCA

Realizing that this was a flagrant violation of the Treaty of Hdaybiyyah (**Truce for Ten Years**) by the Quraysh, the Prophet ordered them to mobilize at once. The Prophet began to prepare for a campaign but did not declare whether it was to attack Mecca, Syria or any other enemy post. To keep this secret, he confided only in Abu Bakr that Mecca was his target. The Prophet sent messengers to those tribes he trusted for help. They were sent a general summons to attend Medina the next month. The Bedouin faithfully responded, and no able body Muslim stayed behind. The next month was Ramadan, and on the appointed day, the army was the largest to ever leave Medina. The emigrants, the Helpers, and the adjoining tribesmen brought over ten thousand. In Qudayd, the army was joined by the Bani Sulaym. No one in the Muslim camp knew who the enemy was. Their desire to know the destination was no more than idle curiosity compared to the eagerness of the Quraysh and Hawazin to know the answer.

## MEETING WITH ABU SUFYAN

The Quraysh knew they had broken the pact and, after hurried consultation, accepted Abu Sufyan's proposal to venture out and speak to the Prophet. This was because he had now reached the sacred territory. Abu Sufyan was accompanied by Hakim, Khadijah's nephew, and Budayl, who played a positive role in Hdaybiyyah. As they approached, they were greeted by Abbas, the Prophet's uncle, who took them to the Prophet's camp. Abu Sufyan said: "O Muhammad, thou hast come with a strange assortment of men against thy kindred." The Prophet replied: "It is thou who art the transgressor." Ye broke the Hdaybiyyah pact and supported the attack on the Bani Kab and violated God's sacred precinct."

## CONVERSION OF ABU SUFYAN

Then, the Prophet declared publicly that he intended to conquer Mecca. He said to the three men: "Bear witness that there is no god but God and that I am the Messenger of God." Hakim and Budayl professed faith, but Abu Sufyan testified that "there is no god but God" and then silent. He still doubts Muhammad, a prophet. Abu Sufyan spent the night as the Prophet's guest. At dawn, the call to prayer was made, and the sound greatly shook Abu Sufyan. Then he saw the men eagerly crowding and jostling each other so they might be splashed with water from the Prophet's ablution. He told Abbas, "I have never seen such sovereignty as this." After prayer, Abbas returned him to the Prophet and completed his faith profession. As a favor to Abu Sufyan, the Prophet advised him to return to Mecca. He declared: "Whoever enters Abu Sufyan's house shall be safe, those who lock themselves in their homes, or enter the Mosque shall be safe."

On reaching Mecca, the order was given to divide and enter the city from four directions.

Khalid bin Walid, with his soldiers, entered the city from below and the others from the hills through three different passes. Ikrimah, Safwan, and Suhayl gathered a force of Quraysh with some of their allies who were determined to fight. They attacked Khalid's troops, but they were no match for Khalid and his men. Both sides suffered minor casualties as a result of their flight. Ten thousand strong, the Muslim army seized Mecca and quickly occupied the city with minor resistance. The Prophet announced a general amnesty and forgave all those who persecuted and fought against him and his companions. Only four Quraysh men were condemned to death for previous murder crimes against Muslims. Anyone who converted to

Islam was forgiven regardless of their previous crimes. Washi, who killed the Prophet's uncle Hamza, and Hind bint Utba, who mutilated his body, were also granted clemency. Habar ibn al-Aswad injured Zaynab, the Prophet's daughter, when she tried to emigrate from Makkah to Madinah. Habar intentionally threw her down from the camel. She was badly hurt and miscarried as a result. He came to the Prophet, who forgave him. Self-restraint and statesmanship have few parallels in history. Even Abu Sufyan, the archenemy of Islam, was ready to embrace the faith he had fought violently for so long.

#### BREAKING OF THE IDOLS IN KABAH

Radical and uncompromising monotheism and Islam's iconoclasm were vividly demonstrated when the Prophet entered the Kabah. He smashed all three hundred and sixty idols while exclaiming:

***Say: "The truth has now come, and falsehood has vanquished!" for, behold, all falsehood is bound to wither away!" (17:81)***

"Falsehood" has central theological significance. The Quran condemns associationism or idolatry as a great and unforgivable sin. After the Kabah was purified of its idols, the Prophet ordered Bilal to mount on its top and, from there, to recite the call of prayer (adhan). The Muslims gathered and, led by the Prophet, performed the prayer. For the last fourteen centuries, men have been called to prayer five times a day from the same spot where Bilal stood. More than a billion Muslims turn their faces to Mecca five times a day to worship one God alone. The Prophet resided in Mecca for two weeks, organizing its affairs and instructing its people in Islam. The city was almost universally converted, but he returned to Medina instead.

## MISINTERPRETATION OF THE ABOVE EVENTS

The Kabah was the first temple built by Abraham and his first son Ismael before the Temple of Solomon. It was devoted to worshipping one God alone. Over the millennia, it became a bastion of Arabian paganism. After the Prophet destroyed all 360 idols, Abraham's true monotheism was restored. Some unthinking Muslims drew general conclusions from this isolated incident. Over the centuries, foreign Muslim invaders used this isolated incident to justify attacking Hindu and Buddhist temples and destroying their idols. Hindu and Buddhist temples were not built for one God's worship. Muslims who think in black-and-white gloss over subtle differences. Sometimes, the real reason was to loot all the treasures in these temples and justify criminal acts on religious grounds. The destruction of any place of worship is a gross violation of Quranic teachings on freedom of religion. Verse 6:108 supports this view.

## PROHIBITION OF DEFILING WHAT OTHERS HOLD SACRED

***Do not revile those [beings] they invoke instead of God, lest they revile God out of spite and ignorance. Good indeed. We have made their actions evident to every community. In time, [however,] they must return unto their Sustainer, and then He will make them [truly] understand all that they were doing. (6:108)***

The prohibition against reviling anything that other people hold sacred—even in contravention of the principle of God's oneness—is expressed in the plural and addressed to all believers. While Muslims are expected to argue against others' false beliefs, they cannot abuse the objects of those beliefs. This will hurt the feelings of the erring men. It is human nature to regard the ideas implanted

in childhood and that he now shares with his peers as the only true and possible ones—with the result that a polemic against those beliefs often provokes a hostile psychological reaction.

## DESTRUCTION OF BUDDHA'S STATUE

Before its destruction, the 1,700-year-old Buddha of Bamiyan statue stood more than 150 feet above a small town at the foot of the Hindu Kush Mountains in central Afghanistan. The Taliban demolished the sacred statue in March 2001, contrary to Quranic teachings. Those men involved in destroying Buddha's statue probably had never heard of verse 6:108 above.

## MORAL CONTRADICTIONS OF THE NONBELIEVERS

***It is not for those who ascribe divinity to others besides God to visit or tend to God's houses of worship. This is because [by their beliefs] they bear witness against themselves that they deny the truth. Their works shall perish, and in the fire shall they abide! Only he should visit or tend God's houses of worship who believes in God and the last day. He is constant in prayer, gives in charity, and stands in awe of none but God: for [only these] can hope to be among the right-guided! (9:17-18)***

Some commentators conclude from this verse that “those who ascribe divinity to anything besides God” are not allowed to enter mosques (God's houses of worship). This conclusion, however, is untenable since in 9 H.—that is, after the revelation of this surah—the Prophet himself lodged a deputation of the pagan Banu Tha'qif in the mosque at Medina. Thus, the verse above expresses no more than the “moral inconsistency” of nonbelievers visiting or caring for God's houses of worship. As regards their exclusion from the

central mosque of Islam at Mecca (the Inviolable House of Worship), see verse 28 of this surah.

## FAITH SUPERIOR OVER RITUALS

***Do you, perchance, regard the [mere] giving of water to pilgrims and the tending of the inviolable house of worship as equal to [the works of a person] who believes in God and the last day and strives hard for God's cause? These [things] are not equal in God's sight. When people do wrong on purpose, God does not grace them with his guidance. (9:19)***

In this verse, there is an allusion to the pagan Quraysh boast before the Muslim conquest of Mecca. This boast was that they were superior to all others because of their guardianship of the Kabah and water provision for pilgrims. According to an authentic Tradition, one of the Prophet's Companions stated in the mosque of Medina, "I would not care, after having accepted Islam, to do any good deed beyond providing water to the pilgrims!" Another of the Companions declared, "I would rather take charge of the maintenance of the Inviolable House of Worship." But another Companion said, "Struggle (jihad) in God's cause is far better than what you have mentioned!" A short time afterward, the above Quran verse was revealed to the Prophet. What is meant here is the superior value of faith in God and struggle in His cause as compared with acts, which, however meritorious, are concerned only with outward forms: in brief, the immense superiority of real self-surrender to God over mere ritual. Having been captured by the Muslims at Badr, Al-Abbas, the Prophet's uncle, excused his failure to accompany the Muslims on their exodus from Mecca to Medina because he provided water for pilgrims.

## EXCLUSION OF PAGANS FROM THE KABAH

***O you who have attained faith! Those who ascribe divinity to others besides God are impure, and so they shall not approach the inviolable house of worship from this year onwards. And if you fear poverty, God will enrich you out of his bounty if He so wills, for God is all-knowing, wise! (9:28)***

The term najas (impure) occurs in the Quran only in this one instance and carries an exclusively spiritual meaning. It describes a wicked person. After the year 9 H, in which this surah was revealed, idol-worshippers were not allowed to enter "The Inviolable House of Worship" (al-masjid al-haram) or the Kabah and, by implication, the whole of Mecca. Prophet Abraham and Ishmael built the Kabah as the first house of worship dedicated to one God alone. The Kabah was thus liberated from idolatry and returned to its original purpose. Therefore, this commandant does not contradict 2:256: "there shall be no coercion in matters of faith." "And should you fear poverty?" refers to the fear that the exclusion of unbelievers could lead to Mecca's loss of economic and social significance.

## HIGHEST RANK IN THE SIGHT OF GOD

***Those who believe and who have forsaken the domain of evil and have strived hard for God's cause with their possessions and their lives have the highest rank in God's sight. It is they who will triumph [in the end]! Their sustainer gives them glad tidings of the grace [that flows] from him, [his] goodly acceptance, and of the gardens that await them, full of lasting bliss. Therein, they will abide beyond the count of time. With God, there is a mighty reward! (9:20-22)***

## THOSE WHO STRUGGLED BEFORE MECCA'S CONQUEST

***Why should you not spend freely in God's cause, seeing that God's [alone] is the heritage of the heavens and the earth? Not equal are those of you who spent and fought [in God's cause] before the victory (of Mecca). They are of a higher rank than those who spent and fought [only] after it—although God has promised the ultimate good to all [who strive in his cause]. And God is aware of all that you do. (57:10)***

There is a higher rank for those who spent and fought before the conquest of Mecca in 8 H. when the Muslims were still weak and their future uncertain. The above principle applies, of course, to the relative merits of believers of all times who strive for God's cause.

## **CHAPTER 26**

### **THE BATTLE OF HUNAYN AND SEIGE OF TAIF (630)**

The battle of Hunayn, a valley situated on one of the roads leading from Mecca to Taif, occurred in 630. They were located northeast of Mecca and their territory sat beside the trade route to Iraq. The Hawazin consisted of the subtribes of Banu Sad, Banu Jusham, the powerful Banu Thaqif, and Banu Amir. During pre-Islamic times, the Hawazin tribe was a long-standing enemy of the Meccans and fought several wars between them. They were allied with the Thaqifs, who settled in Taif, a town southeast of Mecca whose trade routes ran through Hawazin territory. The alliance had engaged in several wars, probably concerning trade routes between Taif and Mecca.

#### **THE MOBILIZATION OF THE HAWAZIN ARMY**

Fifteen days of their stay in Mecca barely passed before news broke, dampening Muslims' joy and security. The Meccans learned that the Hawazin had mobilized 20,000 of its forces to march against the Muslims in Mecca. The Hawazin had noted that Mecca had surrendered to Muhammad without striking a blow. They attributed the Quraysh's failure to resist to their unmanliness. The Hawazin and the Thaqif, both pagan tribes, joined hands with some of their allies to form an allied front. Their commander-in-chief was a thirty-year-old man named Malik ibn Awf, who, despite his youth, had a reputation for great valor. Against older men's advice, he ordered to bring all their women, children, and cattle to the

battlefield. This was so that, with them in the rear, the army would fight valiantly.

### THE LARGEST-EVER MUSLIM ARMY

The Muslim army comprised about twelve thousand men. Ten thousand conquered Mecca, and two thousand newly converted to Islam from the Quraysh, including Abu Sufyan. The Prophet did not want to fight the Hawazins within Mecca's sacred boundary. Early in the morning, the Muslim army descended into Hunayn valley. The array of tribes, each with a banner waving at its head, was so imposing that Abu Bakr broke forth, as the marshaled forces passed, with the exclamation: "We shall not be disadvantaged because of our numbers." In the rear of the Muslim army were those Meccans who had not yet converted to Islam.

### TRAP OF AMBUSH

Very early in the morning, while dawn was gray and the sky was overcast with clouds, the Prophet's army was in motion. Clad in full armor, as on the day of Uhud, he rode on his white mule, Duldul, at the rear of the forces. The vanguard, formed of the tribe of Sulaym and led by Khalid ibn al-Walid, were defiling leisurely up the steep and narrow pass when the Hawazin sprang forth unexpectedly from their ambush, charging them with impetuosity. Staggered by the unexpected onslaught, Sulaym's warriors broke and fell back. The shock was communicated from column to column that the reverse sustained at the opening of the day was attributed to the vainglorious confidence with which the believers looked upon their mighty army.

***Indeed, God had succored you on many battlefields [when you were few]. [He did so, too] on the day of Hunayn when you took pride in your great numbers. They proved of no avail to you—for the earth, despite all its vastness, became [too] narrow for you, and you turned back, retreating. (9:25)***

It is to this battle that verse 9:25 refers, pointing out that true succor can come only from God and that great numbers, ties of kinship, and worldly wealth are of no avail if they are “dearer to you than God and His Apostle and the struggle in His cause.” Relying on their vast numerical superiority, the Muslims were over-confident and, apparently, careless.

#### THE ROUT OF THE MUSLIM ARMY

Aggravated by the indignity of the hour and the narrow ruggedness of the road, panic seized the whole army; all turned and fled. As troop-by-troop they hurried past him, the Prophet called out: ‘Whither away? God's Prophet is here! Return! However, his words did not affect, only that the confusion increased, the multitude of camels jostled wildly one against another; all was noise and clamor, and the Prophet's voice was lost amid the din. Many Muslims were killed and wounded in the stampede.

#### THE PROPHET'S EXAMPLE

The Apostle, of course, did not abandon his post and stood firm like a rock. A band of devoted friends and followers gathered around him and stood between him and the enemy in his defense. The tribesmen charged repeatedly but were repulsed. Then, bidding Abbas to pick up for him a handful of gravel, the Prophet cast it towards the enemy, saying, “Ruin seize them!”

***God bestowed from on high his [gift of] inner peace upon his Apostle and the believers. He also bestowed [on you] from on high forces you could not see and chastised those who were bent on denying the truth. For such is the recompense of all who deny the truth! But with all this, God will turn his mercy on whom He wills. God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace. (9:26-27)***

The spiritual nature of this aid is implied in the phrase "forces you could not or did not see."

#### DESPERATE CALL BY ABBAS

At last, seeing the column of Medina troops bearing down in common flight, the Prophet bade his uncle, Abbas, who held his mule, to cry aloud: 'O citizens of Medina! O men of the Tree of Fealty! Ye of the Surah Baqarah!' Abbas had a stentorian voice, and as he shouted these words repeatedly at the pitch of his voice, they were heard far and near. The voice of Abbas boomed in the narrow valley for all to hear, and it proved effective in stopping the Muslims' flight. At once, they touched a chord in the hearts of the men of Medina. Arrested in their flight, they rushed to the Prophet, crying aloud, "Labbaika! Here we are at thy call!" One hundred of these devoted followers, disengaged from the difficulty of navigating past the camels that jammed the narrow pass, threw themselves upon the advancing enemy and checked its progress. After being relieved of the pressure, the army rallied gradually and returned to the battlefield. The conflict was severe, and the issue, due to the adverse nature of the ground and the impetuosity of the wild Bedouins, remained for some time doubtful.

## ROLE OF ALI

Ali caused one of the enemy's commanders to fall from his camel, lose his balance, and be killed. Later, in a hand-to-hand fight, he killed another Hawazin leader. When these two generals were killed, the enemy lost their hearts. The steadiness of the Medina band and the enthusiasm of the rest, when once recalled, won the day. The battle of Uhud began with the Muslims' victory and ended with their defeat. Hunayn's battle began with their defeat and ended with their victory. The victory at Hunayn meant that, except for tribes on the frontiers of Syria and Iraq, there was no group of tribes in Arabia capable of assembling a force sufficiently strong enough to meet the Muslims with any prospect of success. Hunayn was the last battle led personally by the Prophet, the Messenger of God. The enemy fled, and the rout was complete.

## THE SIEGE OF TAIF

After the victory of the battle at Hunayn, the Muslim army, under the leadership of the Prophet, laid siege to the walled city of Taif. Taif residents had enough provisions to last them for a year. The city was well fortified and had ample defenses. There were many fierce arrow exchanges between the parties. Half a month had passed, and the Muslims were no nearer to capturing the town. The Prophet concluded that a siege was not the best way to overcome them. He ordered his army to lift the siege and proceed to Jiranaḥ.

## THE SECOND SIEGE OF TAIF

Malik, the commander-in-chief of Hawazin, fought with remarkable bravery but finally retreated with Ṭḥaḳīf's men to their walled city of Taif. Later, a delegation from Hawazin came to free

their women and children. The Prophet sent a message through the visiting delegation: "If Malik comes to me as a Muslim, I will give him a hundred camels and return his family, including all his possessions." When the message reached Malik in Taif, he said nothing to Thaqif for fear of imprisonment. In the dark, he secretly left Taif and went to the camp and declared his faith in Islam. The Prophet put him in command of the Muslim community of Hawazin around Taif. The Bani Thaqif pride themselves on Taif's impregnability, but a large and expanding Muslim community now surrounds them. Any caravan they sent out was in danger of attack. They were even afraid of taking their camels and sheep to pasture without the risk of Malik's men capturing them. The second siege was now in progress, less acute but more implacable. After many months, Taif residents decided to send a delegation to the Prophet. They said they would accept Islam in return for the safety of its people, animals, and land.

#### MEETING LONG LOST FOSTER SISTER

One of the older captives from Bani Sad ibn Bakr rebuked her captors, saying: "By God, I am the sister of your chief." They did not believe her but brought her to the Prophet's attention. She said: "O Muhammad, I am thy sister." The Prophet gazed at this old woman and asked, "Have thou any sign of that?" She showed him the mark of a bite and said, "Thou didst bite me when I carried thee in the valley of Sarar. Thy father was my father, and thy mother was my mother." It was indeed Shayma, one of his foster sisters. The Prophet spread out a rug for her and asked her to sit on it. His eyes filled with tears as he asked her for the news of Halimah and Harith, his foster parents. She told him that they both had passed away. The

Prophet gave her a rich present, besides more camels, sheep, and goats, and bade her farewell.

## DISTRIBUTION OF THE SPOILS OF WAR

After the siege of Taif, the Prophet ordered his army to proceed to Jiranah with all the spoils of war. About six thousand Hawazin women and children were captive. In addition, twenty-six thousand camels, forty thousand sheep and goats, and 4000 ounces of silver were among the spoils.

The recent revelation introduced another category of persons entitled to benefit from charity: “those whose hearts are to be won over.” The following are the eight categories eligible for charity:

***The offerings given for the sake of God are [meant] only for (1) the poor, (2) the needy, (3) those in charge thereof, (4) freeing humans from bondage, (5) those over-burdened with debts, (6) for struggle in God’s cause, (7) for the wayfarer, and (8) those whose hearts are to be won over. [this is] an ordinance from God—and God is all-knowing, wise. (9:60)***

“Those whose hearts are to be won over” refers to recent converts and non-Muslims close to understanding and accepting Islam. Every effort should be made for their conversion, either directly or indirectly (through the widest possible propagation of Islam's teachings). Meccans who recently converted to Islam after the new religion shattered their world of Arab paganism have provided an immediate example of men whose hearts are to be reconciled.

## GENEROUS GIFTS FOR THE QURAYSH

The Prophet gave Abu Sufyan a hundred camels, and when he asked

that his two sons should not be forgotten, they were each given a hundred. Included were recipients who were on the brink and had not decided to enter Islam. Some of these men were also given a hundred camels. One of them was Safwan ibn Umayyah, son of Umayyah ibn Khalaf, one of the elders of the Quraysh, and the other was Suhayl. They both joined the Hunayn battle as nonbelievers and fought alongside the Quraysh against Hawazin. They both entered Islam after the Hunayn battle, and the Prophet was very generous with them. The Prophet bestowed rich gifts upon sixteen influential Quraysh men and four chiefs of other tribes. All these recipients were wealthy men.

#### MISUNDERSTANDING OF GIFTING TO RICH QURAYSH

Many older companions, let alone others, did not understand the principle of "those whose hearts are to be won over." The Prophet knew religion could transform souls. Whether or not a believer accepts this religion with real commitment and not just nominally depends on psychological barriers, such as bitterness, frustration, and humiliation faced after losing battles. It was to remove those barriers that the principle of gifting to "those whose hearts are to be won over" was implemented.

#### THE HELPERS' COMPLAINTS

While generosity was bestowed on those of questionable faith, little was given to the devout. The four thousand Helpers noticed it. Many of them were impoverished. Each Helper received four camels or their equivalent in sheep and goats. The Helpers said among themselves that the Messenger of God joined his people. In times of battle, we were his Companions, but when spoils are divided, his Companions are his own people.

## THE PROPHET ADDRESSES THE HELPERS

When the Prophet was notified of the Helpers' feelings, he called a meeting. He addressed them: "Men of Helpers, the word has come to me that ye are deeply moved against me. Did I not find you erring, and God guided you, enemies of each other, but God reconciled your hearts? Will ye not retort against me?" Ye might say unto me and say truthfully: Thou did come to us discredited, and we credited thee, abandoned and lonely, and we helped thee, an outcast, and we took thee in, destitute, and we comforted thee. O Helpers, are ye stirred in your soul about the things of this world whereby I have reconciled men's hearts that they may submit unto God? Are ye not well content, O Helpers, that the people take with them their sheep and camels, and that ye take with you the Messenger of God? If all men chose one way and the Helpers another, I would go the Helper's way. God have mercy on the Helpers and their sons."

They all wept until their beards were wet. With one voice, they said: "We are well content with God's Messenger as our portion and our lot."

## CHAPTER 27

### WAR AGAINST THE JEWS OF KHAYBAR

Khaybar—a fertile Jewish oasis a hundred miles north of Medina—was a strongly fortified territory, studded with castles situated on inaccessible hills. It served as an asylum for the exiled Bani Nadir from Medina. They actively encouraged the Meccans to attack Medina before the battle of Trench. They financed and promised a whole year's crop from the Khaybar orchards as a prize for the mercenaries from the Ghatafan tribe. Sallam ibn Abu al Huqayq and al Yasir ibn Razzam, two Khaybar chieftains, were also killed during the Trench campaign.

#### FIGHTING IS PROHIBITED FOR THE SAKE OF WAR GAINS

*As soon as you [O believers] are about to embark on a war that promises material gains, those who stayed behind [in the past] will surely say, “allow us to come with you”— [thus showing that] they would like to alter the word of God. Say: “By no means shall you travel with us: God has declared aforetime [to whom all spoils of war shall belong].” Thereupon, they will [surely] answer, “You begrudge us [our share of booty]!” They can grasp but so little of the truth! (48:15)*

The above verse alludes to the future war against the hostile Jews of Khaybar, with more than 10,000 fighters, only 90 miles from Medina. They endangered the Muslim community in Medina.

#### SELECTION OF TRUE BELIEVERS FOR THE EXPEDITION

After signing a peace treaty of Hdaybiyyah with the Meccans, the

Prophet began war preparations without giving the Jews of Khaybar more time to forge any new alliance. He restricted the call to arms to those who had accompanied him to al Hudaybiyyah. As instructed in the verses above, he intended to leave behind all those interested in war gains and stand with only the true believers. Bedouin's failure to respond to the Prophet's summons to make a pious visit to Mecca had been prompted largely by mercenary motives. There was no hope of plunder on the pilgrimage, so it was not worth the effort.

Fighting for material gains contravenes the principle of a “war in God’s cause,” which may be waged only in defense of faith or liberty (2:190). So, the Prophet set off with a smaller force. It kept the mission secret until the last moment.

Often, Western historians depict jihad as a war for war booty. The Quran prohibits such practices. Men of true faith do not sacrifice their lives for temporary material things. The rewards of life eternal are the hope of the faithful, a concept difficult to grasp for materialistic minds. These historians tend to ignore or underestimate high morale and the power of faith as the key to Muslim victories in battles.

## THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE

Muslims gathered one thousand six hundred strong and reached Khaybar in only three days and took Khaybar by surprise. For the last part of the journey, the Prophet asked for a guide. When the sun rose the next day, and the land workers came out with their shovels and baskets, they were astonished to find themselves face to face with a silent army. They fled back to their strongholds. The master key to the Prophet’s success in all major battles was surprise tactics

and techniques. This was combined with a toughness to which both Arabian Jews and the Quraysh were unaccustomed.

## OFFER OF PEACE

The Prophet took a peace initiative and sent a letter to the leaders of Khaybar Jews:

“In the name of Allah, the Compassionate and Merciful. This is from Muhammad, the Apostle of Allah, friend, and brother of Moses, who confirms what Moses brought. Allah says to you, O people of the book, and you will find it in your Book: Muhammad is Allah's Apostle. Those who believe in him are stern with disbelievers but compassionate among themselves. Thou seest them bowing and prostrating themselves, seeking grace and acceptance from Allah. The mark of their prostration is on their foreheads. That is their description in the Torah. And their description in the Gospel is like a seed that sends forth its shoot. It strengthens and becomes thick and rises straight upon its stalk, delighting the sowers. He may cause the disbelievers to burn with rage at (the sight of) them. Allah has promised those who believe and do good works forgiveness and a great reward. I adjure by Allah, and by what He had sent down to you, by the *manna* and quails He gave as food to your tribes before you, and by His drying the sea for your fathers when He delivered them from Pharaoh and his works, that you tell me, do you find in what He has sent down to you that you believe in Muhammad? If you do not find that in your book, then there is no compulsion upon you. The right path has become plainly distinguished from error, so I call you to Allah and His Apostle.”

The conciliatory tone of the letter to Khaybar is remarkable when one considers the bitter opposition the Apostle had received from

the Jews of Medina and all the provocations from Khaybar. He called himself “friend and brother of Moses” and claimed to “confirm what Moses brought.” He adjured them, “by God, and by what He has sent down to you, by the *MANNA* and quails He gave as food to your tribes before you.” Having entreated them to accept him as the Apostle of God, he added a qualification: “If you do not find that in your scripture, then there is no compulsion upon you,” making it clear that the invitation to Islam was not compulsory. Khaybar Jews, however, had lost control of their affairs. Their leadership had passed into the hands of the exiled al-Nadir clan leaders from Medina. They had failed their own tribe earlier and were now playing with the destiny of those who had everything to gain by reaching a compromise with Islam’s rising power. Muslims offered peace terms to Jews, but they refused. The Jews held a hurried war council and decided to defend each fortress individually. This was against their chief’s warning. The presence of approximately 10,000 warriors made Khaybar overconfident, and they overestimated their combat efficiency. Also, their fortresses were very well-defended. The Jews failed to mount a centrally organized defense, leaving each family to defend its fortified redoubt. There seemed to be neither coordination nor a proper liaison between the different Jewish garrisons. This allowed the Prophet to conquer each fortress one by one, claiming food, weapons, and land as he conquered. Despite a valiant struggle by some Jews, fortress after fortress fell, and, in the end, they sued for peace. The Prophet accepted their plea and permitted them to stay on their land. Jews, though they did not lose, had to negotiate. It did not seem to be a conclusive battle, though Muslim historians depict it as such.

Ultimately, both parties reached a negotiated peace, but after a great loss of life in the battle. Half of the dates offered to the Ghatafan were now annually given to the Muslims as tribute. This practice, far from being considered a sign of political weakness, was freely indulged in by the mighty Byzantine and Persian empires. This was done to secure peace from many unruly neighboring tribes. It was far cheaper than permanent garrisons to stave off raids. By arranging with Muhammad to pay him half of their annual produce, the Khaybar Jews may have thought they had exchanged one recipient for another. They exchanged the Ghatafan alliance for that of the Apostle. With the fall of Khaybar, Muslims were no longer threatened by Jews' dominance.

#### ATTEMPT TO POISON THE PROPHET

One of the Jewish widows roasted a lamb and laced it with deadly poison. She brought it to the Muslim camp and set it before the Prophet. When the Prophet took a mouthful of lamb, he immediately spat it out, saying to others: "Hold off your hands! This meat is poisonous." One of the Prophet's companions, Bishr, also took a bite of the lamb, but he swallowed it. Bishr's face turned ashen, and he died on the spot. When the Prophet summoned the woman, she readily admitted. The Prophet asked: "What made you do it?" She said, "What thou hast done unto my people, slain my father, uncle, and my husband? I told myself, 'If he is a king, I will be safe from him, and if he is a prophet, he will be informed of poison.'" Despite Bishr's death, the Prophet pardoned the woman.

#### MARRIAGE WITH SAFIYYAH

Safiyyah was born to Huyayy ibn Akhtab in Medina the chief of the Jewish tribe of Banu Nadir. She was married to Sallam ibn

Mishkam, who later divorced her. In 625, Safiyyah's family was expelled from Medina, and they settled in Khaybar. Her father and brother played a significant role in instigating the Meccans to attack Muhammad and annihilate Muslims once and for all. During the Battle of Trench, Huyayy ibn Akhtab approached the Banu Qurayzah and convinced them to violate their covenant with the Muslims. After the Muslims defeated the Banu Qurayza, Akhtab was captured and executed.

In 627 or early in 628, Safiyah was married to Kinanah ibn al-Rabi, only a few months before the battle of Khaybar. She was 17 years old. Kinanah was the treasurer of the Banu Nadir, executed by Muslims. The Prophet gave Safiyyah a choice: to remain Jewish and return to her family or enter Islam and become his wife. "I chose God and His Messenger," she said, and they were married, sealing his alliance with the most powerful Jewish group in Arabia. Marriages cement tribe relationships and won enemies' hearts. This gesture almost always won a defeated adversary on the battlefield.

The campaign was not over, and the Prophet turned his attention to the Jews of Wadi l-Qura and besieged their fortresses. They allied with Khaybar, and after three days, they surrendered on the same terms.

## **APOCRYPHAL STORIES OF ASSASSINATIONS IN SIRA LITERATURE**

Typically, academic scholars doubt the reliability of the sira (biography of Prophet Muhammad) literature, especially the stories of Prophet Muhammad and the Jews of Medina. The assassinations of Ibn Abi al-Huqaiq (Abu Rafi), Kab ibn al-Ashraf, al-Yusayr, Ibn Sunayna, Al-Yusayr ibn Rizam, Asma bint Marwan, etc., are

mentioned in the Prophet's sirah. Almost all the victims were Jewish. Some of these murders were committed by their tribesmen for personal reasons, seeking to glorify their ancestors, or for apologetic purposes. One should not reject these stories as inventions and deny their historicity. However, these stories should not be accepted at face value either.

The Prophet's identity is built around the Quranic concept of "mercy to the world," and anything that challenges that identity is false, no matter who says it and where it comes from. This simple principle will liberate believers from scores of lies presented as part of the Prophet's statements and actions.

Muslim historians have written accounts of revenge and violence against Muslims' enemies. Yet, when judged based on evidence, none qualify as authentic or accurate.

None of these apocryphal stories are mentioned in the Quran. Therefore, it is beyond the scope of this Quranic series to delve into details.

The Quran only allows force in self-defense against active combatants and forbids killing non-combatants like women, children, and old people. Even if the enemy uses peace as a deception, it must be accepted. The Quran prohibits treating noncombatants as enemies and using their supposed non-belief as a pretext for plundering them. "You are not a believer," and therefore, one of the enemies. All apocryphal assassination stories violate the Quran's rules for just wars and, therefore, should be disregarded on this basis alone.

## CHAPTER 28

### THE CAMPAIGN OF TABUK (631)

#### THE NINTH SURAH AT-TAWBAH (REPENTANCE)

The campaign of Tabuk was the last expedition conducted by the Prophet, although no fighting took place. A substantial part of the surah, At-Tawbah, relates to the conditions prevailing in Medina before the Prophet's expedition to Tabuk in 631. Almost all the surah was revealed shortly before, during, and immediately after the campaign. This was done on the long march from Medina to Tabuk. The title of the surah is based on the frequent references to the repentance (Tawbah) of the erring ones and to its acceptance by God.

#### STRUGGLE AGAINST NONBELIEVERS

***O you who have attained faith! Fight against those deniers of the truth who are near you, and let them find you adamant, and know that God is with those who are conscious of Him. (9:123)***

Be resolute or uncompromising about ethical principles. For the general circumstances in which war is permitted, see 2:190-194, 22:39, 60:8-9, and 9:9:5. The reference to "those deniers of the truth who are near you" may arise from the fact that only those who are near can be dangerous in a physical sense, or that—having come from afar—they have already approached the Muslim country with aggressive intent.

#### REASONS FOR THE EXPEDITION

The immediate reason for this expedition was the information the

Prophet received. This information stated that the Byzantines were worried about Islam's rapid growth in Arabia. The Byzantines were assembling a significant force within the confines of the Peninsula to march against Medina and overthrow the Muslims. To guard against such an assault, the Prophet gathered thirty thousand soldiers, the strongest force Muslims could have. He set out in Rajab, 9 H., towards the frontier. The time had come for the inevitable northern campaign, and he wished to train his troops for long-distance expeditions. He announced the campaign against the Byzantines and mustered the largest and best-equipped army he had led. It had been his practice not to divulge his true objective at first and to keep the preparations secret. But this time, there was no secrecy. He sent orders to Mecca and allied tribes to send all available armed and mounted men.

The majority began preparing at full speed. The wealthy men vied with each other in contributing money. Uthman alone gave enough for ten thousand men's mounting and equipment. Even then, there was not enough for all those who wished to attend.

#### UNABLE TO PROCURE SUPPLIES FOR THE EXPEDITION

***[But] no blame shall attach to the weak, [the old and the infirm] or the sick. Those who have no means [to equip themselves] if they are sincere towards God and his Apostle. There is no cause to reproach the doers of good, for God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace. Nor [shall blame attach] to those who, when they came to you [O prophet, with the request] that you provide them with mounts, were told by you, "I cannot find anything where on to mount you." [Whereupon] they turned away, their***

***eyes overflowing with tears out of sorrow that they had no means to spend [on their equipment]. (9:91-92)***

At the time in question, a public Treasury did not yet exist. Every participant in a military expedition was expected to provide his weapons and mounts. The above revelation has enshrined in memory the “seven weepers”—five needy helpers and two Bedouins, whom the Prophet turned reluctantly away from, and tears filled their eyes.

## RELUCTANT TO JOIN THE EXPEDITION

There were **three groups** of erring believers and hypocrites who were reluctant to travel to Tabuk:

1. Absent with Permission
2. Absent without Permission
3. Deferred cases

### 1. ABSENT WITH PERMISSION

***May God pardon you [O Prophet]! Why did you permit them [to stay at home] before it became obvious to you who was speaking the truth? [Before] you know who the liars were? (9:43)***

The Prophet permitted those who advanced questionable excuses to remain at home. The phrase, “May God pardon you,” although expressed in the form of an invocation, has the meaning of a statement, “God pardons you” or “has pardoned you.” Thus, absolving the Prophet of any moral responsibility for his mistaken but humanly understandable acceptance of questionable pleas on the part of those who wished to be excused from participating in the campaign. It seems that this statement of “absolution” was intended

to free the Prophet from self-reproach for his too-great liberality in this respect.

#### TRUE BELIEVERS DON'T ASK FOR EXEMPTIONS

***Those who [truly] believe in God and the last day do not ask you for exemption from struggling with their possessions and lives [in God's cause]. God has full knowledge of who is conscious of him. (9:44)***

#### THOSE WITH HEARTS FULL OF DOUBT

***Only those who seek exemption do not believe in God and the last day. Their hearts have become prey to doubt so that in their doubt, they waver between one thing and another. Had they [genuinely] desirous of setting out [with you], they would surely have made some preparations. But God was averse to them taking the field, and so He caused them to hold back when he said, "[You may] stay at home with all [the others] who stay at home." (9:45-46)***

God causing hypocrites to hold back refers to God's natural law. The phrase "You may stay at home" refers to the permission granted by the Prophet to ascertain which of his followers, who, for apparently legitimate reasons, were unable to take part in the campaign. In recognition of this, hypocrites readily availed themselves. There is more to these verses than just a historical connotation, they are an attempt to depict hypocrisy in their original form.

#### THE BEDOUIN WHO ALSO STAYED HOME

***There came [unto the Apostle] such Bedouin with some excuse to offer, [with the request] that they are granted an exemption. Those***

***bent on giving the lie to God and his Apostle remained at home, [and] grievous suffering is bound to befall those bent on denying the truth! (9:90)***

The specific mention of "Bedouin" in the passage above highlights their attitude—positive or negative—towards Islam. It was of the utmost importance within early Muslim history. The Prophet's message could not obtain a real, lasting foothold in Arabia without first securing the allegiance of those warlike nomads and half-nomads, who constituted the majority of the Peninsula's population. When the Prophet was preparing to leave for Tabuk, many of the already converted tribesmen were willing to go to war under his leadership.

## 2. ABSENT WITHOUT PERMISSION

Those who absented themselves without permission but later spontaneously repented of their sin. They were utterly averse to exposing themselves to the hardships of a campaign in distant lands. This did not seem to affect their immediate interests. Rather than come to Medina and excuse themselves, they stayed at home.

## THREE FELL TO CORRUPTION BUT REPENTED

***And [He turned in his mercy, too] towards the three [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] to Him. He turned again to them in his mercy so that they might repent. For God alone accepts repentance and is the dispenser of grace. O you who have attained faith! Remain***

***conscious of God and be among those who are true to their word!  
(9:118-119)***

“The hearts of a group of them had swerved” refers to the believers who—without a valid excuse—failed to respond to the Prophet’s calls when he set out on the expedition to Tabuk. The three who fell prey to corruption are **Kab ibn Malik, Mararah ibn ar-Rabi,** and **Hilal ibn Umayyah** (all from among the Ansar). They abstained from the campaign and were ostracized by the Prophet and his companions. He told the three believers who remained behind to depart from him until God decided their case. He ordered no one should speak to them. For fifty days, they lived as outcasts until the revelation of the above verse. It relates to all believers who temporarily deviate from the right path and, after realizing- either spontaneously or in consequence of outside reprobation—that they had “fallen prey to corruption,” sincerely repent of their sin.

#### THOSE WHO SWERVED BUT REPENTED

***Indeed, God has turned in his mercy unto the Prophet, as well as to those who have forsaken the domain of evil [emigrants] and those who have sheltered and succored the faith [Ansars]. [All] those who followed him in the hour of distress, when hearts of some believers almost swerved from faith. And once again, He has turned to them in mercy-for He is compassionate towards them, a dispenser of grace. (9:117)***

#### ACCEPTANCE OF REPENTANCE AND CHARITY

***And [there are] others [who] have become conscious of their sin after doing righteous deeds side-by-side with evil ones. It may well be that God will accept their repentance, for God is much-***

*forgiving, a dispenser of grace. [Hence, O Prophet], accept that [part] of their possessions offered for God, so that you may cleanse them thereby and cause them to grow in purity and pray for them. Your prayers will be [a source of] comfort for them—for God is all-hearing, all-knowing. Do they not know that it is God alone who can accept the repentance of His servants and is a true recipient of whatever is offered for His sake? God alone accepts repentance, a dispenser of grace. And say [to them, O Prophet]: "Act! And God will behold your deeds, and so will his Apostle and the believers. And [in the end] you will be brought before Him who knows all that is beyond the reach of a created being's perception. This includes all that a creature's senses or mind can witness. Then He will make you understand what you have been doing." (9:102-105)*

“Others” are neither believers in the full sense of the word nor hypocrites but half-hearted, confused waverers between right and wrong or between truth and falsehood. Although it relates primarily to the vacillating Muslims who refused to participate in the expedition to Tabuk, this verse alludes, in its broader meaning, to all sinners who—without external prompting—become conscious of their wrongdoing and repent of it. Acceptance of “their possessions offered for God” (*Sadaqah*), in this context, denotes a tax called *Zakah* (the purifying dues), which is levied on every Muslim enjoying a certain minimum of property and/or income. An acceptance of *zakah* by the head of state (or the community) amounts to recognition of the giver as a “Muslim.” In the Quranic sense of this term, the Prophet refused to accept it from all whose behavior made it obvious that they were hypocrites. The above verse, however, authorizes him (and, by implication, the authorities of an Islamic state) to accept *zakah* from those who express their

repentance by deeds and words. No human being, not even the Prophet, has the authority to absolve a sinner of his guilt. A prophet can do no more than pray to God for sinners' forgiveness.

“And say [unto them, O Prophet]: Act!” This connects with the injunction in verse 103 above), "Accept that [part] of their possessions offered for God and pray for them." The emphasis on action as an integral part of faith is fundamental to the ethics of the Quran. The frequent juxtaposition of the concepts of "believing" and "doing good works" and the condemnation of all "who, while believing, wrought no good works." (6:158)

### 3. DEFERRED CASES

Those whose cases were first “deferred” (verse 106) and who repented shortly after the Prophet’s return from Tabuk.

#### DEFERRED CASES REPENTED AFTERWARDS

***And [there are yet] others [people whose cases are] deferred until God wills to judge them. He will either chastise them or turn again unto them in his mercy—for God is all-knowing, wise. (9:106)***

The people referred to here are the waverers who stayed away from the campaign of Tabuk. Their cases are deferred in anticipation of repentance. By implication, the above verse applies to all half-hearted believers who confusedly hover between right and wrong and have not yet reached the stage of moral self-examination and repentance, with the result that their cases are deferred until their impulses sway them entirely one way or another.

## WHY RELUCTANCE TO JOIN THE CAMPAIGN OF TABUK?

Participation in the war of self-defense is obligatory for all Muslim men of fighting age. At the time of the preparation for this expedition, the hypocrites and a minority among the believers displayed an extreme reluctance to embark on a war with Byzantium for the following reasons:

- The distance was too long.
- The reputation of the imperial legions was formidable.
- It was the beginning of October, and the weather was extremely hot.
- It was also the time when ripe fruits were harvested.
- At the same time, others were afraid lest, in their absence, their encampments, denuded of manpower, be raided by hostile yet unconverted tribes.

## WORLDLY COMFORTS IN PREFERENCE TO THE AFTERLIFE

***O you who have attained faith! What is amiss that when you are called upon, “Go forth to war in God’s cause,” you cling heavily to the earth? Would you content yourselves with [the comforts of] this worldly life in preference to [the good of] the life to come? But the enjoyment of life in this world is but a paltry thing when compared with the life to come! If you do not go forth to war [in God’s cause], He will chastise you with a grievous chastisement and place another people in your stead—whereas you shall in no wise harm Him, for God has the power to will anything. (9:38-39) Go forth to war, whether easy or difficult [for you], and strive hard***

***in God's cause with your possessions and your lives. This is for your good—if you but knew it! (9:41)***

The reference, “You cling heavily to the earth,” refers to this small group of believers who were reluctant to join the campaign of Tabuk.

#### THE DISTANCE WAS TOO GREAT

***Had there been [a prospect of] immediate gain and an easy journey, they would certainly have followed you, [O Prophet], but the distance was too great for them. And yet, [after your return, O believers], they will swear by God, “Had we been able to do so, we would certainly have set out with you!” [thus, falsely swearing] they will be destroying their own selves, for God knows indeed that they are lying! (9:42)***

The phrase, “Distance too long for them,” refers to a strenuous march of about fourteen days—the distance needed to reach Tabuk. Half-hearted believers and hypocrites made excuses concerning the purpose of this expedition, the uncertainty of its results, and the hardships involved. In many cases, the Prophet accepted these excuses and allowed the men concerned to remain in Medina.

#### THEY WOULD HAVE ONLY STIRRED DISCORD

***Had these [hypocrites] set out with you, [O believers], they would have added nothing to you save the evil of corruption. They would surely have scurried around in your midst, seeking to stir up discord among you. This is because there are in your midst people who would have lent them an ear. God has full knowledge of evildoers. Indeed, even before this time [before the expedition to Tabuk], they tried to stir up discord. They devised all manner of***

*plots against you, [O Prophet], until the truth was revealed, and God's will became manifest, however hateful this may have been to them. (9:47-48)*

#### DO NOT PUT ME TO A HARD TEST

*And among them, there was [many one] who said, [at the time when the prophet was preparing for the campaign.] "Grant me permission [to remain at home], and do not put me to a hard test!" Oh [by making such a request], they had [already failed in their test and] succumbed to a temptation to evil. Hell will indeed encompass all who refuse to acknowledge the truth! (9:49)*

#### THEY GRIEVE AT YOUR GOOD FORTUNE

*Should good fortune shine on you, [O Prophet] [during the campaign of Tabuk], it will grieve them. Should misfortune befall you, they will say [to themselves], "We have already taken our precautions beforehand!" And they will turn away and rejoice. Say: "Never can anything befall us save what God has decreed! He is our lord supreme, and in God let the believers place their trust!" Say: "Are you, perchance, waiting for something bad to happen to us [even though nothing can happen to us] save one of the two best things? [either victory or martyrdom] , but as far as you are concerned, we are hopefully waiting for God to inflict chastisement upon you, [either] from Himself [in the life to come] or by our hands! Wait, then, hopefully, we shall wait with you!" (9:50-52)*

#### WE WERE ONLY INDULGING IN IDLE TALK

*Indeed, if you were to question them, they would surely answer,*

***“We were only indulging in idle talk and were playing [with words].” Say: “Were you, then, mocking God and His messages and His Apostle? Do not offer [empty] excuses! You have indeed denied the truth after [having professed] your belief [in it]!” (9:65-66)***

“Playing with words” refers to the derisive remarks made by some of the hypocrites about the alleged futility of the expedition to Tabuk.

#### PLOT TO KILL THE PROPHET

***[The hypocrites] swear by God that they have said nothing [wrong]. Yet they have certainly uttered a saying that amounts to a denial of the truth. They have [thus] denied the truth despite their self-surrender to God. They were aiming for something that was beyond their reach. (9:74)***

The allegation that the Prophet deceived himself in revelation is equivalent to “denial of the truth” in the outcome of his revelation, i.e., the Quran. “Aiming at something beyond their reach” refers to an abortive plot by some hypocrites to kill the Prophet during the expedition to Tabuk. However, the above allusion has a far more profound meaning—namely, the existential impossibility of inner peace without believing that man’s life has meaning and purpose. It can only be understood through the revelations bestowed on those exceptionally gifted and receptive personalities—the prophets. Thus, torn between their half-hearted desire to surrender to God and their unwillingness to accept the divine guidance offered to them by the Prophet, the hypocrites were aiming at something beyond their reach.

## HYPOCRITES REJOICED WHILE STAYING HOME

***Those [hypocrites] who were left behind rejoiced in their staying away [from war] after [the departure of] God's apostle. They hated the thought of striving with their possessions and their lives for God's cause. They had [even] said [to the others], "do not go forth to war in this heat!" Say: "The fire of hell is hotter by far!" Had they but grasped this truth! Let them, then, laugh a little—for they will weep a lot in return for what they have earned. Hence, [O Prophet,] if God brings you again face to face with some of them, and they ask your leave to go forth [to war with you], say: "Never shall you go forth with me, nor shall you fight an enemy together with me! You were well-pleased to stay at home on that first occasion, stay at home, then, with those who [are obliged to] remain behind!" (9:81-83)***

They rejoiced in their sitting at home—a reference to those who, under one pretext or another, excused themselves from participating in the expedition to Tabuk. As is evident from the sequence—and stated in many authentic Traditions—one of the excuses advanced was the extreme heat of the season. If God brings you (O Prophet) back from the campaign of Tabuk and you come face-to-face with those hypocrites who remained at home under pretenses, tell them: “Never shall you go forth with me, nor shall you fight an enemy together with me.” You will stay at home with the old men, women, children, and the sick, who are not able or not expected to go to war.

## PUNISHMENT IN THE AFTERLIFE

***Only they may rightly chastise you for asking you for exemption even though they were fully able [to go to war]. They were delighted to remain with those who were left behind. Therefore,***

***God has sealed their hearts, so they do not know [what they are doing]. They will [still] be offering excuses to you when you return to them [from the campaign]! Say: “do not make empty excuses. We will not believe you. God has already enlightened us about you. And God will behold your [future] deeds, and [so will] his Apostle. In the end, you will be brought before Him, who knows all that is beyond the reach of a created being’s perception. This includes all that a creature’s senses or mind can witness. Then He will make you truly understand what you were doing [in life].” When you return to them, [O believers], they will swear to you by God, [repeating their excuses] to your letting them be. Let them be, then. They are loathsome, and hell is their goal in recompense for what they used to do. They will swear to you to please you, but [even] should you be pleased with them, God shall never be pleased with iniquitous folk. (9:93-96)***

Those who were able to go to war refer to people who were able-bodied and financially capable. They would swear to you by God, repeating their excuses for not joining the campaign “to your letting them be” left alone and not punishing them. Their fears were unfounded since, on his return from Tabuk, the Prophet took no punitive action against any of those who had failed to follow him on his campaign. After returning from Tabuk, those hypocrites who had not taken part in the trip came to the Prophet and made their excuses, which he accepted.

## RETURN TO MEDINA

On reaching Tabuk, about halfway between Medina and Damascus, the Prophet ascertained that the Byzantines were either not yet ready to invade Arabia or had entirely given up the idea for the time being.

The army stayed for twenty days in Tabuk, and during those days, the Prophet made a peace treaty with the Christian and Jewish communities.

In accordance with the Islamic principle that war may be waged only in self-defense, he returned to Medina with his followers without engaging in hostilities.

#### YEAR OF DEPUTATION

During the next two years, the Prophet established his authority over much of Arabia. Since the hostile Bedouin tribes were defeated militarily, many tribes in Arabia sent delegations to come to terms with the successor to the Quraysh. Therefore, Muslim history remembers this period as the year of delegations. Numerous alliances were forged during this period, and while many converted to Islam, others did not.

## **CHAPTER 29**

# **THE CONQUEST OF THE PERSIAN AND BYZANTINE EMPIRES**

External politics outside Arabia were dominated by the two superpowers, the Byzantine and Persian empires. The Meccan trade connected Persian-held Yemen in the south with Byzantine Syria in the north. Neither the Persians nor the Byzantines tried to control the Arabian nomads directly. It was a task beyond an empire.

### **THE BYZANTINE LAND**

The name Byzantium refers to the ancient Semitic lands that made historic Syria from Antioch and Edessa (Turkey) to Israel, Palestine, and Jordan. By the seventh century, these lands shared a common language, Aramaic. Centuries earlier, Alexander's conquest left Greek as a second language alongside Aramaic.

The Byzantine Empire was the eastern half of the Roman Empire. The name refers to Byzantium, an ancient Greek colony and transit point that became the Byzantine Empire's capital city, Constantinople, modern-day Istanbul.

### **FACTORS BEHIND THE CONFLICT BETWEEN MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS**

The historical facts behind conflicts between Muslims, Christians and Persians included political, religious, and military causes. Wars between Arabs, Persians and Christians cannot be explained by the self-defense doctrine of the Quran. It was a pragmatic decision based on military and political realities where the dominant power

survived. For almost thirty years, Christians and Persians fought for supremacy and territorial gains, and the Arabs did the same. The following are some of the key considerations that led to epic battles that changed history.

## 1. POWER VACUUM

Before Islam, Christian Byzantium or the Eastern Roman Empire and Zoroastrian Persia fought for supremacy. By 614, Persia had overrun Syria, Egypt, and other parts of the Byzantine Empire. Heraclius (emperor of the Byzantine Empire) fought back with grim determination and gained much ground. Heraclius rebuilt the Empire after Persia's decisive but costly defeat in 628. Both the Byzantine and Persian empires were exhausted by prolonged wars. Arab armies filled the power vacuum thus created.

## 2. DISPUTE OVER TRIBAL ALLIANCES

The Syrians, Iraqis, and Egyptians belonged to Christian sects (Nestorian, Monophysite, Jacobite, and Copt) considered heretics by the official Byzantine Church, and, indeed, there were times in which their Byzantine masters persecuted Eastern Christians.

The Arab tribe of **Ghassinid** was loyal to the Byzantium Empire for centuries. To prevent nomads from raiding settled people, the Byzantines supported the Ghassanids. This tribe dominated the region east of Jordan and Damascus. (Similarly, the Persians supported the **Lakhmids**, who controlled the Euphrates area.)

These Arabs, who lived in southern Syria, had become Monophysite Christians, claiming there was only one nature of Christ (divine), which was in direct contradiction with the Orthodox belief in two natures (divine and human). The Byzantines

aggravated the situation by persecuting Ghassiniid Arabs and cancelling their subsidy.

After defeating the Persians, Byzantium tried to reestablish tribal alliances, extending ties among the Syrian Arabs and northern Hijazi nomadic groups. This was to form the defensive coalition needed to guard Syria from the southeast. It was just this effort to extend their political control over these tribes that made the Byzantines appear such a threat to Muslims. Muslims also aspired to extend their influence over the Arab tribes. A conflict between the two empires was inevitable.

### 3. THE QURANIC PREDICTION

***Say unto those Bedouins who stayed behind: “In time, you will be called upon [to fight] against people of mighty prowess in war. You will have to fight against them [until you die], or they surrender. And then, if you heed [that call], God will reward you. If you turn away as you did this time, He will chastise you with a grievous chastisement.” (48:16)***

“People of mighty prowess in war” is a prophecy relating to future wars against Byzantium and Persia, the two superpowers of the day. The above verse is related to the Bedouin who lived outside Medina, who refused to accompany the Prophet on His peace mission to Hudaybiyyah. As God chastises those who turn away, as did those Bedouins at the time of the expedition, their refusal to accompany the Prophet to Hudaybiyyah

### 4. THE PROPHET’S VISION

During the battle of the Trench, the Prophet had a vision of the future Muslim conquest of both the Persian and Byzantine Empires

(see the battle of the Trench). Muslim tradition views these near-miraculous conquests as historical validation of Islam's message.

## 5. REVENGE FOR MUTAH DEFEAT

The Battle of Muthah took place in September 629 between Muslim forces and the Byzantine Empire and their Ghassanid allies. Muslims suffered defeat at Muthah (see before). It was the first battle between the Byzantines and the Arabs. For the Byzantines, it was, most probably, a minor skirmish. For the Arabs, however, it was a milestone. Three years later the Muslims returned to defeat the Byzantine forces in Usama bin Zayd's expedition. This is the son of Zayd ibn Harithah, commander of the Muslim army at Muthah.

## 6. THE SNOW BALLING EFFECT

With Arabia united under the Islamic ideology, within a decade after Prophet Muhammad's death, Arab forces overran the Byzantine and Persian armies. Once the conflict started between Muslims and the Byzantine and Persian Empires, it had a snowball effect. The battles between these combatants increased in size and ferocity faster and faster. The cycle of attack and counterattack continued, which ended in the eventual defeat of both the Persian and Byzantine Empires at the hands of Muslims.

Muslim armies conquered Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Persia, and Egypt and became dominant forces. The momentum of these victories was extended to brilliant battles under famous generals like Khalid ibn al-Walid and Amr ibn al-As. These battles extended the Muslim empire to Morocco and Spain in the west and across Central Asia to India in the east.

## ARABS SECRET TO SUCCESS

What caused the Arabs to defeat the two superpowers simultaneously, the Byzantines and the Persian Empires? The United States army has produced scholarly research to explain the miraculous victories of Muslims even today without any conclusion. The most decisive factor in the Arab victory was conquering the fear of death. During the battles, the promise of paradise motivated Muslim warriors to display extraordinary bravery and ferocity. Seventy virgins of paradise is a disgusting myth not found in the Quran. Through religious fervor, they defeated vastly superior forces in Syria and Mesopotamia. It was the promise of eternal paradise and not the temporary gain of war booty that motivated the Muslim warriors to achieve success on the battlefield. The secular historians and military tacticians will have difficulty appreciating the spiritual concept of martyrdom in Islam.

## TRANSITION FROM WAR TO PEACE

What is remarkable about Arab conquests is not only the rapidity and orderliness with which they were achieved—with hardly any wanton destruction—but also the ease with which the transition was made from war to peace. The lack of wanton destruction can be explained by the Islamic law of war. It prohibits the use of force against noncombatants of the enemy and prevents the destruction of vegetation, trees, and infrastructures.

## END OF THE JEWISH PERSECUTION

In a remarkable essay on Jews and Judaism between Byzantine and Islam, Professor Steven Fine notes that “Jewish life was precarious under Byzantine rule. Christians began attacks against synagogues

with official approval, and Jews were banned from entering Jerusalem.” The author further states, “Many Jews saw the Islamic invaders as nothing less than harbingers of the Messiah rescuing them from ‘the Evil Empire’ made up of Bible-reading super-secessionist Christian pagans.” It was only under the Arab caliphate that a prosperous Jewish community was established in Jerusalem.

## END OF CHRISTIANS' PERSECUTION

When the Arabs arrived with a doctrine that permitted other religions “of the Book” to practice without persecution, the Syrians saw this as preferable to persecution and abuse by other Christians.

Christian worshippers of holy images experienced severe difficulties during iconoclasm's century-long enforcement. They were equally relieved when Byzantine dominance collapsed. Muslim rule was also more tolerant than Byzantium and Persia. Religious communities were free to practice their religion and worship and be governed by religious leaders and laws. In exchange, they were required to pay an exemption tax (JIZYAH) to provide security and protection from outside aggression and exempt them from military service. The Byzantine defense crumbled in Syrian disdain. To them, Islam looked like an emerging Christian sect. The Byzantines suffered a colossal defeat at the hands of Muslims because of a hostile local population and minority persecution.

## POLITICAL AND CULTURAL REASONS

In many ways, the local population found Muslim rule more flexible, with enhanced local autonomy, ruled by fellow Semites. In

addition, it had closer linguistic and cultural ties than Byzantium's Hellenized, Greco-Roman elites.

### ISOLATION OF CLERGY FROM ORDINARY PEOPLE

Both the Persian and Byzantine empires suffered from religious weaknesses. Persia's religion was a noble creed founded by Zoroaster a thousand years before. However, the clergy was an elite group alienated from ordinary people. In Rome, many clergy fled to monasteries, leaving only a few to meet ordinary people's spiritual needs. So alienated were the people from Persia and the Byzantine religions that voluntary conversion to Islam soon led to the magnificent religion we now see.

### ADMINISTRATION OF THE CONQUERED LANDS

According to the Cambridge history of Islam:

- After the Muslims captured Syria, the second Caliph Umar concluded a treaty with the city's notables on very generous terms. Christians were to be given protection and freedom of worship, paying less tax than Byzantium.
- Umar allowed local administrators to continue operations and appointed a governor with full powers. He replaced military commanders with civil affairs experts. The conquered lands were left in their owners' hands.

For these reasons, some Jewish and Christian communities aided and welcomed the invading armies. In Damascus, as in other towns, the natives hoped for better times.

## THE PROMISE OF EMINENCE BASED ON ACTIONS

***Hold fast to all that has been revealed to you. For you are on a straight path, and this [revelation] shall indeed become [a source of] eminence for you and your people. In the end, you will all be held accountable [for what you have done with it]. (43:43-44)***

The meaning is that, on the Day of Judgment, all prophets will be asked, metaphorically, what response they received from their people (see 5:109). Those who professed to follow them will be called to account for the spiritual and social use they made—or did not make—of the revelation conveyed to them. Thus, the eminence promised to Muhammad's followers would depend on their actual behavior and not on their mere profession of faith.

## RIGHTEOUS TO INHERIT THE EARTH

***God has promised those of you who have attained to faith and do noble deeds that, of a certainty, He will cause them to accede to power on earth, even as He caused [some of] those who lived before them to accede to it. And of a certainty, He will firmly establish for them the religion, which He has been pleased to bestow on them. And of a certainty, He will cause their erstwhile state of fear to be replaced by a sense of security [seeing that] they worship Me [alone], not ascribing divine powers to aught beside Me. Hence, [O believers], be constant in prayer, and render the purifying dues, and pay heed to the apostle, so that you might be graced with God's mercy. [and] think not that those who are bent on denying the truth can elude [their final reckoning even if they remain unscathed] on earth: the fire is their goal [in the life to come]—and vile indeed is such a journey's end! (24:55-57)***

God will enable the righteous to achieve power and security and the capability to satisfy their worldly needs. This Quranic reference to God's "promise" contains an oblique allusion to the God-willed natural law, which makes the rise and fall of nations dependent on their moral qualities. The firm establishment of religion relates to the strengthening of the believers' faith and the growth of moral influence in the world. The term *amn* (sense of security) signifies not merely physical security but also freedom from fear. The above clause implies not just a promise of collective security after an initial period of weakness and danger, which, as history tells us, overshadows the beginnings of every genuine religious movement. It also promises an individual sense of inner security—the absence of all fear of the unknown that characterizes a true believer. The believer's freedom from fear is a direct outcome of his intellectual and emotional refusal to attribute to anyone or anything but God the power to shape his destiny. The specific mention of the "purifying dues" (*az-zakah*) in this context is meant to stress the element of unselfishness as an integral aspect of true faith

## CHAPTER 30

# PROSELYTIZATION OF ISLAM

### THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Prophet Muhammad's warfare was not alien to Arab customs or Hebrew prophets. Both believed in God-sanctioned battles with enemies. Biblical stories about the exploits of kings and prophets, such as Moses, Joshua, Elijah, Samuel, Jehu, Saul, and David, recount the struggle of a community called by God. They also recount the permissibility, indeed a requirement, to take up arms, when necessary, against those considered enemies of God.

### THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE BIBLICAL AND QURANIC CONCEPT OF WAR

There are, however, two major differences between biblical and Quranic war concepts. Biblical war accounts clearly support the massacre of enemy noncombatants, including children, women, and even animals. In contrast, the Quran explicitly prohibits such crimes against humanity. Also, war under Quranic rules is defensive in nature.

### SPREAD OF ISLAM AND HISTORICAL EXAMPLES

Islam became the second-largest religion in a short period of time. Was it the policy of convert or die or true proselytization? This author does not intend to present a rosy picture of Islamic dominance over the conquered people. There were many Islamic rulers who set aside the golden rules of their religion for their personal benefit. Even to this day, most tin-pot dictators belong to the Islamic world. With the aid of world powers, the pseudo-

defenders of human rights, these evil dictators commit all kinds of unimaginable horrors against those who oppose them. To benefit themselves, they will use cruel and immoral means, trampling on the basic human rights of good people under their rule. With this upfront disclosure, let us ask whether Islam spread peacefully or militarily. The overwhelming evidence is that Islam spread through true proselytization. Islamic successes include:

### PERSIA AND THE BYZANTINE EMPIRES

The authors of *THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF ISLAM* mentioned the conversion of the local population in the following words: “Nevertheless, despite the government's indifference to Islam's propagation, large numbers of non-Muslims embraced the faith of their conquerors. A truly surprising phenomenon was the light-hearted abandonment of old beliefs in territories under Muslim rule. In certain circles, the idea that Islam was a syncretist faith, which, thanks to its simplicity and tolerance, excluded all disputes—unlike their own religions in which too many schisms had developed, was invariably followed by persecution and strife.”

When Muslims first surged into Persia and Syria, they did not proselytize. Indeed, for a century after Prophet Muhammad's death, conversion was not encouraged, and in about 700, it was forbidden by law. Muslims believed Islam was for the Arabs as Judaism was for the sons of Jacob. When the Abbasid caliphs encouraged conversion, many Semitic and Aryan peoples in their empire were eager to accept Islam. The conquered people were exposed to Muslims, and voluntary conversion was due to Islam's simple and pristine monotheism. This contrasts with the complex Trinity of Christians and the dualism of Zoroastrianism practiced by Iranians.

**Coptic Christians:** Muslims ruled Arabia for more than a thousand years, and today, millions of Arabs are Coptic Christians.

**Hindus:** Muslims ruled India for a thousand years. Today, more than 80% of India's population is Hindu. As a result of forced conversions, there should not be any Hindus left today, and all their temples would be converted into mosques. Just like the Muslim population in Spain is extinct because of forced conversion to Christianity. However, there is no denying that many Muslim rulers exploited their Hindu subjects. They looted their wealth by robbing temples.

It is impossible to find objective data regarding the Muslim rule of India. Data from locally biased and politically motivated sources should be viewed cautiously or dismissed outright. One exception is American historian Audrey Truschke. In her new book, *Culture of Encounters: Sanskrit at the Mughal Court* (Columbia University Press), Truschke says that the heyday of Muslim rule in India from the 16th to 18th centuries was, in fact, one of "tremendous cross-cultural respect and fertilization," not religious or cultural conflict. It is up to Indian sources to produce objective data through independent research to prove the misconduct of Muslim rulers.

**Indonesia** has the largest Muslim population today, yet a foreign Muslim army never ruled Indonesia.

**Spain:** Muslims ruled Spain for 800 years. In Islamic Spain, known as Al-Andalus, from the eighth century through the 10th century, Muslims, Jews, and Christians lived together in a sophisticated civilization notable for advances in medicine, astronomy, mathematics, agriculture, and architecture. Later, the Christian Crusaders conquered Spain, wiped out the Muslims, and expelled

the Jews in the 15th century. Today, there are hardly any significant Muslim communities in Spain, and all mosques have been converted into churches or museums.

## ISLAMOPHOBIC PROPAGANDA

One of the greatest lies ever perpetrated is the charge that Islam was spread by the sword and upheld by the sword. This falsehood has been repeated so many times over the past millennium that it is now considered fact. According to Joseph Goebbels, a notorious Nazi propagandist, “If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually believe it.” The myth “convert or die” is still widely propagated in the biased Western press.

## ABSENCE OF AUTHORITATIVE REFERENCES AND PROOF

There is no documented event by any credible authority during Muhammad's life or during the first four rightly guided Caliphs where forced conversion to Islam took place.

There are no recorded incidents in historical literature proving that Muslim armies forced conquered people to accept Islam. Even under the most oppressive caliphs, Christians and Jews held positions of influence and retained religious freedom. Muslims ruled India, Spain, and the Near East for centuries, while Christians, Jews, and Hindus lived quietly and freely.

## PROSELYTIZATION OF ISLAM BY PEACEFUL MEANS

Islam spread far more thoroughly by proselytizing, and a growing number of Western historians, including H. G. Wells and Arnold Toynbee, support this view. Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), one of

the great literary geniuses and recipient of the Nobel Prize for his essay *THE HERO AS PROPHET*, states, “Much has been said of Muhammad’s propagating his religion by the sword. It is no doubt far nobler what we have to boast of the Christian religion that it propagated itself peaceably in the way of preaching and conviction. We do not find, of the Christian religion either, that it always disdained the sword when once it had got one. Charlemagne’s conversion of the Saxons was not by preaching.”

There is not a single verse in the Quran or the Prophet’s authentic saying that advocates “convert or die.” The Quran clearly states: There shall be no coercion in matters of faith. (2:256) This verse is considered the bedrock of religious freedom in Islam. It is a grave sin to force religion on others.

## CONCLUSION

To quote from John Renard’s book *101 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON ISLAM*: “Islamic criteria governing the call for jihad against an outward enemy are as stringent as Christianity’s terms for waging a “just war.” According to Muslim tradition, for example, no action can be justified as authentic jihad if any of the following conditions are obtained: killing noncombatants, prisoners of war, or diplomatic personnel; use of poisonous weapons or inhumane means to kill; atrocities in conquered lands, mutilation of persons and animals, and wanton despoliation of natural resources, and the sexual abuse of captive women. All of that, however, has not prevented horrors from being perpetrated in the very name of Islam to the profound sorrow of many millions of Muslims. Nothing can excuse those who engage in such atrocities, whatever their expressed motivation, whatever their avowed religious affiliation.”

In today's world, where weapon systems are extremely lethal, starting a war can endanger the entire human race. The Muslim and Christian concept of just war only in self-defense may be critical for human survival.

**PART 3**  
**THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF WAR**

## CHAPTER 31

### MASSCRES BY THE JEWS

Even today, the stories of massacres committed by Jews in their history are relevant. During the Gaza war of genocide (2023-24), the prime minister of Israel urged his army to follow the example of Amalekites to massacre and ethically cleanse Gaza of Palestinians. This policy of genocide had most of the Israeli public support.

In his book, *A DEADLY MISUNDERSTANDING*, Mark Siljander writes about the Quran: “But what about violence? This was the book of Islam, right, the ‘religion of hate’? Where were all the verses telling me to rise up and slay the infidels? They were there, all right, and they are quoted repeatedly these days, both by Muslim militants for purposes of exploitation and by their critics for purposes of denunciation. But I was wholly unprepared for how few and far between these verses are. In fact, when I listed all the verses embodying or advocating violence in the Old Testament and New Testament (at least, out of context), then tallied and compared these to a similar list drawn from the Quran, the Bible came out as three to five times more violent.”

#### MASSACRES OF BIBLICAL PROPORTIONS BY THE ISRAELITES

According to Mark Siljander, the author of the book *A DEADLY MISUNDERSTANDING*, there are some six hundred passages of explicit violence in the Old Testament attributed directly to God. There are 160 killing sprees in the Bible. Approximately three

million deaths are specifically enumerated in scripture as directly orchestrated by God or carried out with His assistance or approval.

The following are some examples and not a comprehensive description of the Old Testament, where massacres and ruthless killings of innocent people were sanctioned but described with great pride.

## MASSACRE OF THE MIDIANITES

In Numbers 31, the battle between the Israelites and the Midianites is recorded as follows:

And they warred against the Midianites, as the Lord commanded Moses; and they slew all the males. And the children of Israel captured all the women of Midian and their little ones. They took the spoils of all their cattle, flocks, and goods. And they burned all their cities and castles. They took all the spoil and all the prey, both of men and of beasts. And they brought the captives, and the prey, and the spoil, unto Moses, and Eleazar the priest.

And Moses was infuriated with the officers of the host. And Moses said unto them, 'Have ye saved all the women alive?' Now, therefore, kill every male among the little ones and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. But keep alive for yourself all the women and children who have never known a man by lying with them. And thirty and two thousand persons in all, of women that had not known a man by lying with him."

It was estimated that 200,000 Midianites were massacred. Moses' reaction is the most shocking aspect of the above story. The chilling words, "kill every male among the little ones (boys), and kill every woman that hath known man."

## ANNIHILATION OF THE AMORITES

Sihon, king of Hesbon, refused to let us pass. For the Lord thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into thy hand, as it appears this day. And the Lord said unto me, I have begun to give Sihon and his land before thee: begin to possess, that thou mayest inherit his land. At Jahaz, Sihon, along with his people, fought against us. And the Lord our God delivered him before us; and we smote him, and his sons, and all his people. And we took all his cities at that time and utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones, of every city. We left none to remain: Only the cattle we took for prey and the spoil of the cities.” (Deuteronomy chapter 2, verses 24-35). About 5000 perished at the Israelites' hands.

## EXTINCTION OF PEOPLE OF BASHAN

“Then we turned and marched up the way to Bashan. Og, the king of Bashan came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei. And the Lord said unto me, Fear him not: for I will deliver him, and all his people, and his land, into thy hand; and thou shalt do unto him as thou didst unto Sihon king of the Amorites, living at Heshbon. So the Lord our God delivered into our hands also Og, the king of Bashan, and all his people. We smote him until none remained. And we took all his cities at that time.” (Deuteronomy 3 verses 1-4) Approximately 60,000 people were killed.

## DESTRUCTION OF THE SEVEN NATIONS

“When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites,

and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee, thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant nor show mercy unto them.” (Deuteronomy 7 verses 1-2)

## ETHNIC CLEANSING OF CANAANITES

“And the Lord spoke unto Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, when ye are passed over Jordan into the land of Canaan; then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places. And ye shall dispossess inhabitants of their land, and dwell therein; for I have given you the land to possess it. And ye shall divide the land by lot for inheritance among your families. The more ye shall give, the more inheritance, and the fewer ye shall give, the less inheritance. Every man’s inheritance shall be in the place where his lot falleth; according to the tribes of your fathers, ye shall inherit. But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell. Moreover, it shall come to pass that I shall do unto you as I thought to do unto them.” (Numbers 33, verses 50-56)

## THE FALL OF JERICHO

With Moses' passing, Joshua assumed leadership of the Israelites. Under him, Canaan was conquered, including Jericho. During their murderous rampage, the Israelites massacred all the inhabitants and killed all the animals.

“Jericho was shut up by the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in. And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valor. All ye men in battle go around city once. Thus, shalt thou do six days. So, the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets. It came to pass when the people heard the trumpet, and the people shouted with such a loud shout, that the wall fell flat. The people marched into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city. And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both men and women, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword. And they burned the city with fire, and all that was therein: only the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord.” (Joshua 6, verses 1-3, 20-21 and 24)

#### AI AMBUSHED AND ANNIHILATED

Joshua chose thirty thousand men and sent them forth by night. “Lie in ambush against the city, behind it,” he commanded. Early in the morning, Joshua mustered the people, and they encamped on the north side of the city, with a ravine between them and Ai. When the king of Ai saw this, he and his men hastened to meet Israel in battle. Joshua and his men pretended to be beaten and fled, so all in the city were called together to pursue them. There was no man left in Ai, and they left the city open. Then, the Lord said to Joshua, “Stretch out your javelin toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand.” Joshua stretched out his javelin, and the men in ambush rose quickly, taking the city and setting it on fire. The men of Ai looked back and saw the city smoke rising to heaven, but they had no power to flee this way or that, for when Joshua and his men saw the smoke, they turned back against the men of Ai, and the others came forth

from the city against them. So they were in the midst of Israel, some on this side and some on that side, and Israel smote them until none survived or escaped. Those who fell that day, both men and women, were twelve thousand, all the people of Ai. Israel took cattle and spoil as their booty, according to the Lord's word. Joshua burned Ai and made it a heap of ruins. He hanged the king of Ai on a tree until evening and raised over it a great heap of stones, which stand there to this day.” (Joshua 8, verses 1-29). About 12000 were massacred.

### MASSACRE OF THE AMALEKITES

The unique aspect of the story described below is that God was angered by the Israelites' "generosity" towards the Amalekites and King Agag. “Samuel also said unto Saul, the Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now, therefore, hearken thou unto the voice of the Lord's words. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not. Slay both men and women, infants and suckling, ox and sheep, camels, and ass. But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, and the oxen, and the fatlings, and the lambs. Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel, saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments.” (1 Samuel 15 verses 1-3 and 7-11)

### ETHNIC CLEANSING OF PALESTINIANS BY ISRAELI JEWS

Between 1947 and 1949, at least 750,000 Palestinians from a 1.9 million population were refugees beyond state borders. Jews took more than 78 percent of historic Palestine land. They ethnically cleansed and destroyed about 530 villages and cities and killed

about 15,000 Palestinians in mass atrocities. This included more than 70 massacres. Israel's secret use of biological weapons and poison against Palestinians during the 1948 war was revealed by historians Benny Morris and Benjamin Kedar. There were dozens of Palestinian water wells poisoned, including those in Acre and Ilabun in the Galilee. The goal wasn't mass poisoning, but rather an act of deterrence that prevented Palestinians from returning to areas where the water was poisonous.

It is inconceivable that a merciful, loving God could have ordered the genocide of innocent women, children, and even animals, as described in the Old Testament. The sanctioning of genocide and ethnic cleansing are examples of misrepresentation of the loving and merciful God. There is not a single verse in the Quran where God ordered Moses to kill innocent noncombatants and ethnically cleanse the holy land. Palestinians of today should count their lucky stars because they were not annihilated as the nations described above. Thanks to modern technology of cameras and quick communication, they avoided extinction. The genocidal tendencies still exist among the mainstream Jews of Israel.

## CHAPTER 32

### RUTHLESS KILLINGS BY BIBLE FOLLOWERS

*We ordain unto the children of Israel that if anyone slays a human being - unless it be [in punishment] for murder or for spreading corruption on earth - it shall be as though he had slain all mankind. If anyone saves a life, it shall be as though he saved all mankind. And, indeed, there came unto them Our apostles with all evidence of the truth. Yet, behold, notwithstanding all this, many of them commit all manner of excesses on earth. It is but a just recompense for those who make war on God and His apostles and endeavor to spread corruption on earth. They are being slain in great numbers, or crucified in vast numbers, or have, as a result of their perverseness, their hands and feet cut off in great numbers. In addition, they are being [entirely] banished from [the face of] the earth. Such is their ignominy in this world. But in the life to come [even more] awesome suffering awaits them - except for such [of them] as repent before you [O believers] become more powerful than they. For you must know that God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace. (5:32-34)*

The term “**apostles**” is used here in its generic sense and applies to all the prophets on whose teachings the beliefs of the Jews and the Christians are based. The “**excesses**” refer to crimes of aggression and ruthless killing. “**Making war on God** and His apostles” is meant as a war of aggression and hostile opposition to, and willful disregard of the ethical precepts ordained by God and explained by all the apostles. In the classical Arabic idiom, “**cutting off one’s hands and feet**” is often synonymous with destroying one’s power,

and it is in this sense that the expression has been used here. Alternatively, it might denote being mutilated, both physically and metaphorically. This is similar to the use of the expression “being crucified” in the sense of being tortured.

A convincing interpretation suggests itself as we consider the above verse—as it ought to be read—in the present tense. When read in this way, the verse reveals itself immediately as a statement of fact—a declaration of the inescapability of retribution, which those who make “**war on God**” bring upon themselves. Their hostility to ethical imperatives causes them to lose sight of moral values. Their consequent mutual discord and perverseness lead to unending strife among themselves for worldly gain and power. They kill one another in great numbers and torture and mutilate one another in great numbers. This results in whole communities being wiped out or, as the Quran puts it, “**banished** from the face of the earth.” It is this interpretation alone that takes full account of all the expressions occurring in this verse. Aside from suffering in this life, they will face severe **punishment** in the hereafter. Exempted shall be those who truly repent, especially before belief in God and ethical principles decreed by Him become prevalent. In that event, repentance on the part of “those who make **war on God** and His apostles” would be no more than an act of conforming to the dominant trend and, therefore, be of no moral value.

### IRAQ WAR

Let us take an example from the Iraq war and review it considering the above verses. In 2003, the born-again Christian president of the United States and Christian fundamentalist prime minister of England launched a war of aggression based on bogus intelligence. (A war of aggression is a war against God.) The American troops

suffered four thousand fatalities. Over 30,000 U.S. troops were wounded, with 20% suffering serious brain or spinal injuries. In addition, over 30% of U.S. troops developed serious mental health problems. Army veterans committed suicide more than combat fatalities. More than one thousand American troops suffered amputations of their limbs (i.e., had their **hands and feet** cut off in large numbers).

### RUTHLESS KILLINGS BY THE MUSLIMS

*“ALL MANNER OF EXCESSES”* applies to anyone who wages a war of aggression, including Muslims. Let's continue with the Iraq War of 2003. Iraqi Muslims, instead of uniting against aggressors, split along sectarian lines, and Shiahs and Sunnis slaughtered each other in large numbers. Iraqis suffered casualties exceeding one million, and those displaced inside and outside Iraq exceeded more than four million. This is only one example of sectarian violence, and Islamic history is replete with massacres committed by Muslims against Muslims.

Concerning peace, Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9). Despite Jesus’ peaceful ministry, Christians have killed more human beings in God's name than any other religious group in mankind's history. Before he sent his soldiers on the First Crusade to commit slaughter of Muslims and Jews, Pope Urban II implied that if they died in Christ's name, they would ascend to heaven. They would dwell in the company of the Lord.

Christians instituted the Inquisition, invented the rack and the stake as instruments of religion, and plunged Europe into devastating religious wars. Christianity was the religion of those who instituted

the genocide of Native Americans, the Salem witch trials, the American slave owners, and the Ku Klux Klan. In addition, Christians fought in two world wars and killed millions of their own people.

The supreme genius of the Western enlightenment—Voltaire—wrote vehement attacks on the Church’s brutal record. He wrote, “Every sensible man, every honorable man, must hold the Christian sect in horror.” He told Frederick the Great that Christianity “is the most ridiculous, the most absurd and bloody religion that has ever infected the world.” Tom Paine (1737-1809), one of the Founding Fathers of the American Revolution, said about the Bible in *THE AGE OF REASON*, “Whenever we read the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and tortuous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness with which more than half the Bible is filled, it would be more consistent that we call it the work of a demon than the work of God. It is a history of wickedness that has corrupted and brutalized mankind.”

## GENOCIDE IN THE NAME OF COMMUNISM AND ATHEISM

Atheism is based on no God, Heaven, or Hell. Communism is a political ideology based on atheism. In the 20th century, communists killed hundreds of millions of people. Just three examples illustrate the maniacal and genocidal nature of atheist philosophy. **Stalin**, Russia’s General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union between 1922 and 1952, killed about 20 million people during his rule. This is almost certainly too low an estimation and may require an increase of 50 percent or so. This is considering the Stalin regime's debit balance for twenty-three years.

**Mao Zedong** of China caused 40-70 million deaths through starvation, forced labor, and executions. In the Killing Fields of **Cambodia**, the communist Khmer Rouge caused the **deaths** of between 2 and 2.5 million human beings, with a “most likely” **figure** of 2.2 million.

## WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT THIS BOOK SERIES?

### TRADITIONAL ARRANGEMENT

The Quran is a unique book, and unlike most other books, it does not have a beginning, middle, or end. Topics or subject matter are not divided into categories. The traditional Quran is arranged according to the inner requirements of its message and not in the chronological order in which the individual passages were revealed.

The seemingly abrupt transition from subject to subject is also in accordance with the Quranic principle of deliberately interweaving moral exhortation with practical legislation. This is in accordance with the teaching that man's life—spiritual, physical, individual, and social—is one integral whole. Therefore, it requires simultaneous consideration of all its aspects if the concept of a good life is to be realized. The Quran, in its traditional form, was meant for common people to read daily in small installments and ponder. The role of **Tafsir**, or exegesis of the Quran, is verse-by-verse and sometimes word-by-word explanation or interpretation of the text.

The Quran, in its original format, is difficult to understand. Discussion of varying subjects within the same chapter, which seems disconnected and may cause confusion and misunderstanding. This is particularly relevant to those unfamiliar with the Quran's uniqueness. Due to the randomness of the subject matter, the Quran is vulnerable to misinterpretation. The Quran's core message is very consistent despite the randomness of the topics covered.

## THE QURAN IN AN EASY-TO-UNDERSTAND FORMAT

The author of this seven-volume series has rearranged **THE MESSAGE OF THE QUR'AN** by Muhammad Asad according to specific topics and subject matter. This approach to organizing Quranic verses according to different topics is based on the central idea that conclusions should not be drawn from isolated verses. This is a first-ever attempt to present the Quran in an easy-to-understand format—a revolutionary paradigm in understanding the Quran. For example, divorce is discussed in the Quran in Chapters 2, 33, 58, 60, and 65. Compiling all divorce verses in one place gives the reader a quick reference and comprehensive understanding. For scholars, lawyers, and anyone who needs to study a particular issue, it would be handy to have it arranged by subject matter.

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