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In the Name of Allah Most Gracious Most Merciful

PROPHET MUHAMMAD^P MY ROLE MODEL



Compiled by:

**Dr. Yusuf Osman
Fuad Hendricks
Mymoena Hendricks**



IDM Publications and Research Unit
Division of the Islamic Dawah Movement
of Southern Africa

P.O. BOX 48009, Qualbert, 4078, Durban, South Africa
Tel: (+27-31) 304 6883 Fax: (+27-31) 305 1292
Email: idsm@ion.co.za www.idmdawah.co.za

 [islamicdawah](https://www.facebook.com/islamicdawah)

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Physical Address: 495 Dr. Pixley KaSeme Street
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Telephone: (++27-31) 304 6883
Facsimile: (++27-31) 305 1292
Email: idm@ion.co.za
Website: www.idmdawah.co.za

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Fuad Hendricks
Mymoena Hendricks

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PUBLISHERS NOTE

Mankind first stepped onto this earth in light, not darkness, because the first person on earth was also the first Prophet of Allah (God).

Mankind will never be lost in this world as long as the way of life of the Prophets of Allah continue to light our path.

These Prophets – Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad (peace be upon them all) and many others – based their lives on principles and values which have stood the test of time.

Lifestyles and role models will come and go like changing seasons, but the way of life of the Prophets remain as fashionable as tomorrow in a changing world.

We are living in a throw-away society. Everything has become disposable, even values. The crisis of our times is that our society is being consumed by the craze; “we know the price of everything but the value of nothing”.

Our society will remain in crisis as long as we remain hesitant to get back on Allah’s road.

This book deals with the dynamic personality of Prophet Muhammad^{P*}, the last Messenger sent by Allah to show us the way.

* *Muslims are expected to invoke Allah’s blessing on Prophet Muhammad whenever his name is mentioned. In English this translates to “Peace be upon Him”. This is represented in this book by the small letter P whenever the Prophet’s name is mentioned.*

A great historian once said: “If a man like Muhammad^P were to assume the leadership of the modern world, he would make it a better and more secure place to live in.”

Prophet Muhammad^P did not come to merely define the world, but to change it.

How we live has an impact, not only on ourselves but also on our families, and history at large. It is said that those who know history will be able to make better history. Thus, taking Prophet Muhammad^P as our role model will enable us to make better history, both in our personal and communal lives.

Though *Prophet Muhammad^P, My Role Model* has been compiled for primary school student, others, like high school students, as well as adults, will find the literary style quite gripping and thought-provoking. Understandably, the life of Prophet Muhammad^P is far too comprehensive to be entirely covered in this volume. Therefore, this book should be seen merely as an introduction to his life, which will hopefully motivate the reader to do further reading on this towering and dynamic personality in history.

The importance of this topic, especially for presentation to youths and teenagers, necessitated the compilers of this book to present the life of our Noble Prophet^P in a unique and attractive way. Much was therefore extracted and borrowed from more experienced, senior and seasoned writers of the Seerah, who have done greater justice to the topic, and it has been presented it in a most attractive way for growing minds.

The compilers and publishers of this book are grateful to the many previous biographers of this noble personality^P from whom they extracted relevant and appropriate passages; and they pray to Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) to forgive them for whatever they may have unwittingly overlooked.

Dr Ebrahim Dada

National Executive Director

Islamic Dawah Movement

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FOREWORD

Islam and Muslims are under intense scrutiny in contemporary times. Events in the Muslim World – including the Arab Spring and conflicts in Muslim countries in the Middle East, Africa and Asia – have resulted, on the one hand, in a keen interest in Islam and, on the other, in the negative portrayal of Islam in the media and on social networks. Islam is accused of being intolerant, exclusive and sexist and Muslims are said to be fanatical, violent and oppressive. In addition, the Prophet of Islam^P has come to be vilified, ridiculed and insulted. Muslims are, therefore, challenged to counter this negative image of Islam, Muslims and the Prophet^P.

The life of the Prophet of Islam^P is inextricably linked with the Qur'an. The Prophet^P is venerated by all Muslims who consider him to be an exemplar and model of truthfulness, sincerity, virtue, compassion and humility. He provides guidance in all aspects of life, hence the title of the book. Any allegation against the Prophet^P amounts to undermining the faith of Muslims. The scurrilous attacks on the personality of the Prophet^P, which have increased in frequency and intensity, have to be responded to with wisdom, reason and empathy. This explains the recent appearance of numerous writings on the Prophet of Islam^P.

Education and information are keys to altering the negative perceptions that have gained popularity, specifically in Western media. It is in the above context that this compilation, though not exhaustive, has to be understood. The citations selected by the compilers are comprehensive; they cover every aspect of the Prophet's

personality. The universality of his message is the main strength of the book. While Muslims will benefit from this work, it should be recommended reading for anyone interested in understanding the true message of Islam and appreciating the noble character of the Prophet of Islam^P.

Prof. Suleman Dangor

Professor of Islamic Studies

School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics

University of KwaZulu-Natal

South Africa

Contents

<i>Publisher's Note</i>	v
<i>Foreword</i>	ix
It's so hard to say goodbye	1
His Mother's Love	7
Muhammad's Sad Loss	12
In His Uncle's Care	17
His Teen Years	21
A Perfect Pair	27
What a Smart Move	30
The Perfect Husband	34
Friend of the Oppressed	38
In Search of Allah	41
A New Era for Mankind	46
Khadija ^R Declares Her Faith	51
The First Muslims	56
Challenges Facing New Faith	60
Victory or Martyrdom	69
Islam in the News	76
Africa, Home to the Muslims	87
The Qur'an Changes Umar ^R	92
Christians Welcome Islam	98
The Will to Overcome	103
His Loved Ones Pass Away	108
He Responded with Love	110
His Journey to Meet God	117
The Good News	123
Towards A New Society	128
<i>Bibliography</i>	144



In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful



And thou (Muhammad) standest on an exalted standard
of character. (Qur'an 68:4)



We have sent thee (Muhammad) as a grace to all the
worlds. (Qur'an 21:107)



O Prophet! Truly we have sent thee as a witness, a
bearer of glad tidings, and a warner. (Qur'an 33:45)



It is part of the mercy of Allah (God) that thou
(Muhammad) does deal gently with them. Were thou
severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away
from thee. (Qur'an 3:159)





CHAPTER ONE

It's so hard to say goodbye

Muhammad^P and Halima were heading towards Makka. Halima was the lady who took care of Muhammad^P in her tribe Banu Sa'ad. Muhammad^P, being only five years old, was very excited because he was going to be with his mother, Amina, and his grandfather, Abdul Muttalib. At the same time, Muhammad^P was feeling somewhat sad, because he was going to leave Halima and the people with whom he had lived for the past five years.



When they were on the horse's back, Muhammad's mind kept going back to the many wonderful memories he had of Halima and her tribe. He thought of the many children he had played with, and the good friendships he had formed; he thought of Halima, who had taken care of him so nicely and so gently. He thought of the hills and the valleys, of the sheep as they grazed, and of the gentle breeze of the spring.

Halima was so tender and lovely. She showered him with affection and love. She fed him when he ran to her with an empty stomach, and she took care of him when he cut himself, or when he tripped and hurt his toes.

Muhammad^P remembered the tents he used to sleep in; the sheep and the cattle so noisy early in the morning; and the people tending to those animals.

He also remembered the heat of the days during summertime and how the sweat had dripped down his cheeks on those days; and he remembered too the chilly days during winter and how, when it rained, the tents oozed some rain on the inside.

“Oh, how wonderful those year were,” Muhammad^P thought.

While he and Halima were on the horse's back, Muhammad^P heard a dog barking in the distance. The dog was with a long caravan of camels, along with some horses. They were loaded with goods, and they were heading up north. There were many people in that caravan and everything was proceeding so slowly. It was an interesting thing to see.

Halima was on the horse's back, with one hand on the rein, and the other hugging Muhammad^P firmly but tenderly.

She was feeling sad because Muhammad^P was going to be with his mother, and her heart was heavy with the thought of separation. You see, she had taken good care of Muhammad^P for the past five years and she loved him so very much, and now they were going to be separated. Her mind was so loaded with conflicting thoughts that she hardly noticed the caravan pass by.

She went back in her memory to a special day, five years ago, when she and a group of women were heading towards Makka. Their purpose was to pick up babies born to important families, to take care of them and nurse them for about two years. That was the custom in Arabia in those days, and the reason for that was to give the baby a strong healthy beginning. The desert air, the sunshine and being away from town were good things for a child's health.

That day, five years ago, Halima had gone from one house to another, trying to find a baby to take care of. She didn't succeed until at last she found baby Muhammad^P. He was good looking, lovely, with a sweet smile; the smile made him even more lovable.

Sadly enough, his father had died before baby Muhammad^P was born, so Halima was worried that she might not be paid well enough for her services.

Abdul Muttalib, who was Muhammad's grandfather, assured Halima a few times that he would pay her well and that he had a great deal of love for that particular boy.

He told her he was willing to pay very well, and that certainly she wouldn't be disappointed.

So Halima happily accepted the offer and was very glad she'd accepted. Her experience with baby Muhammad^P proved to be very happy and it became memorable.

When it came to taking care of Muhammad^P, Halima's memory was quite clear and vivid. She remembered very well how her horse seemed to be trotting with pride as she went to join the group of women who were waiting for her, and how those women had looked at her with an eye of mockery, because Muhammad^P was an orphan.

Halima also thought that Muhammad's presence in the tribe of Banu Sa'ad proved to be such a blessing in itself. The skies rained more than usual, and the pastures became very rich; the milk from the goats was plentiful and the whole tribe seemed to have done very well.

There was plenty of everything, but the best of all was that the presence of the boy Muhammad^P, which had really counted.

Muhammad^P didn't seem to demand that much, and his disposition made him the apple of her eye. Halima was very sweet and tender to him, and she'd loved this new baby Muhammad^P very much.

As he grew up, the children around seemed to sense something special in Muhammad^P and they treated him with admiration, love and respect.

Halima noticed that Muhammad's command of Arabic was great indeed, something that gave her a great sense of pride.

She was proud of him too, because of the way he played with other children and because he was a very honest and straightforward boy. She saw that Muhammad^P did not fib or tell a lie. Never was he in any mischief and neither did he hurt anyone, nor even kill a crawling insect!

All those memories came to Halima while she and Muhammad^P were on the back of the horse. The horse was moving slowly but surely.

She thought of how unhappy she was going to be made by leaving Muhammad^P with his mother, and she felt the warmth of the tears rolling down her cheeks.

In the desert, such as that of Arabia, you can see clearly from far, far away. This is because the land is flat, consisting mainly of sand, and there are very few trees around. In a hot desert area when it doesn't rain much, trees cannot grow well.

While Muhammad^P and Halima were on the horse's back, and while both of them were deep in their dreams, Muhammad^P saw something unusual on the horizon. "What is that, Mama?" he asked.

Upon hearing him so suddenly, Halima just about jumped, her train of thought being suddenly interrupted.

She answered with a lump in her throat and a quiver in her voice, “That is Makka dear. That is where your mother and grandpa are waiting so anxiously for us.”

Slowly but surely they were approaching Makka, and as they were doing so, the buildings seemed to become taller and taller. Finally they entered Makka, and they went through the main street. The streets were narrow and winding, and the houses were built back to back. No gardens or trees could be found in front of those houses. There were some houses built on the mountain. Some children were playing here and there; at certain sections of the streets people were selling clothes or other interesting things.



CHAPTER TWO

His Mother's Love

At some distance Muhammad^P saw a lady waiting with a look of expectation. Standing by her was a kindly old gentleman, looking around as anxiously as she was. A few other people were about too, talking to one another while waiting patiently. The whole group hurried towards Halima and Muhammad^P as soon as they saw them coming. What an excitement for everybody. Muhammad's heart started to beat fast. He felt Halima's hand more firmly around him, as if to say, this is the end.

"Is that they?" Muhammad^P managed to say.

"Yes, sweetheart." Halima answered chokingly. "You are a lovely child and the best child I have ever taken care of, and you have the best family. Your mother and grandfather are wonderful and you come from the Hashim clan, which is part of the famous Quraish tribe. I'm so glad I could keep you with me for five years, rather than only two. I'm so grateful for that, and I'm going to miss you so very much".

The two sides were approaching each other. There was excitement in the air, a happy feeling. Abdul Muttalib received Muhammad^P gently, and then he helped Halima to dismount. Muhammad^P was soon hugged by his mother, whose eyes were full of tears of joy. His grandfather, Abdul Muttalib, waited anxiously and patiently for his turn, then he kissed the boy Muhammad^P very tenderly.

The whole group, Muhammad^P, Halima, Abdul Muttalib and Amina, Muhammad's real mother, all went to the house.

The horse was left outside while Muhammad^P and Halima washed the dust off. They were hungry and tired, so they had their dinner soon after arrival.

Halima kept telling Muhammad's mother Amina, and his grandfather Abdul Muttalib, about her past experiences with Muhammad^P. She kept telling them about the many, many things that had happened in the past and everyone listened attentively and enjoyed what they heard. She told them how nicely Muhammad^P had behaved and how lovable he was and how he played with other children without any trouble.

Muhammad^P soon learned that the kindly old man, Abdul Muttalib, was his grandfather. Both seemed to hit it off right away, and they became very much attracted to each other. He found out that his grandfather, since he was the chief of the Quraish tribe, was the keeper of the Ka'ba. He found out that the people respected Abdul Muttalib a great deal, and that the Ka'ba was a meeting place of some sort.

The Ka'ba is a huge cubic structure, covered with black cloth. The people of that time went there and worshipped in a funny way. Muhammad^P found out that the way the people worshipped was silly, since they went to talk to stones which looked quite ugly. The people knelt in front of the stones, which were their idols, and they kept asking those stones for health, wealth and happiness. They even

offered sacrifices, bringing food and what have you to those stones for the sake of offerings!

Muhammad^P became curious and giggled inside on seeing the people talking to those ugly-looking stones and doing what they did, yet the stones didn't reply and they could do nothing.

Soon, however, Muhammad^P got used to living in Makka. Though he missed the desert – and especially Halima and her children – he found out that Makka was fascinating too.

In Makka they had what was called the Ukaz fair. People came from all around Arabia to gather at the Ukaz fair. Many of them brought goods and merchandise, which they would sell or buy, and there was always some degree of bargaining. Some people, called poets, would stand up and say their poems, and the listeners would admire them, and ooh and aah. Not only that: people would visit their idols too, and after so many days, everyone would go home. This happened regularly at a certain time of the year. It was a “fair” where people made friends too, and they got to know one another.

However, Muhammad^P found out that some people seemed to become angry and nasty very easily, and often some foul language was used. Some people would even threaten others over something so minor that had been said. He found out that some people bragged very much about their tribes, which made others resent them. There was so much friction going on. In other words, there were many unhappy things going on in Makka and at its fairs, although those fairs were quite fascinating.

Though grandpa Abdul Muttalib was quite old, he became quite attached to the young boy Muhammad^P. In return, Muhammad^P loved his grandfather a great deal and he felt encouraged to play with the old man and have a nice time. The two enjoyed the company of each other very much.

As head of Quraish and master of the whole of Makka, Abdul Muttalib used to sit on a cushion laid out in the shade of the Ka'ba.

His children would sit around that cushion, not on it, in deference to their father.

But, whenever Muhammad^P joined the group, Abdul Muttalib would bring him close to him and ask him to sit on the cushion; he would pat the boy's back and show his pronounced affection for him.

At home with mother Amina, Muhammad^P the boy was the centre of her affection and love. She took care of him very well, feeding him and letting him rest whenever he needed to.

He loved to hear her telling him stories at night. He would lie in bed, the room being dark, his mother sitting by him talking, yet everything around them was so quiet. He was especially interested to hear about his father, Abdullah.

Muhammad^P learned that his father had been a handsome young man, well liked by the people around and very nice and kind. Muhammad^P also learned that his father had been on a trip to Yathrib (later called Madina) when he became very sick. The sickness became so bad that he could hardly move. He was in bed for many days, and he became

weaker and weaker until, finally, Abdullah could not make it, and he passed away.

“When did he die Mother?” Muhammad^P asked sadly.

“Before you were even born, dear,” Amina answered chokingly, with tears in her eyes. “Maybe we’d better go and visit the grave,” she added. “Perhaps we can see my relatives in Yathrib too.”

“That’s a good idea. I will go with you, of course,” Muhammad^P answered excitedly.





CHAPTER THREE

Muhammad's Sad Loss

Muhammad's mother and another lady, Umm Ayman, were quite busy packing and preparing for the coming trip. The six-year-old Muhammad^P was also busy helping them. Early next morning, the group mounted camels and left Makka, heading towards Madina.

The road was curvy as it went along the high rugged mountains. The trip was slow and tiresome. The desert was beautiful, especially in the early morning and late evening. The desert sand was everywhere, and it blew with the wind, piercing the faces and hands of Muhammad^P and the others with him. But the nights were quiet and cool, and the skies clear.

After two weeks or so of travel through the desert, they arrived in Madina and they were made most welcome by their host, the family of Amina. Muhammad^P played with children of his own age, but soon he became the centre of admiration by everyone. He was quiet, nice and undemanding, and he didn't come to his mother crying for this or that. He never was troublesome, nor caused any mischief. Everyone loved him very much.

Muhammad^P liked Madina and the many relatives of his over there. He knew that they were nice to him and he appreciated that too.

Madina was also a town of many houses close to each other, and many narrow groves around. It was colder, much colder, in Madina than in Makka.

After a few enjoyable weeks in Madina, it was time to go back to Makka. While they were packing, Amina started to feel somewhat sick, but she thought it would be okay to travel.

After a few days of travel from Madina, Amina became much sicker, and she could hardly travel anymore. She became weak, pale and very sick looking.

Without a doctor's care, as they had none in those days, Amina's condition became critical and she could hardly move. Not long afterwards, Amina, the mother of Muhammad^P, died.

She left the six-year-old boy Muhammad^P grieving over the loss of his mother and father. Oh, how lonely he must have felt! Muhammad^P had just finished visiting the grave of his father, but now he was to leave his mother behind.

Amina was buried and she left a vacuum, a feeling that her presence was missing, a sad, sad feeling for Muhammad^P the boy and the other people around. Muhammad^P and the other lady continued their journey to Makka, but with heavy hearts and sad feelings.

Abdul Muttalib was told about what had happened, and he became very sad too. His affection for Muhammad^P by now had grown even deeper and his protection of him was even more valued by Muhammad^P himself. As time passed, Muhammad^P could see that his grandfather seemed to look older and older, and the grooves in his face were becoming deeper, and he would tire very easily.

About two years had passed, and Muhammad^P had grown to be an eight-year-old boy.

He was busy observing the way the people in Makka were living. He saw that some were very rich while others were terribly poor.

He noticed the fights, the bad language used, and the unfairness of some to others.

He noticed how so many, many people used to get drunk and act silly and stupid. He was aware of how some people stole, and how others bragged about their raids in the desert and how they killed innocent people. All that seemed to hurt Muhammad^P inside, though he was only eight years old. By the way, there were no schools in those days, no schools at all; so Muhammad^P, like most children around, did not learn how to read or write.

Abdul Muttalib had become very sick and weak. He was almost eighty years old. He was so sick and weak that he could hardly move in bed. Everyone around was upset and worried about him. He lay in his bed, surrounded by his many children, who were all grown up and who were trying to take care of him the best way they could.

He looked around until his eyes rested on the eight-year-old boy Muhammad^P, and then a special smile showed on his face. He wanted to hold him and play with him, but he could hardly move because he was so very sick. Then he said to his son Abdul Talib, “Take custody of my beloved boy, Muhammad^P.” Abu Talib agreed readily and he felt honoured with his great trust.

Abdul Muttalib became weaker and his condition became critical, then suddenly he became motionless, and stopped breathing. You see, he had just passed away.

Everyone grieved, but Muhammad^P was the only one who knew how terrible it felt to be left an orphan, how terrible it felt to lose both parents and to lose a loving grandfather!

He felt very, very sad. He was heartbroken at what he was seeing and he was at a loss. He felt something warm coming down his cheeks; it was the warmth of the drops of tears. The tears sympathized with his condition and with the condition of all the orphans and the destitute.



CHAPTER FOUR

In His Uncle's Care

Muhammad^P moved to live with his uncle Abu Talib, who also had many children. He was able to gather more experience about the people in Makka and especially about those yearly gatherings at Ukaz and other sites. He was becoming pained at what he saw and what he heard in the yearly Ukaz fairs, and never, ever did he want to join those people in what they said. He kept it to himself, as if registering in his mind one event after another.

Muhammad^P was very happy to help his uncle's family in serving drinking water to the many people who came to those yearly gatherings, since, after the death of his grandfather, that duty fell in the hands of his uncle Abu Talib, .

Muhammad^P was anxious to become a shepherd. The thought crossed his mind over and over again. How good it was, he felt, to be trusted to take care of the sheep and to be left alone to the beauty of nature, away from the distressing conditions of the Makkan people.

His mind could wonder as much as the horizon allowed, his thoughts could go as high as they pleased, and the desert breeze was so excitingly refreshing to his spirit.

Caring for the sheep was not difficult; it was somewhat easy. It taught Muhammad^P responsibility, and it afforded him more experience in giving tender loving care to God's creatures.

He fed them, he watered them, he protected them and he directed them quite well to their usual destination.

And while caring for the sheep, he could find time to think clearly since he was left to himself, away from the bad ways of living of the Makkan people.

Muhammad^P had noted that the people looked towards him in a different way. They seemed to respect him, or even envy him. He wondered whether that was because he was so straightforward, being a person who never lied, who did what he promised, who did not do any mischief, who was fair, friendly and simply very, very clean cut. He wished from the bottom of his heart that those people of Makka would become good and change from their bad ways. It was sad that those people lived the way they did.

When Muhammad^P was about twelve years old, he heard that a trade caravan was going to be heading towards Syria. His uncle, Abu Talib, was going to participate and be in it.

“Uncle,” the twelve-year-old Muhammad^P said, “I would like to be in your company on the caravan, that is, if you don’t mind.”

Abu Talib, the kindly gentleman, looked affectionately at Muhammad^P for a while, then answered, “All right, I’d love to have you.”

Muhammad^P was very pleased and thankful. He prepared for the trip with full energy, and soon the long caravan was on its way. Muhammad^P and Abu Talib were among the participants.

As the caravan went along its way, Muhammad^P could see how vast the desert was, how immense the skies were, how breathtaking the sunrise in the morning was and how absolutely beautiful the surrounding nature was.

Slowly, slowly the caravan marched, the camels being so heavily laden, and the scenery looked so lovely in Muhammad's eyes. The caravan had to stop at many special places, every so often, for rest and refreshment. Way up north, in a place called Busra, and after so many weeks of travel, the caravan came to rest. A Christian priest named Buhaira sent for all in the caravan to come to dinner with him at the monastery where he stayed. All went except Muhammad^P, who stayed behind for some reason or another.

Buhaira then asked for Muhammad^P to join them, which he did. He asked Muhammad^P several questions, which Muhammad^P answered briefly and to the point. Then Buhaira and Abu Talib started to talk together away from the others.

Buhaira emphasized that according to his readings, Muhammad^P the boy had some signs of the Prophet to come. He also impressed on Abu Talib to protect Muhammad^P very well and to take good care of him. Abu Talib on his part, felt even more protective of young Muhammad^P, now that he had heard what he had from a complete stranger, who was a Christian living in a far-away monastery!

In Syria, Muhammad^P noted the vast differences between the arid desert of Arabia and the rich, lush land of Syria. He noted the many differences between the customs and the habits of the two peoples,

and the differences between the ways of their living. Alas, however, soon it was time to return.

Abu Talib was in a hurry, constantly remembering what Buhaira had told him and constantly looking at his nephew with an eye of tenderness, protection and admiration.



CHAPTER FIVE

His Teen Years

At the tender age of fifteen, Muhammad^P noted that he had become a teenager, taller and stronger, healthy-looking and robust. An early beard had already started to grow on his cheeks, and he looked handsome and dignified.

صلى الله

استغفر

There was a lot of hustle and bustle in Makka, and a lot of talk about a war. A war had been raging off and on between the tribes of Quraish and the tribe of Hawazin. The war had been going on for four long years – just imagine! The real reason for that war sounded silly to Muhammad^P and he felt that it was for nothing but a completely absurd reason.

Muhammad^P did participate in that war, but he never lifted a sword, nor threw an arrow.

Muhammad^P was against the idea of such a senseless war. He was against senseless killing. So, in that war, he stood by the side of his uncle Abu Talib, lifting arrows from here and there and giving them to him.

Muhammad^P was most disgusted with the sights of the shedding of blood and all that needless killing. “Oh, how terrible,” he thought, “to waste all those lives, to orphan so many children, and to break up so many families.”

It pained him so much to see a good many men fall wounded, many suffering so severely while others lay killed.

Some women were crying so hard and wailing so loudly because their sons or husbands had been wounded or killed. “Senseless, senseless,” Muhammad^P would say to himself in disgust.

However, being as observant as he was, he gathered a great deal of information about the tactics of war in those days. He could

learn a lot from simply being there. It was a form of education for Muhammad^P, so to speak.

Because so many people were killed in this Fijar war, a number of people wanted to stop such nonsense in the future. As a result, a special gathering was arranged for that purpose. Muhammad^P and others came to the gathering which was held in the house of Gad'an. At this gathering a league was formed called Hilf-ul-Fudul. Muhammad^P, being the youngest and only fifteen years old, along with a group of older people, were to take an Oath. The oaths were taken to fulfil the following:

- TO HELP THE POOR AND NEEDY;
- TO PROTECT THE WEAK AND TAKE THEIR RIGHTS FROM THE TYRANTS;
- TO ASSIST THE OPPRESSED;
- AND TO TRY THEIR BEST TO ESTABLISH PEACE AND HARMONY AMONG THE PEOPLE.

Muhammad^P was of medium height, with a fair complexion, black, slightly curly hair, and a beard. He had a broad forehead, and wide eyes that were dark, with long eyelashes. His eyebrows were full, his nose was well proportioned, his cheeks were firm, and when he smiled, he showed very white teeth.

He allowed his beard to grow, but he trimmed his moustache. He was broad-shouldered and muscular.

When he walked, he walked firmly and his steps were steadfast. He dressed very simply, and his clothes were immaculately clean.

He was just as clean-cut in appearance as he was superb his conduct. Thus, he was known to be charming, attractive, well-loved, respected and very highly appreciated and trusted.

To others, Muhammad^P was far, far ahead as the model, the one who was very much in the lead, the perfection that is just about impossible to duplicate.

His reputation became well known as a man who was very fair, very honest, and who had excellent conduct. He always spoke the truth, he was always dependable, and he always fulfilled his promises. His honesty was beyond suspicion and to such an extent that he earned the name AS-SADIQ AL-AMEEN,” which means: HE WHO IS TRUTHFUL AND TRUSTWORTHY. This was an honour that had been given to nobody else before.

Muhammad^P acted and behaved as his very nature demanded and it was very difficult, if not impossible for him to be any other way. His very nature was that of a man of the highest integrity.

Khadija^{R*} was a highly respected lady. She was a widow for the second time.

* *Muslims are expected to invoke Allah's blessing on male and female Sahaaba (companions of the Prophet^P). The letter R represents the words "Radiah Allahu 'Anha". In English this translates to "May Allah be pleased with her".*

She was forty years old, and quite well-to-do. She needed an agent to take her caravan of merchandise to Syria.

Abu Talib, Muhammad's uncle, went to Khadija^R and, in a tactful way, suggested that Muhammad^P be the agent responsible for that caravan.

Muhammad^P by then was twenty-four years old or so, and he had won the admiration of everyone because of his absolute and strict honesty, among his other qualities. His dealings had always been profitable and his honesty had never been questioned.

Khadija^R agreed to Abu Talib's request right away, and Muhammad^P was to be her agent and he was to be in charge of the new caravan of hers.

Muhammad's good reputation had come to her ears many, many times before, and she was delighted to employ him this time.

Abu Talib was very pleased with the result, and told his nephew Muhammad^P about the agreement, and both felt quite happy.

The caravan consisted of a long line of camels, all laden with heavy merchandise, and all were heading towards Syria. Muhammad^P was the man in charge. He was accompanied by Maysara, the servant of Khadija^R.

The march was slow but steady, and it brought so many beautiful memories back to Muhammad^P.

Muhammad^P familiarized himself for the second time with the different places, the different stops, the hills and the valleys and the oases along the long route of travel, until they reached the rich land of Syria.

Memories came back, sweet memories of the many wonders of the nights and days of the desert and the lush green of Syria.

Muhammad^P and Maysara became close friends. Maysara (being only a servant) was surprised to see himself treated as an equal by Muhammad^P. The warm friendship between the two began on a firm footing and it seemed to grow stronger every day. Both liked each other and they became good friends.

In Syria, the honesty of Muhammad^P was the biggest surprise to everyone. As was a rule with him, Muhammad^P would tell everyone interested in buying about the good and the bad points of the material he wanted to sell, and he would ask for a fair price that would be satisfactory to both; just imagine!

No one had ever heard before of such a way of dealing, nor of such straightforward and honest information. To the delight of all, the merchandise was soon sold and at a good profit. Muhammad^P and his crew began to prepare to return home.



CHAPTER SIX

A Perfect Pair

Khadija^R had been thoroughly investigating Muhammad^P. It was confirmed to her that he was the noblest of men. He was never in a fight, was never heard to say one bad word, never told a lie, never broke a promise, never talked behind someone's back, and never hurt the feelings of anyone. She had heard also that he was always just in his dealings, fair to everyone around him, and was so straightforward and honest that he was nicknamed AS-SADIQ AL AMEEN!

Khadija^R wondered why such a great and noble man had not yet married. She blushed at the idea, and somehow her heart started to beat fast. She became embarrassed about herself and the thoughts that crossed her mind, and she said: "Oh no, not me. He is fifteen years younger than I am and it doesn't seem proper for us to marry."

While in Syria, Muhammad^P bought things that he thought Khadija^R would like to have, and other things which she had previously asked him to buy for her. The friendship between Muhammad^P and Maysara seemed to grow even stronger and stronger. They talked, they joked and they enjoyed each other's company and this was in spite of the fact that Maysara was no more than a servant and Muhammad^P was the captain of the caravan. Over there, such a relationship was unheard of before.

Upon arriving in Makka, Muhammad^P was the first to see Khadija^R.

It was noontime. Khadija^R rushed down from her terrace to meet Muhammad^P. He was soft-spoken and gentle, and he told her the details of the trip.

Khadija^R was listening attentively and she was quite pleased. They completed the deal and Muhammad^P said goodbye and left.

Khadija^R kept hearing from her servant, Maysara, about Muhammad^P and how wonderful he was, and what a noble man he was, how marvellous a companion he had been. He also kept telling her again and again about the many wonderful experiences they had shared on the long trip to Syria and back.

Khadija's admiration for Muhammad^P grew fast and affection for him became obvious to her. She told her closest friend, Nafisa, about her deep admiration and affection for Muhammad^P. Nafisa offered her services as a confidante, that is to say, she would go to Muhammad^P to see if marriage could be arranged between the two. Her offer was graciously accepted by Khadija^R. Now it remained to be seen if Muhammad^P would accept.

So, Nafisa visited Muhammad^P and after a while she asked him what kept him from marrying. Muhammad^P had a smile on his face, and then he said, "What have I to marry with?"

"But if wealth did not matter, and you were invited to marry a woman of beauty, nobility and wealth, what would you say?" Nafisa asked Muhammad^P again, having an inquisitive look on her face. Muhammad^P was puzzled; he wondered who that noble and beautiful woman could be.

He didn't suspect at all that Khadija^R would be interested, so he asked, "Who is she?"

Nafisa answered with a whisper, "Khadija^R".

Muhammad^P was taken by surprise and he thought it would be very good to marry Khadija^R, since she was well known in Makka for being noble, decent, and a wonderful woman. So he answered without hesitation, "I accept".

Muhammad^P had admired and respected the woman and he never hesitated to marry her, even though she was fifteen years older than he.

Khadija^R had been married twice before, and her previous husbands had died and left her with a good deal of wealth. After that, she was asked in marriage several times, not only by the noblest but also by the most reputed of the Quraish tribe, but she'd refused. Now her heart was captivated by the charming Muhammad^P and she wanted to marry him.



CHAPTER SEVEN

What a Smart Move

It rained hard and persistently for a long period, and the water poured consistently towards the Ka'ba. The Ka'ba is not in the hilly section of Makka and, when it rains hard, it is liable to pour towards it. The Ka'ba had already become old and needed rebuilding for sure. The heavy rains had made rebuilding it even more urgent.



So, the rebuilding was started by many clans of the Quraish tribe and it had progressed well enough until the black stone was to be put into place.

Since the black stone (which was put there originally by Prophet Ibrahim^{AS*}) was so revered, the leading families of Quraish tribe started to compete with one another as to who would have the honour of putting the black stone in its place. As a matter of fact, each clan of Quraish felt the honour of placing the black stone belonged to it and nobody else. This meant trouble.

The disagreement became deeper and louder and it led to a lot of argument, shouting and insisting. The mood became ugly and emotions were high. The members of each clan were thinking that a war was going to break out anytime.

None of the different clans of the Quraish tribe seemed to be willing to change its position, and they regarded it as a grave insult if they didn't have that special honour of putting the black stone back in its place.

One member stood up and said, "I have a suggestion. Let us wait and see who enters the Ka'ba first, then let him decide and be the judge, and all of us will accept his decision, whatever it would be." Everyone agreed since that sounded like a good suggestion.

The place became dead silent; everyone was squatting on the floor, listening anxiously for some footsteps. They heard some steady

* The words "Alahis Salaam" represented by the letters "AS" are mentioned after the names of prophets and angels. In English this means "May Peace be upon Him".

footsteps coming towards them. They were anxious to see who that man would be. Their hearts were beating violently and they were full of expectation. To the pleasant surprise of all, Muhammad^P was the man!

Everyone, of course, knew, loved and admired Muhammad^P, so with a loud voice everyone said, “Here comes Al Ameen,” and the voices echoed through the place over and over again. Muhammad^P was taken by surprise, since he heard them mentioning his descriptive nickname so suddenly and so loudly.

He was told about what was going on, and Muhammad^P listened carefully. This was followed by period of silence for a good many seconds, and everyone around thought that his own clan was going to be favoured and that Muhammad^P was going to choose it. Their hearts were beating hard, and they were getting anxious and impatient.

“Give me a robe!” said Muhammad^P. The people looked at each other in disbelief. “What does he want to do with a robe?” they thought. “How odd!”

He put the robe on the floor and he took the sacred black stone and put it in the centre of the robe.

He then said, “The chief of each family will take one corner of the robe and lift it together.”

With that, every person present could understand a marvellous example of justice in sharing the great honour.

What Muhammad^P wanted was fair and equal representation and he thought of it so brilliantly and did it so nicely. Each clan had its equal share; each had its equal and just distribution! It showed how Muhammad's maturity of mind had far exceeded those around him, and it also showed how great his capacity was to solve difficult problems such as this one. Would you have thought of such a solution in such a short time?

Coming back to our story, when the robe was lifted to a reasonable height, Muhammad^P picked up the black stone from its centre and put it in its rightful place, right where it belonged.

It was a smart and clever solution to the problem, to say the least. Each one was satisfied, none felt insulted, and each had his share of the privilege and honour of participating in the act. This brilliant solution prevented a possible war among the different clans of Quraish, thus saving a lot of lives and avoiding senseless killing.



A vibrant tropical scene featuring a multi-tiered waterfall cascading over dark, mossy rocks. The water is white and frothy as it falls. The surrounding vegetation is dense and lush, with various types of green ferns, palm-like plants, and bright red flowers on the left side. The overall atmosphere is serene and natural.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Perfect Husband

Muhammad^P and Khadija^R were well suited to each other. He, very mature, noble in character and straightforward, proved to be the perfect husband. He also found in his wife Khadija^R the best example of a woman. She was the Tahira, or the Pure, as he called her. It was a marriage of faith and purity. It is said that in all twenty-five years of their married life, their companionship was so perfect that not a single fight took place! How marvellous! He never shouted at her, never lost his temper with her, and never seemed to become disgusted with any irritating situation in the family.

He seemed to have no worries. He said little, but listened a lot. Never did he make too many demands on her, be it work or otherwise.

He showered her with true affection and love, and the lucky woman deserved every bit of it. There was an exchange of warm, kindly feelings of affection between the two, and this exchange made life sweeter than honey. Khadija^R had the chance to compare Muhammad^P with two previous husbands, and the difference was truly tremendous.

Nobility of character aside, Muhammad^P was completely dependable. He never drank any liquor, while almost everyone around him took to drinking a great deal.

He was strictly faithful to his wife, while many men around had evil relationships with women other than their wives. Muhammad's company at home was so sweet and so was Khadija's company in return.

Knowing that she was fifteen years older than he, Khadija^R appreciated that particular companionship even more. Many friends must have felt jealous and envious of Khadija^R, and rightly so.

Muhammad^P also helped with the chores at home. This was something unheard of those days. He even used to sweep the floor and mend his own sandals! He was very undemanding. Their marriage was wondrously blessed, and filled with great happiness.

They had six children – two boys, Qasim and Abdulla, and four girls, Zainab, Ruqaiyya, Umm Kulthum and Fatima.

The children brought a lot of happiness to the home of Muhammad^P and Khadija^R. They were good-looking children, quite obedient and listened to their parents tell them stories and teach them good manners. They were in gentle hands, and they were loved very much. Muhammad^P, as tender-hearted as he was, was at his tenderest point when it came to the children. He never spoiled them, but he knew instinctively their demands and he met those demands in the most gentle of ways. No wonder his children loved him so much, and they appreciated the affection given to them without taking advantage of it.

Alas, sometimes happiness does not last very long. In those days, doctors and medicines as we understand them now, were not available. So, when some of the children got sick, certain sicknesses were too much for them and that unfortunately led to their death. That was the case with both sons of Muhammad^P.

They died in childhood. It just about cut Muhammad^P and Khadija^R to pieces inside. Both were quite sad for some time afterwards. (Muhammad^P had another son, Ibrahim, from a later marriage, who also died during childhood). The four girls, however, grew up to become attractive young ladies and they got married and one of them had children. The girls grew up to be of the noblest character.

They had an upbringing that was the best anybody could have and they followed the way of life in that house, which certainly was the best ever.

During his married years, Muhammad^P, of course, continued to visit his uncle Abu Talib, his family and his relatives. Abu Talib was

not a wealthy man and he had difficulties in supporting his family financially.

Muhammad^P never forgot the many, many years he had lived in his uncle's house, and the privilege and honour of being protected, cared for and brought up in that house. He always wanted to help his uncle.

It came to Muhammad's mind that it would be good idea if he could ask his uncle, Abu Talib, for a favour. This favour was to ask Abu Talib to allow his son, Ali, to live with Muhammad's family. Ali was a cousin of Muhammad^P and was about five years of age.

Abu Talib agreed to the suggestion with pleasure, since he knew that Ali was going to be in good hands.

Muhammad^P was about thirty-three years old when the young boy, Ali, joined the new family. Ali filled the house with vigour and vitality, and he grew up to be of noble character. No wonder. He had the best teachers at hand, and the best example of a family in manners and conduct of living: that special family, the family of Muhammad^P.



CHAPTER NINE

Friend of the Oppressed

Khadija's house was on the hilly side of Makka, where the wealthy people lived. She was well off, so her house was fairly big, and it had a good many things for material comfort.

Muhammad^p, however, did not like to see himself living in such comfort, because he was quite aware that the majority of people around him were very poor and his heart felt for them. He used to love to visit the section of Makka where the poor people lived. Down the hill, the houses were very crowded and the people were in rags; so many had very little to eat, and so many lived in miserable conditions. It was there that the Prophet^p used to go and visit regularly, to comfort and to help the oppressed.

Muhammad^p gave sympathy, understanding and love to those people. He listened to the stories of so many families in difficulties, and his heart bled for the wretched way in which they lived, the problems they had, and the tough times they passed through.

He also kept visiting the sick, and it seemed that there were so many sick ones. They didn't have any hospitals in those days, so the sick stayed at home, with no medicine or with medicine of little value. Some people died while others recovered, but the unhappiness, poverty, disease and, on top of that, the ignorance, were everywhere. Most people lived in miserable conditions.

In contrast, in the hilly part of Makka where the wealthy lived, Muhammad^P saw how greedy those people could be.

They made their living off the poor, and often in a cruel manner. Those rich people didn't work hard; they were merchants and many used to lend money to the poor at a very high rate of interest. This high interest gradually eroded and hurt the finances of those poor families, who could hardly afford it.

Those wealthy people on the hills used to have big, noisy parties, where everyone used to get drunk. Shouting, bragging and fighting were not unusual, but they were especially noticeable at those parties and a good many evil things would happen then.

So it was easy for Muhammad^P to see how the wealthy were greedy, and how they took to drinking, evil-doing and corruption. It was a nasty atmosphere, very unfair, and very wrong: the very rich versus the poor, the very corrupt versus the wretched!

What a contrast he saw between the rich people uphill and the poor downhill.

He wondered as to what kind of justice that was! The whole society seemed to be sick, sick, sick, and it needed help desperately, no question about that.

Muhammad^P gathered tremendous experience this way, but he was pained a lot and felt ill at ease because of what he saw. His conscience would hurt him very much, and his heart would bleed for the conditions of the people around him.

He would tell his wife Khadija^R about what he saw but, alas, there seemed to be no solution. He could find some comfort in being at home and being away from the Makkans, but that was not a solution.

Going to the yearly gatherings at Ukaz Fair added nothing new either, neither was it a solution. People coming to Ukaz Fair from other parts of Arabia were just as vicious and bad as, if not worse than, the Makkans of that time. As a matter of fact, some were downright beastly!

As the years passed by, Muhammad^P started to go to a place called Hira, some distance from Makka. Contemplation was his aim.



CHAPTER TEN

In Search of Allah

Since his experiences with people, rich and poor, the stranger and the familiar, the old and the young, perturbed him, Muhammad^P started asking himself questions. He was anxious and determined to find an answer.

To have a clear mind, you should be away from distractions. For that purpose, a person has to be away from family and town, at least temporarily, be it regularly or occasionally. This was very necessary for Muhammad^P.

To contemplate and to think clearly and without interruption, Muhammad^P took it upon himself to go to Hira Cave. It was a small cave near the top of the mountain of Noor (light). The mountain is very rugged, quite high, and is one of the highest mountains surrounding Makka, if not the highest. To go to the top, it would take about one and half hours of climbing, at times climbing with difficulty.

As you go up, the pure air and the cool breeze, and the complete silence around, overpower you. Haze will be on the horizon alright, but when you sit in the small cave of Hira you will clearly see the Ka'ba and the surrounding area.

It is surprising to see how Muhammad^P had found this very unusual spot, a spot not only high and silent, but also facing the Ka'ba.

The cave is at the opposite side of the mountain of Noor from where you climb it. In other words, you have to climb the mountain to the top then come down the other side before seeing the cave.

Not only that, but the mountain of Noor is one of many, many mountains surrounding Makka, and finding such a spot would make you admire him who chose it very much.

The cave is not big. It can hold only two people, and it is more like a space between big boulders than a dark, musty area.

It was particularly during the month of Ramadan that Muhammad^P liked to leave the hustle and bustle of Makka and its people to go to Hira Cave. He wanted to be alone in that quiet, serene cave.

At first, he found comfort in simply being there, and his mind would go back to the thousands and thousands of problems that the Makkan people used to have or did have. He would review their conditions and way of living, their many, many problems, and he would become so sad and unhappy about what was going on. Things were quite discouraging.

One basic problem stood out, however, which seemed to affect him most. The problem seemed to him to be the most crucial and important point and the one that distressed him most. That point concerned what he saw at the Ka'ba, and he hated to see what was going on over there, day in and day out.

You see, his people did not worship Allah (God), but they made idols and worshipped them. There were as many as 360 idols, no less!

All stood around the Ka'ba, some made of stone, others carved out of wood and yet others made of other materials. Some idols looked like men, others looked like women, and yet others looked like animals. Some looked very ugly indeed. Each tribe preferred to worship one of those idols, which to them was their god; just imagine!

Those people would come to the idols and ask them for favours, and they would beg those stones repeatedly. They would offer them sacrifices, and they would stand in reverence, worshipping them, deeply believing that those ugly stones were their gods! How absurd!

Muhammad^P, at that time, felt that worshipping those idols was a waste of time and energy and that it was absurd and ridiculous to believe in them.

How could those people, or anyone at all, Muhammad^P thought, worship stones or wooden objects that they had made themselves? It was downright insulting to the intelligence and dignity of man, wasn't it? Nay, that way of worship was absolutely wrong, very wrong. Their way of worship simply did not make sense.

Worship nothing but the Creator of everything seemed to be the sensible way. After all, we owe Him our being here, we owe Him our very existence, and we also owe Him everything in us and around us. The whole universe is nothing but a creation of this Great Being.

Then Muhammad^P would think and ask himself: "Who is the Creator of everything?"

That was a big problem in itself. How could you discover the Creator? There seemed to be no way at the time, but to go through a process of deduction, and that frustrated Muhammad^P a lot.

The years passed by and Muhammad^P became a more frequent visitor to his place of solace, Mount of Noor.

He became used to living in seclusion at this special place, for a reasonable period of time, every single year.

His wife accompanied him several times too, and she used to sit aside and admire the nature around her, and contemplate herself. At times, she even had to urge him to eat, because he would forget himself and his meals, so deep were his contemplations!

At times, he didn't even take notice of his surroundings, because of the fact that he was sunk so deeply in contemplation! He did not know how to worship the Creator, but he wanted to find a way.

Before turning forty years old, Muhammad^P seemed to become more and more absorbed in that contemplation, and his visits to the Cave of Hira, at the Mount of Noor, became particularly frequent, and that became obvious to just about everyone.



CHAPTER ELEVEN

A New Era for Mankind

Muhammad^P had reached the mature age of forty. His wisdom and strength of character were well known to just about everybody in Makka. This was especially evident to his wife Khadija^R, the pure.

The last few months had seen Muhammad^P icontemplating more frequently at Hira Cave. His aim, as always, was the constant search for the truth. It was a very difficult period to observe or to go through. Even Muhammad^P himself had feelings of uneasiness, an uneasiness about what he was going through. On several occasions he discussed those fears with his wife Khadija^R. He was looking for assurance and support.

Instead of becoming worried and disturbed about him, Khadija^R the pure would comfort him, assure him and support him. She gave him the very things he needed, sincerely and from the bottom of her heart.

It was the month of Ramadan, and Muhammad^P went into seclusion at the Cave of Hira once again. He kept praying, asking for guidance and help, and he kept searching his mind as he had done so many times before.

One day, he was asleep in the cave. It was very quiet there. Prophet Muhammad^P was awakened by some being.

“Read,” Muhammad^P heard, and the whole cave echoed with it! Muhammad^P got scared, his heart was beating fast.

Muhammad^P, as you know, had never learned how to read or write. He was what is called illiterate.

So he answered, “I cannot read”. He did not know to whom he was answering. Muhammad^P felt as if something was gripping him and squeezing him hard.

He was relieved for a short while; just to hear again the clear commanding voice saying: “Read”. On hearing that, he answered again: “But I cannot read,” and once again he felt as if was being squeezed hard and then let go.

Then, and for a third time, the voice commanded, “Read”. This time he said, “What shall I read?” and he heard:

“Read in the name of your Lord Who Fashioned man from something which clings. Read and Your Lord is most Bountiful, He who taught (the use of) the pen, taught man what he knew not.” (Qur’an 96:1-5)

He recited these words after the Angel, who thereupon left him. And Muhammad^P said: “It was as though the words were written on my heart.”

Muhammad^P became more curious than ever, because he couldn’t see the source of the voice. He waited in the Hira Cave for a short while then, being too apprehensive, he fled from the cave. But when

he was half-way down the slope of the mountain he heard a voice above him saying: “O Muhammad^P, thou art the Messenger of God, and I am Gabriel^{AS}.”

He raised his eyes heavenwards and there was his visitant, still recognizable and now clearly an Angel, filling the whole horizon, and again he said: “O Muhammad^P, thou art the Messenger of God, and I am Gabriel^{AS}.”

The Prophet^P stood gazing at the Angel; then he turned away from him, but whichever way he looked the Angel was always there, astride the horizon, whether it was to the north to the south, to the east or to the west. It made him feel that he wasn't seeing something out of his head, but he was seeing something for real.

THUS, WITH STRANGE AND BEAUTIFUL WORDS, ANGEL GABRIEL^{AS} HAD ANNOUNCED THE PROPHETHOOD OF MUHAMMAD^P.

Upon saying that, in a commanding and convincing way, the Angel vanished. The Angel was gone. Muhammad^P was left alone. He was feeling weak, pale and tired; and he was feeling sick. His head was swimming with notions and ideas and he was almost disorientated.

Khadija^R was worried because her husband Muhammad^P had been away much, much, longer than usual. Finally, she decided to send a friend of hers to the cave of Hira. He was to see whether Muhammad^P had been hurt or if he had been involved in an accident.

Not too long after that, however, she heard fast, firm footsteps coming towards the door. With a hopeful feeling, she hurried to the door and opened it. She was very delighted and relieved to see Muhammad^P at last. She was surprised however, to see him so sick-looking, pale, shaky, and weak.

There was something wrong, she thought to herself right away, something must have happened.

“Cover me,” Muhammad^P said in a weak voice. As he lay down, she covered him and sat beside him. She waited for him to talk. She kept looking at him apprehensively. He told her all about his experience, all about Angel Gabriel^{AS}, and all about those few sentences that seemed to have become engraved in his mind.

There was a short period of silence in which Muhammad^P looked at his wife to see whether she believed what he said or not. Khadija^R, being the woman who had lived with him for fifteen years and who knew him better than anyone else, looked at him tenderly, affectionately, and said:

“Be happy and firm. I certainly hope that you are the Prophet of this people. Allah Almighty will never put you to shame, because you are the one who is truthful in your speech, and the one who takes the burdens of others and puts them on yourself, and you honour your guests, and help people when they are in trouble because of their support for the truth.”

Muhammad^P was grateful for his wife’s support and encouragement and he thanked her for what she’d said. He felt assured, he felt

comfortable. Going through what Muhammad^P had gone through was very, very difficult. The Prophet^P became so tired that he soon went to sleep. His wife saw to it that he was quietly left alone, making sure that no noise was to be in the house. For her part, she went to consult regarding her husband's story.



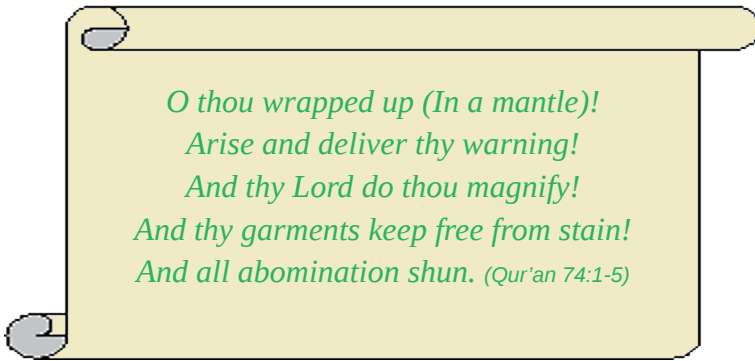
CHAPTER TWELVE

Khadija^R Declares Her Faith

Khadija^R went to an old cousin of hers, Waraka ibn Naufal. He was Christian and was respected for being wise and religious. She greeted him, and after a short while she told him the story of Muhammad^P, bit by bit. She was surprised when she saw Ibn Naufal become very elated and excited, having a look of cheer and happiness on his face. He said to her, “Khadija^R, if you have told me the truth, the Great Law and Commandment has come to him, which came to Moses^{AS}, and most surely he is the Prophet of his people. Tell him to be steadfast.”

Khadija^R felt good inside; she felt strong and very happy. Quickly, she returned home. She'd gained confirmation through Ibn Naufal, and her heart was full of joy, happiness and excitement.

At home at last, she saw Muhammad^P still asleep. He looked well-rested. After a short while, Muhammad^P became restless, with deep heavy breathing and the sweat began to flow from his forehead. He got up, and he seemed obviously to have gone through a rough experience. She heard him saying:



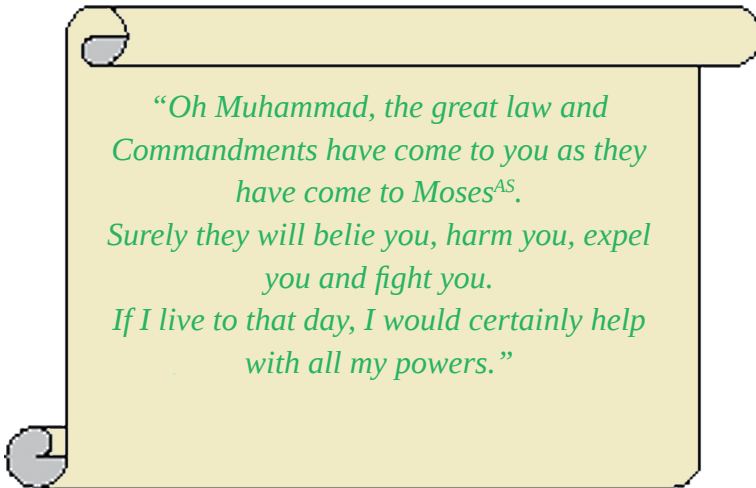
Khadija^R saw with her own eyes what her husband was going through. There were many strange changes on his face.

It was very strange alright. She heard afterwards, with her own ears, those strange words that took her by surprise. She tried very hard to let her husband, Muhammad^P, rest and feel comfortable but he refused. His answer was that the time for sleep and rest was gone and the Angel Gabriel^{AS} had told him to “Warn the People”.

Khadija^R told him about what Ibn Naufal had said, and she declared her belief in One Allah, and that Muhammad^P is his last Messenger.

Thus, Khadija^R the pure, the wife of Muhammad^P for fifteen years, had the great honour and privilege of becoming the first Muslim lady. How marvellous!

Some days later, Muhammad^P met Ibn Naufal at the Ka'ba. He told Ibn Naufal about his recent experiences. The old, blind man listened to him attentively, then he said:



After that, he approached Muhammad^P and kissed his forehead. That gave more encouragement and assurance to Muhammad^P, but it also made Muhammad^P feel the gravity of the situation.

“If they disbelieve me, who will believe me then?” Muhammad^P thought. “And if they expel me, who will accept me? And if they fight me, who will protect me?”

He looked around and saw the many, many idols around the Ka'ba. Many of those idols were surrounded by people of all sorts. Those people, he thought, were rough, tough and vicious; they were used

to looting, drinking and evil doing, and from such a base the new Prophet Muhammad^P was to work.

It was Allah's orders, and it was Allah who would protect him and show him the way, the Prophet^P thought again. His obvious conclusion was that his full and complete protection would come from nobody except Almighty Allah, and that certainly was the best kind of protection.

So far, the fifty-five year old Khadija^R was the only person to become a Muslim. Prophet Muhammad^P did not know what Allah's orders were going to be, and the information he had at hand was very little. His experiences with angel Gabriel^{AS} had changed him completely. He felt different inside, he felt as if he had more strength, more dynamism, more determination and more dedication.

He waited for Gabriel^{AS} to show up, but hours passed by, then days passed by, then weeks passed by, but alas, Gabriel^{AS} never showed up. The periods of worry and anxiety for Prophet Muhammad^P became more frequent and more intolerable, and he could hardly stand it.

Even Khadija^R, his comforter and supporter, thought maybe Angel Gabriel^{AS} had forgotten about the Prophet^P or perhaps Allah had forsaken him. That was not reassuring to anybody, to say the least, let alone to the anxious Prophet Muhammad^P.

Prophet Muhammad^P would go back to the Cave of Hira over and over again, to pray and to ask for God's help. He had even questioned himself about whether he had lost his mind or had become mentally disturbed. Then he would say to himself:

“Allah will not forget Prophet Muhammad^P and He will lead him.” He even used to say to himself, “Oh Soul! It is better for you to die than to be forsaken.” Then he would pray to God and say, “O God, enlighten me, enlighten me, enlighten me!” Such was Prophet Muhammad’s anxiety and desperation! It was an intolerable period of anxious waiting and pleading; of questioning and of patience and self-examination.

At last, and after waiting for so long, Gabriel^{AS} came with good news: “By the white forenoon and the brooding night your Lord has neither forsaken you, nor does He hate you. Surely the life to come will be better for you than this present life. And certainly your Lord will be bounteous to you and you will be satisfied. Did He not find you an orphan and give you shelter? Did He not find you in error and guide you? Did He not find you poor and enrich you? Therefore, do not wrong the orphan, nor chide away the Beggar. But proclaim the goodness of your Lord.” (Qur’an: 93)

The responsibility was certainly big and grave, but Prophet Muhammad^P was to take it no matter what the price was going to be. The Prophet’s anxiety and all his fears left him and vanished. What a relief!

The good news was told to Khadija^R, who was just as relieved as her husband. Prophet Muhammad^P was not forsaken, nay, he was assured, promised and commanded by his Creator.



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The First Muslims

Muhammad^P began to receive more and more revelations. Soon he was given the instructions of how to pray, and the prayer was put into practice by himself and Khadija^R immediately, and regularly. They used to do it in the morning and the evening.

Ali was about ten years of age. He had never prayed to any idol in his life. He had lived for the last few years in the Prophet Muhammad's house. He was the cousin of Prophet Muhammad^P and very close to him. He was very much loved by the Prophet^P and his family.

One day, he came running through the court of the house and, as he opened the door of one of the rooms, to his surprise he saw Prophet Muhammad^P and Khadija^R standing in reverence. He was most surprised and taken aback. He heard them saying strange but beautiful words. He saw them bowing and kneeling and he heard them glorifying the Almighty Allah, but he saw no idols in the room.

He waited patiently until they'd finished, then he asked, "To whom were you bowing?"

Prophet Muhammad^P answered, "To the One God, the Creator of the Universe." Then he told Ali all about his experience with Angel Gabriel^{AS}, and he asked Ali if he would become a Muslim.

Ali, being only around ten years of age, had not learned how to commit himself or to make a decision. But now, all of a sudden, he heard of a prayer to Allah and that was vague to him, then he was asked to become a Muslim. The whole trend made him feel uncomfortable inside. Yet, on the other hand he loved and admired those beautiful words he'd heard during the prayer. He asked Prophet Muhammad^P if he would be given some time to consult with his father, and to get his permission. Prophet Muhammad^P gave him permission and he asked him to keep it top secret.

It was a tense, restless, and almost sleepless night for Ali. It was the night that followed that very special day. The poor boy couldn't decide that easily. He knew Muhammad^P and Khadija^R very well; after all he had lived with them for many long years. But a major decision, such as adopting a new religion called Islam, would be quite a big turning point for anybody, let alone a ten year old boy! Most of the night was spent in thinking seriously, in trying to make up his mind, in trying to decide.

Next morning, with sleepy eyes and an aching head, Ali^R came to Prophet Muhammad^P and said: *"No need to consult my father. God didn't consult him when he created me. Why should I consult him in order to serve God?"*

Ali^{R*} had become a Muslim. He declared his SHAHADA, his honour in becoming a Muslim. He was the first male to convert to Islam.

* The letter R represents the words "Radiyah Allahu 'Anhu". In English this translates to "May Allah be pleased with him". Mentioned after the names of the Sahaaba (companions of the Prophet^P).

Zaid Ibn Harith, a slave who had been emancipated by Prophet Muhammad^P, lived with the Prophet^P and his family, to help with the household chores.

As soon as he heard from Prophet Muhammad about the new religion, he declared his acceptance of Islam. He didn't do that because he wanted to imitate the Master. He did it because he had such an unshakable faith in Prophet Muhammad's integrity and honesty.

He knew very well how straightforward Prophet Muhammad^P was and of his love for the truth.

So, the whole family of the Prophet Muhammad^P, Khadija^R his wonderful wife, Ali^R his beloved cousin and Zaid^R his helper at home, all became the nucleus of Islam, or the core of Islam in those very early days. This solid nucleus of Muslims was soon joined by Ja'far Ibn Abu Talib^R.

Abu Talib was in company with one of his sons Ja'far^R, the brother of Ali^R. He saw Muhammad^P, Khadija^R and his other son Ali^R praying as a group. They were worshipping so reverently, and in such a unique way. The words said were so very unique, and so very beautiful. Abu Talib and his company were also taken by surprise at this experience.

Abu Talib then said to his son Ja'far^R, "Join your cousin (i.e. Muhammad^P) in the prayer". Ja'far^R joined the group immediately, and when the prayer was over, Ja'far^R declared his conversion to Islam.

Abu Bakr^R, a man of noble character, had been a friend of Muhammad^P for some time.

He also knew Muhammad^P very well. He was of great influence in Makka and of high reputation.

Prophet Muhammad^P took Abu Bakr^R aside, and he told him about his experience with Gabriel^{AS} at Hira and at home.

He also recited some passages of the Quran that had been revealed to him up to that time. To Muhammad's delight and relief, Abu Bakr^R accepted what he heard, and he declared his belief in the Oneness of God, and the Prophethood of Prophet Muhammad^P. Thus, he declared his conversion to Islam.

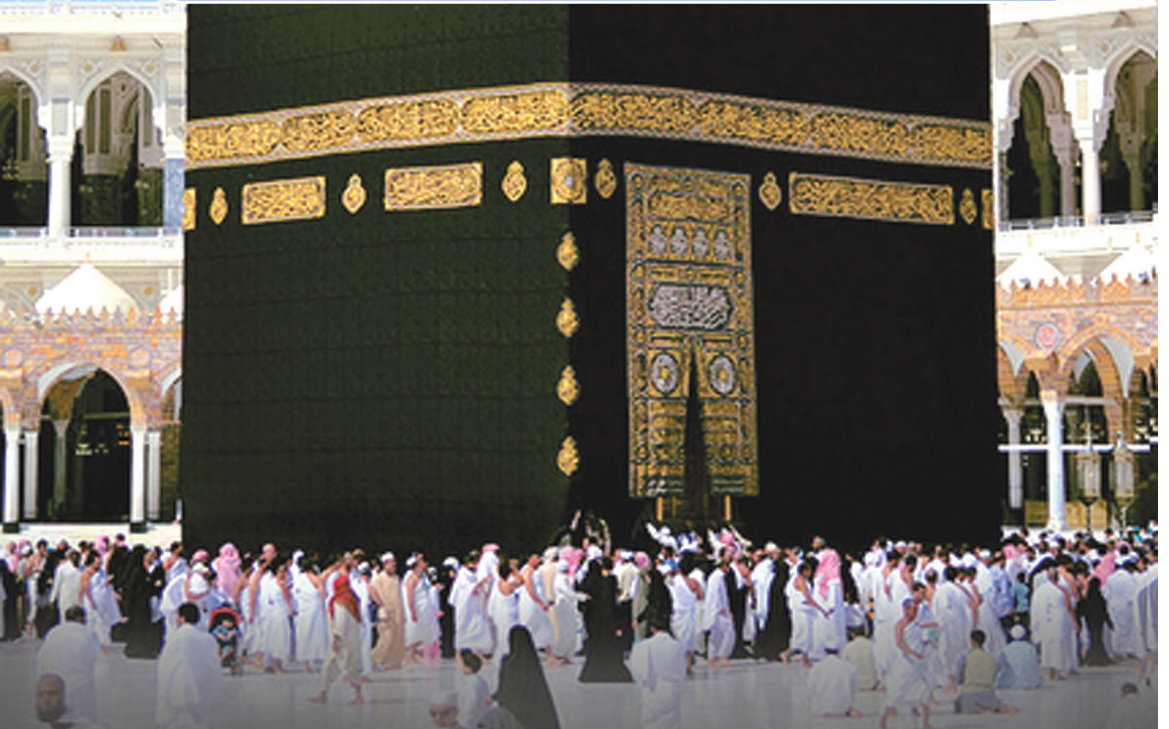
Abu Bakr's support was very valuable, and through him a number of important people in Makka became Muslims.



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Challenges Facing New Faith

Prophet Muhammad^P was extremely well liked, loved, trusted and respected by the people of Makka. He kept making his round of consoling the oppressed, comforting the sick and helping the poor. He helped them by doing things for them, by assisting them financially, and by being good to them. This had been his habit for many years. People always remembered and loved him for that. This habit built up a strong bond between him and the people around him. This friendship became stronger and stronger with the passage of the years.



Now, Muhammad^P had become the Messenger of God, and he had the heavy responsibility of calling the people to Islam. His first few converts were his closest friends. Slowly and gradually, however, he started to gain new ones, new converts from the very poor, from the destitute, and some of the slaves. Though most of the new Muslims were the ones who were not influential, their new faith had changed them into strong, dynamic persons of iron will.

Abu Bakr^R was doing his best to gain new converts. All those new Muslims used to go to Prophet Muhammad^P to receive lessons in Islam, and to learn what had been revealed of the Holy Qur'an, up to that time.

A number of people in Makka began to hear about Prophet Muhammad^P, the new religion called Islam, and the new group of converts.

Some thought that Prophet Muhammad^P was insane; others thought he was a magician, while some others thought he wanted some material gains.

They laughed in sarcasm when they found out that the new Muslims were those considered to be insignificant, the slaves or the like. As a matter of fact, they even believed that their idols were going to protect them against Prophet Muhammad^P and what he was calling for.

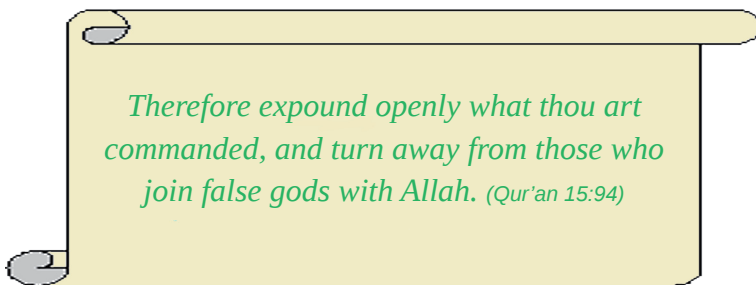
The word of Islam started to spread. This special call was noble, and it called for decency, truthfulness and sincerity in the service

of Allah – the Creator. The call was also for justice, and a clean and decent living; and of a life of good dynamic conscience.

The Makkans underestimated the dynamism of Islam and its magnetic power to attract people. Three long years had passed and the message was still secret, and the Muslims were still few in number. However, more and more people started to hear about the religion, and the message began to move more and more widely. Then came the order from the Almighty, the order to call for Islam in public.

The message of Islam was no more to be propagated in secret. A bold step was to be taken, and higher risks were also to be taken. It was a giant step forward and Islam with its few Muslims were ready for the tough days ahead, for the encounter with the unbelievers who were the overwhelming majority. The Prophet^P and the Muslims were set for that.

Prophet Muhammad^P was ordered by God to declare the Message of Islam in the open:



The Muslims were still relatively few in number, but they were dedicated, ready to stand firm, and ready to suffer. Muslims began to be looked upon by the Makkans from a different angle; as a power to

be reckoned with. In other words, the Muslims were showing signs of dynamism, signs of being ready to work as a united group for the sake of Islam.

By simply being that, they began to gain the admiration of many of the unbelievers around. They began to be looked upon as a force to be reckoned with, to be taken seriously. This was a turning point, and a turning point for the good of the Muslims and Islam.

Prophet Muhammad^P gave a big dinner party for a good many of his relatives. They came to his house, each wondering what the host was up to. After they'd finished eating, Prophet Muhammad^P took the initiative and started to talk about God and the Religion of Islam. He had so many, many things to tell those people. Suddenly, however, he was rudely interrupted by an evil-minded uncle of his, Abu Lahab.

Abu Lahab was sharp tongued, he loved his authority and he was quite rude. He opposed his nephew Muhammad^P very much, and by his rude interruption he ruined the whole occasion, and the people started to leave. Thus, those present at the party did not get a good chance to hear all that Prophet Muhammad^P wanted to say.

But Prophet Muhammad^P was calling for a very noble cause, for a great Religion of Allah and, although he was disappointed by what had happened, he never allowed that incident to stop him. No, not at all.

So, Prophet Muhammad^P called them once again for another party.

When the guests had finished eating and the occasion was proper, he said, “I don’t know of anyone among the Arabs who has brought you anything better than I have. My Lord has commanded me to call you to it. Who will help me in this affair and be my brother, my executor, and the deputy from among you?”

The place was packed with those relatives of his. It was quiet. Everyone was motionless, and everyone was listening attentively. When they’d heard what he had said, they started to look sarcastically and in disbelief at each other. Some thought that Prophet Muhammad^P was asking too much of them.

After all, how could they stop worshipping all those idols, or leave their way of life just to start all over again. Not only that, but they were called to follow Islam, something new.

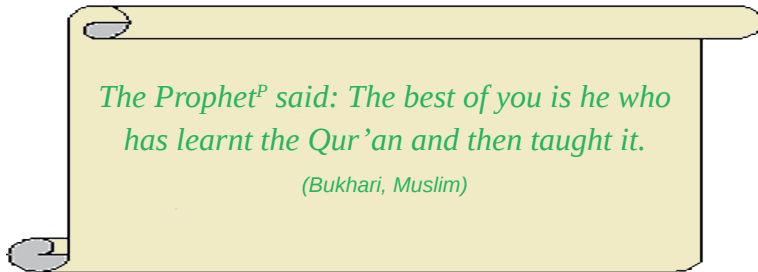
They felt as if they were going into the unknown, and on top of that, being led by someone who was not even the leader of the Quraish. Such were the thoughts that crossed the minds of many.

But wait, the silence was shattered suddenly, and their chain of thoughts were interrupted when a voice was heard:

“Prophet of God! I will be your helper. I will fight him who fights you.”

All faces turned towards the source of the voice, and to their surprise, it was Ali^R who came to the support of Prophet Muhammad^P. He was only thirteen years old!

So the Prophet^P took hold of Ali^R immediately and he said with confidence, loudly and clearly: “This is my brother, my executor and my deputy among you. So listen to him and obey him.”



The people around looked at each other with sarcasm and a spirit of ridicule. Some found it difficult to believe their ears; little could they understand the new boiling spirit of Islam, and little could they comprehend the way it changes a person, helping them to be so daring and brave!

Some of them said to Abu Talib, the father of Ali^R, “Listen to your son and obey him!” And they followed that with a few laughs!

The people dispersed from the party, each with a wry smile on his face, but the event left quite an impression on their minds, whether they liked it or not. The occasion was something to be remembered, no question about that.

Even being mocked and ridiculed by his relatives, Prophet Muhammad^P took his cause to all the people in public.

High up on Mount Safa, he stood and, in a loud voice, he called out: “O, you gathering of the Quraish!”

The voice went through the crowd, making the people become quite curious. Everyone began to say repeatedly: “Muhammad^P is calling you at Mount Safa.”

Singly and in groups, the people went to the area. The confusion subsided slowly as the crowd became silent. They became quiet, expecting to hear Prophet Muhammad^P. Some people regarded him as an agitator by then.

Prophet Muhammad^P asked: “If I told you there was an army behind this hill, waiting to attack you, would you believe me?”

“Yes,” the people answered together, “you are the one man without a blemish and we have never known you to lie.”

“Then I am a warner to you of a severe agony!” Prophet Muhammad^P said. The people were surprised.

They listened to him until he finished his speech by saying: “So believe that there is no deity except Almighty God.”

Through this very special speech, the people heard a call for the belief in One God, who ought to be worshipped and nothing else, and a call to follow Islam through its Prophet Muhammad^P. It was a very bold declaration to make in public, a courageous stand, a point of planting the seed of Islam in the minds of the whole society.

Upon hearing all this, Abu Lahab the wicked got up and shouted with anger: “Perish you this very day! Was it for this that you called us here?”

A hush of silence followed. Everyone was stunned. Prophet Muhammad^P felt very hurt and he was cut deeply. Although he'd expected some trouble, he hadn't expected it to be that much. It was a stunning blow to Prophet Muhammad^P. It was a grave insult to him in front of all the people.

Prophet Muhammad^P had come with intentions of doing good, of calling the people to the new Religion, the great Religion of man which God was outlining. In return for all this good work, his very uncle messed everything up once again, and on top of that he had cursed him and insulted him in front of everyone!

Prophet Muhammad^P was stung by this poison, but will God let Prophet Muhammad^P perish?

Following the above exchange, everyone saw Prophet Muhammad^P undergo a dramatic change. He became still all of a sudden. Then he began to breathe heavily, the sweat started to pour down his forehead and his eyes were fixed towards the skies. This impressed many, many people who wondered what was going on. You see, he was receiving a new revelation, he was seeing Angel Gabriel^{AS}, who said the following:

*Perish the hands of the father of Flame!
Perish he! No profit to him from all his
Wealth, and all his gains! He shall soon be
thrust into a fire full of flame... (Qur'an 111:1-3).*

Gradually, the people began to leave, each with a head swimming with the above facts, each feeling peculiar inside, each asking himself many, many questions.



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Victory or Martyrdom

As time passed, the Muslims were becoming greater in number, and their constant talk about the teachings of Islam was attracting quite a few people. The Prophet's speeches in the open were becoming the centre of attention. The call was attractive! After all, it was a call to a divine Religion which commands decent and clean living, and directs people in a very good way.

The leaders of the Quraish were, however, not happy about that. Those unbelievers were gradually feeling the serious impact on their interests. Their livelihood depended heavily on idol worship which was being threatened so seriously by the new Prophet and Islam. Yet, on the other hand, their conscience started to stir, they were being severely challenged by the very beautiful teachings of Islam. The question was: How were they going to take this very challenge?

Abu Sufyan, Abu Lahab, Abu Jahl and the like became formidable, self-appointed leaders of opposition. They wanted to have no change. They wanted to stop the budding Islam and its Muslims. They were soon joined by anyone who wanted to be the centre of attention, who wanted to be one of "that group" of "let us capitalize on the Muslims". The number of such people began to increase too.

The two camps, that of the Muslims and that of the unbelievers, were beaming in the eyes of each other: one was calling for the worship of God, the other for the worship of idols, and what a difference!

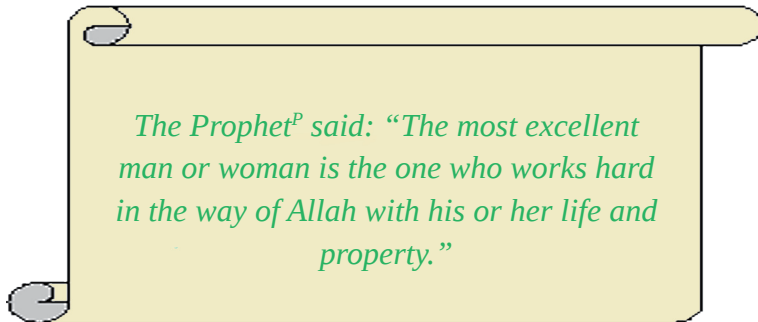
As a result, systematic persecutions of the Muslims began, and the Muslims stood firm in the face of all adversities: defiant, unbendable, unshakable and solid. The persecutions and torture were crude, severe, frequent and quite beastly.

Hardly a day passed by without a Muslim or two being tortured, hurt or ridiculed. But all this was taken in stride and quite patiently by the Muslims, being aware of their stand at that critical stage.

The leadership of the Quraish became frustrated, as their efforts to stop Islam had failed. They felt that their position was being threatened very much, and that they were being challenged and made fools of by Prophet Muhammad^P and Islam. These unbelievers, as numerous and as strong as they were, felt that the call to Islam was too much for them to take. They thought it better to approach Abu Talib, that gentleman who was the uncle and guardian of Prophet Muhammad^P and to talk some “sense” to him.

They mentioned to Abu Talib that Prophet Muhammad^P had gone too far, and that it was time to stop him. They asked if he couldn't stop him (since he was uncle and guardian to Muhammad^P) or if he could at least give them the freedom to deal with Prophet Muhammad^P as they saw fit. They pressed on him and they pressed hard.

Abu Talib was not a Muslim, but he knew Prophet Muhammad^P was on the right track, and he felt he could never betray his nephew. So he argued with them for a long time. His arguments made sense, and he never agreed to their demands. This happened many times, and the Quraish's attempts were to no avail.



On his part, Prophet Muhammad^P continued full force in his call to Allah, and to Islam. Nothing would stop him.

A good many revelations had come in by then, and a good deal of the Islamic Religion could be taught by that time. Islamic knowledge was expanding and it was expanding fast.

The Quraish’s leadership felt more and more frustrated. They felt their age-old paganism and idol worship was being very much undermined by Islam and that it was on its way out. They felt they were being abused. They knew they were failing and quite miserably. This was very hard for them to take. It was a big blow to their efforts, and a very big blow to their dignity!

They went back two more times to Abu Talib, asking him to stop Prophet Muhammad^P. At one time they even offered to make Prophet Muhammad^P the king of Arabia, no less!

But Prophet Muhammad^P refused, since he wasn’t interested in any such gains. His interest was the gains of Islam, and nothing else.

The Quraish didn't seem to understand that Prophet Muhammad^P stood for no gain of any kind, except the fulfilment of God's commands! And what's better? See the difference between the standards of the two camps, not only in thinking but also in approach!

At another time, the unbelievers wanted to have permission from Abu Talib to let them deal with Prophet Muhammad^P as they pleased, and they offered at the same time to exchange Prophet Muhammad^P with another young man to be under Abu Talib's custody and command! This of course was also refused and it made the Quraish even more frustrated. The pressure was mounting fast.

Finally, the unbelievers gave Abu Talib an ultimatum: either he stop Prophet Muhammad^P, or either side may be destroyed.

What this ultimatum meant was that a fight was going to break out and a good deal of killing was going to be initiated by the influential tribe of the Quraish, who opposed Islam. They could stand it no longer. They couldn't see Islam spreading so well, in spite of all their efforts to stop it. They did not like to see themselves failing so miserably. They wanted to take this step out of desperation.

Abu Talib was worried, divided and torn. He was put on the spot by the Quraish.

He had done his best to protect Prophet Muhammad^P so many times before, but now there was an ultimatum by those unbelievers of Quraish, who were in a very ugly, angry mood. A mood for murder, no less!

If he were ousted by the pagan Quraish, Abu Talib thought, his livelihood would suffer a great deal and he would even perish. On the other hand, his love for Prophet Muhammad^P was so very great indeed, that he wanted to give him nothing other than complete and full support. Abu Talib faced a very difficult situation, a very tough job was at hand.

He sent for Prophet Muhammad^P, and when his nephew came he said: “Get both of us out of this difficulty. Please don’t make my affairs unbearable for me.” He told Prophet Muhammad^P all about what the Quraish’s leadership had said and had decided. He told him all about their ugly mood, all about the new serious threats and the new situation.

Many things flashed through the mind of Prophet Muhammad^P: the many new Muslims and the sufferings they were going through; Khadija^R and her support and enthusiasm for Islam; Ali^R and his budding youthful excitement for Islam; Allah’s promise and the decent life on earth that He was ordering, then Heavens afterwards. And what about Islam? Would Prophet Muhammad^P let it down or would he have to keep on with the struggle until it became planted in the heart of everyone? “It would be a betrayal to God, to the Religion of Allah and to everyone, and Muhammad^P never betrays,” he thought.

Prophet Muhammad^P looked up to his uncle, his feelings were those of unbounded love, gratitude and understanding, especially of the tough situation Abu Talib was in. The Prophet^P would not want to put a burden on his uncle, but he would not move one single step

from his principled struggle. Prophet Muhammad's answer was immediate and it was a statement of outstanding leadership:

“O uncle,” he said. “By God, even if they put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left, in order for me to give up my message, I will never do so. I will go on and on until God makes it prevalent, or rather I'll die in the effort.”

“Chivalry, bravery, and victory for the cause, the good cause,” Abu Talib thought. He was startled by this answer of his nephew Muhammad^P. He was taken by surprise. He could feel the tremendous internal power in the new Prophet Muhammad^P and the unshakable determination to deliver God's message, no matter what! “Simply magnificent,” he thought again. He felt proud that he was Prophet Muhammad's uncle. A smile began to draw on his face, and Abu Talib himself had change inside. Gone were the thoughts of compromise of a few hours or even a few minutes ago. He felt full of inspiration and enthusiasm too! His answer came without any hesitation: “Preach then, what you love. By God, I will never surrender you for anything!”

Bravery met bravery, decency met decency and what a beautiful scene!

What Prophet Muhammad^P said kept singing repeatedly in Abu Talib's heart, and with it, it seemed that his heart was jumping with joy.

He gathered Banu Hashim and Banu Muttalib and he told them the story of what had happened between him and the Prophet

Muhammad^P. When he mentioned what the Prophet^P had said, his eyes were wide open with pride and joy, and he saw that everyone was looking at each other and repeating for themselves:

“Even if they put the sun on my right and the moon on my left, in order for me to give up my message, I will never do that. I will go on till God makes it prevalent, or rather I’ll die in the effort.”

The sentence made a strong imprint on those close relatives of Prophet Muhammad^P and they felt it was their duty to stand against any others from Quraish, come what may.

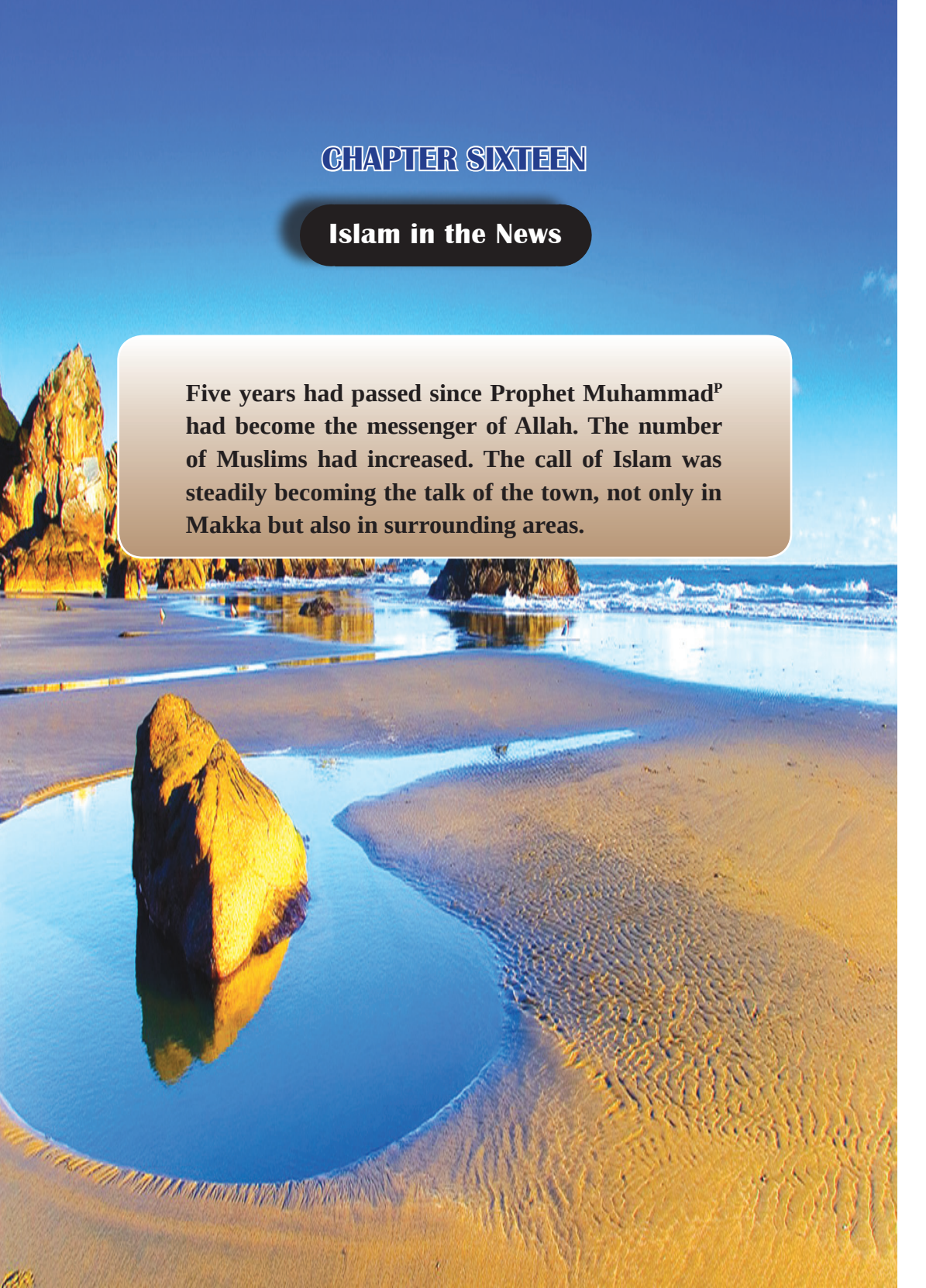
Quraish was the huge, imposing, influential pagan tribe of Makka, out of which emerged the clans of Prophet Muhammad^P. The clans were the ones who decided to stand now in defence of the Prophet^P in the face of that formidable force, and what a challenge.



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Islam in the News

Five years had passed since Prophet Muhammad^P had become the messenger of Allah. The number of Muslims had increased. The call of Islam was steadily becoming the talk of the town, not only in Makka but also in surrounding areas.



When the call was secret, the Muslims were taken only lightly by the unbelievers of Quraish, and persecution was not as heavy or as persistent.

By now, however, Prophet Muhammad^P and the Muslims around had been preaching Islam in the open. Bigger and bigger crowds were being attracted to hear about Islam just about every day, be it at the Ka'ba or other open spaces. More and more people were also changing their religion to Islam. Islam was becoming so attractive, that the Quraish were becoming alarmed by its success, which exposed the weakness of their very own belief.

The Muslims were united in their call, united in their service for liberating the slaves, the destitute, the orphans and the poor. The Muslims were united in their Qur'an and its teachings, and they were united in their prayers and their faith.

The Quraish, on the other hand, went deeper and deeper in their determination to stop Islam and remove it from existence.

The Quraish represented the opposition to Islam, and they formed the unbelieving body in that area, in Makka's surroundings. They took to methods of torture and harassment of the Muslims.

They wanted to strike back at the Muslims, but they had no real religion to strike with. Their methods were mainly physical.

At first, the unbelievers unleashed their tongues and their poet's imaginations in insults, curses, and criticisms.

All these were directed against Prophet Muhammad^P and the early Muslims. Soon they found out that these methods were to no avail, that they had failed bitterly. So these methods gave way to other methods.

Threats against Muslims became an everyday matter. Bribery and inducement were offered, but none of those were of any use either. The Muslims couldn't be bribed, and they were not get scared of threats. Those Muslims were hardy and strong in their beliefs, and they proved to be unbendable.

The Quraish were too afraid to kill Muslims who belonged to influential tribes. The reason was that the tribe to which those Muslims belonged, might decide to attack in revenge and this would produce a blood bath. What they did instead was to persecute the weakest and most defenceless Muslims, and those poor people certainly suffered a great deal at their hands.

A notable example was a slave from Abyssinia by the name of Bilal^R. He became a Muslim and his master learned about that soon afterwards. The master became very unhappy about it and he was determined to force Bilal^R to go back to paganism. But Bilal^R stubbornly refused to do so.

His master would become very angry with him and he would use filthy language to curse Bilal^R. He would hit him and kick him and keep doing that repeatedly, asking him to renounce Islam.

But Bilal^R would stubbornly and bravely take all kinds of punishment without surrendering to his master. He would simply and absolutely

refuse any compromise whatsoever. He was steadfast and firm in his belief.

It is always blisteringly hot during summertime over in Makka, and the master thought it would be smart to torture his slave Bilal^R almost to the point of death. He would drag Bilal^R to a nearby sandy hill and throw him on his back. He would then carry hot, heavy stones and lay them on Bilal's chest to make it intolerable for him. Just imagine how horrible a person he was!

Being in such a terrible situation, Bilal^R would sweat and sweat and he would feel dry. Even his tongue would be so dry that he would hardly be able to move it. The stones were so mercilessly heavy on his chest that he was hardly able to breathe. His master, standing over him like an ugly beast, would shout at him using foul language and would insult and cuss him, wanting Bilal^R to change from Islam back to paganism.

At times, the master would stop his torture, because Bilal^R would move his lips slowly to say something, but, to his master's dismay and surprise, he would hear Bilal^R saying the words:

“AHAD, AHAD, AHAD,” which means, God is one, God is one, God is one. What a love for God! What a magnificent sense of standing strong in the face of all kinds of torture!

All this happened a number of times and in front of gathering crowds. You wonder where humane feelings had gone, don't you?

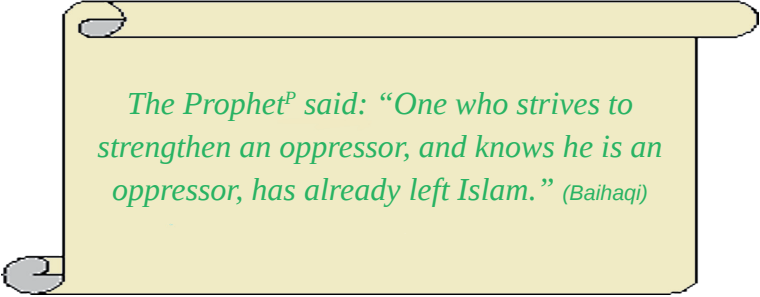
When that experience had taken place several times – and it was so unfair to see such beastly treatment of a human being – Abu Bakr^R saw to it that Bilal^R, the slave, was bought, then set free.

A good many Muslims were naturally tortured in different ways too. One woman was abused and tortured so much that finally she lost her life! It was Abu Jahl who hurt, hit and tortured her so much that she kept bleeding and bleeding from her wounds. She went into severe shock and the shock was too much for her to take.

She finally died, but her death added nothing but admiration for her courage in sticking to Islam, no matter what the odds were. Her name was Sumeiya^R. She was the first Martyr for Islam.

Her husband, Yasir^R, was another well-known example. He was also a slave who embraced Islam. His master insisted that he was to change his religion, and Yasir^R was stubborn, unshakable in his faith. He refused to oblige. His master became so frustrated and so fuming with anger, that he tied each of Yasir's legs to a separate animal. The animals were let loose and startled by whipping. As a result, each was moving in a different direction. They split the body of Yasir^R in half. See how gruesome! It was a happy death for Yasir^R, since his next life would certainly be better. Those two Martyrs were the parents of Ammar^R, the famous companion of the Prophet^P.

Prophet Muhammad^P had his share of persecution too. Threats, foul language and abuse became more frequent and more consistent, and it used to hurt him deeply. Prophet Muhammad^P never answered in the like. On the contrary, he never lost a chance to call to the Islamic way of life.



The Prophet^P said: “One who strives to strengthen an oppressor, and knows he is an oppressor, has already left Islam.” (Baihaqi)

Umm Jamil, the wife of Abu Lahab, was so mean and full of hatred towards the Prophet^P that she used to throw sewer material and thorns in front of the Prophet’s house. This was done repeatedly for the sole purpose of hurting, damaging and abusing the man who was a Prophet of God and calling to the Religion of God! Prophet Muhammad^P never complained, and all that he used to do was to clear the area of the mess Abu Lahab’s wife had caused.

At one time, Abu Jahl came with a piece of cloth and tried to strangle the Prophet^P while he was worshipping at the Ka’ba. It was a cheap, unprovoked act. He held the cloth very tightly around the Prophet’s neck and to such a degree that the Prophet^P could breathe only with great difficulty. Fortunately, Abu Bakr^R saw what was happening and he came to the rescue. After releasing him, Abu Bakr^R said, “Would you kill a man just for saying Allah is my Lord?”

Even then, the Prophet^P wouldn’t protest. See how patient and decent this Prophet of God was!

At another time, the Prophet^P was kneeling during prayer, and while he was concentrating in worship, someone came and put his foot on the Prophet’s head. See how horrible and mean?

The Prophet^P couldn't sit up and he felt as if he was going to be hurt badly.

Fortunately, the man must have felt bad or he had a change of mind, for he moved away, thus relieving Prophet Muhammad^P.

It is said that, at one time, someone even threw manure on him. All the smell and dirt soiling the meticulously clean Prophet Muhammad^P, just imagine! Why do people behave in such a mean way when all that the Prophet^P was calling for was Allah's prescribed way of life. Was it a reaction to their own repeated failures, and did they have to react so violently? Would not their coming to Islam be their greatest success? Did they have to be so blind?

It was a critical and trying period not only for the Prophet^P but for all the Muslims. The Muslims were not numerous, and the Prophet^P would learn every few days about some kind of torture and hurt being done to a Muslim.

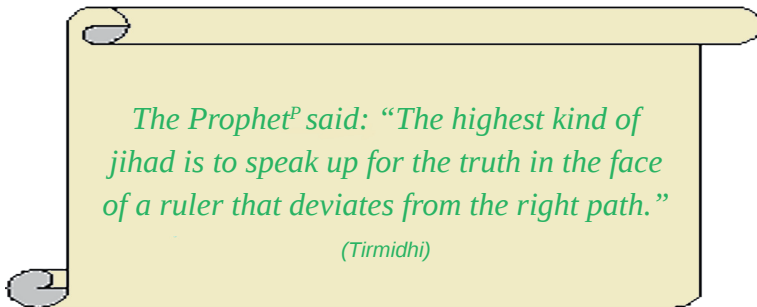
The Prophet^P felt extremely heavy and hurt inside. He would go home and talk to his wife about this and about all that was happening. Khadija^R used to listen to it and comfort him and give him solace as much as she could, but the prolonged constant torture kept going on and on and on. It was so demeaning to the dignity of man, it was so senseless!

Prophet Muhammad^P of course greatly minded the grave situation, but he faced it bravely. His course of action was to carry on the command of God to the people, no matter what. He was to continue the struggle, keep the torch, keep pressing for Islam.

Abu Jahl, a very troublesome man to the Muslims, passed by Prophet Muhammad^P one day. He started to shout foul language at Prophet Muhammad^P and he mentioned many words that were most shameful.

The Prophet^P turned his face away without saying one single word. Prophet Muhammad^P was feeling very hurt and he had a pained look on his face. But, although he was so taken aback by all that abuse and he felt very insulted, he still preferred not to say anything in return.

This incident came to the ears of Hamza^R, who was the uncle of the Prophet Muhammad^P but equal in age to him. Hamza^R was a sportsman and a shrewd hunter, he was well respected by others and he was a man of power and influence in the area. When Hamza^R heard what had happened, he became quite angry and his blood started to boil. He thought to himself, “Muhammad^P calls us to the very best so patiently and so nicely, but he gets nothing except such filthy abuse in return! What sense of decency is that?”



Still furious, Hamza^R rushed to the Ka’ba where Abu Jahl was. He got into a fight, insulting and hitting Abu Jahl until Abu Jahl was wounded in the head and the blood came gushing down his face.

The relatives of Abu Jahl wanted to take revenge, but Abu Jahl stopped them, fearing a great deal of trouble would be the result. Abu Jahl then confessed to them about the indecent treatment he had dealt to Prophet Muhammad^P and the foul language he had used against him.

After that, Hamza^R calmed down and he went to see the Prophet^P. His intention was to become a Muslim. He declared his acceptance of Islam to the happy feeling of all, especially Prophet Muhammad^P. He became one of its very best defendants. He laid his whole life down for Islam and he did everything possible for this new Religion, which calls for the total submission to Allah.

The Quraish, being the leader of opposition to Islam, was feeling, and rightly so, that a grave and serious revolution was already taking place in the area. They were very much frustrated, since none of their solutions seemed to work. The talk of the town had become nothing but about Prophet Muhammad^P and Islam, and that was in about every house. This seemed to go on and on, day and night.

In a desperate attempt to stop the Islamic Revolution, the Quraish accepted Utba Ibn Rabia's suggestion that he should go and make several offers to the Prophet^P. So he went and said: "If by bringing about the conflict you did, you have sought to achieve some wealth, know that we are prepared to give you of our wealth until you become the richest man among us.

"If, on the other hand, you desire honour and power, we will make you our chief and endow you with such power that nothing could be done without your consent.

“Even if you wanted to be king, we would not hesitate to crown you king over us.

“Finally, if you are unable to cure yourself of the visions that you have been seeing, we will be happy to seek for you at our expense, all the medical service possible until your health is perfectly restored.”

When he finished, Muhammad^P recited to him the surah *al Sajdah*. Utba listened attentively to the divine recitation. Facing him was a man devoid of all ambition for wealth, prestige, honour, power, or sovereignty. He was neither sick nor possessed.

Facing him was indeed a man telling the truth, calling to the good, answering him with arguments yet more soundly and sublimely expressed than any he had ever heard. When Muhammad^P finished, Utba returned to the Quraish spellbound by the beauty and sublimity of what he had seen and heard and by the greatness of this man and his eloquence.

When Utba returned to his companions, they were so struck by the change of expression on his face that they exclaimed: “What has befallen thee, Utbah?” He answered them, saying: “I have heard an utterance the like of which I have never yet heard. It is not poetry, by God, neither is it sorcery nor soothsaying. Men of Quraish, hearken unto me, and do as I say.

“Come not between this man and what he is about, but let him be, for by God the words that I have heard from him will be taken from him by others, and if he overcomes the Arabs, then his rule will be

your rule and his might will be your might, and you will be the most fortunate of men.”

But they mocked at him saying: “Muhammad^P hath bewitched thee with his tongue.”



CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Africa, Home to the Muslims

About five years had passed, and conditions at Makka had become so terrible, unbearable and tense, that something had to be done. With the abuse, beating, and persecution, it was becoming impossible for many Muslims to live in Makka anymore.

At a council meeting, Prophet Muhammad^P advised them to leave Makka for Abyssinia. Negus, the king of Abyssinia, was a fair and kind man. He was a Christian.

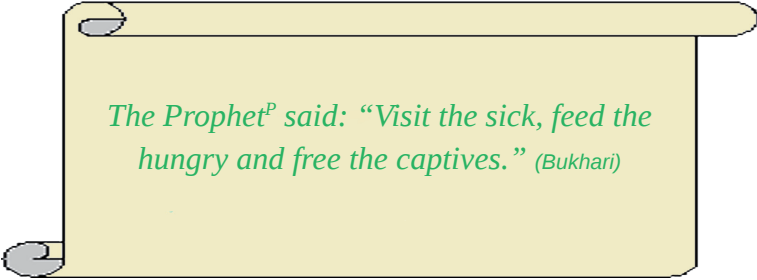
Eleven men and four women left Makka at first. Most of those who left were eminent people in Makka, with respectable positions. A second emigration followed sometime after which consisted of eighty men, not counting the women and children.

These brave, early Muslims had to leave behind them most of their belongings, their friends and their familiar surroundings in Makka. They had no better choice. They were to go to a foreign country which was somewhat different in habits and customs. They had to work and support themselves in this new country and it wasn't easy for anyone to do that, I'm sure you will agree. All this was done, just because there was some freedom of worship in Abyssinia. But, above all, it was done to escape the intolerable life in Makka because of all the persecution against Muslims because of their faith.

These two emigrations were one of the biggest blows yet to the pagans of Makka.

They could hardly believe it, especially when they knew that it would give publicity to the new faith abroad. It was a big blow to their pride and self image. Their anxiety and worry seemed to double. They wanted to react. They wanted to ask for the emigrants to come back. The unbelievers of Quarish didn't want to have their image and reputation tarnished. As a result, they sent emissaries to the new country. The emissaries took costly gifts to King Negus and his court. These emissaries asked the King to force those Muslims to go back to Makka, so that the pagan Makkans could deal with them as they pleased.

Being fair and wise, the King wanted to hear the other side too. He sent for them, and Ja'far^R, the brother of Ali^R, was their representative. When he was asked, Ja'far^R answered:



The Prophet^P said: "Visit the sick, feed the hungry and free the captives." (Bukhari)

“O King, we were an ignorant people, we used to worship idols and eat dead bodies, and we committed indecencies and cut our own relations. We trespassed on our neighbours, and the strong among us used to devour the weak.

“We were in this condition when God sent us a messenger of our own whom we knew to be noble by descent, to be truthful, honest and of chaste actions. He called us to the God that might declare His unity, serve Him and leave all those deities which our forefathers used to worship, deities of stone.

“He commanded us to speak the truth, and to pay back our trusts, to unite with our relatives, to treat our neighbours with kindness, and to refrain from things forbidden and from blood-shedding.

“He forbade us all from doing indecent acts, from lying and from the misappropriation of the property of the orphans and from the libelling of virtuous women.

“He commanded us to serve God and to join no one in His service, and he commanded us to pray, give alms (Zakat), and to fast. So we believed in him and followed him in what he brought to us from Allah. We served Allah alone. We made lawful what he declared to be lawful and unlawful what he declared to be unlawful to us.

“But our people became our enemies and they tortured us and put difficulties in the way of our faith, attempting to revert us to the worship of idols, and asking that we should permit all evils that we used to permit.

“At last, when we were oppressed and tortured beyond our endurance, we left our country and chose yours above others, and we sought shelter in your neighbourhood, and we hope that you will be just to us.”

King Negus of Abyssinia was very impressed. He asked Ja'far^R to read from the Holy Qur'an. Ja'far^R read the chapter called Mariam.

The Negus wept, and his bishops wept also, when they heard him recite, and when it was translated they wept again, and the Negus said: "This has truly come from the same source as that which Jesus^{AS} brought."

Then he turned to the two envoys of Quraish and said: "Ye may go, for by God I will not deliver them unto you; they shall not be betrayed." Then the emissaries accused the Muslims, saying that they made serious charges against Prophet Jesus^{AS}.

Ja'far^R, gave a good reply: "Our judgement of Jesus^{AS} is exactly the same as that which was revealed to our Prophet; namely, that Jesus^{AS} is a servant of Allah, His Prophet, His spirit, His command given unto Mary, the innocent virgin."

The Negus drew a line on the floor with his cane and said with great joy, "Between your religion and ours there is really no more difference than this line." Thus the Negus was convinced, after hearing the two parties, that the Muslims not only acknowledged Jesus^{AS} and Christianity as a true Religion but worshipped the same Allah as well.

Then he turned to Ja'far^R and his companions and said: "Go your ways, for you are safe in my land.

Not for mountains of gold would I harm a single man of you," and, with a movement of his hand towards the envoys of Quraish, he said

to his attendant: “Return unto these two men their gifts, for I have no use for them.” So Amr and the other man went ignominiously home to Makka.



CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The Qur'an Changes Umar^R

One of those who went to extremes in torturing the Muslims, was Umar^R. A strong man in mind and body, intelligent and very proud, he was a patriot, a well known man, and loved his relatives dearly.

He was in his thirties and a quite bitter opponent of Islam and a grave enemy to the Muslims. His pride was hurt a great deal when he learned that a handful of Muslims had left the area for Abyssinia.

He thought about what had been going on for the past five years, from the failure of the pagan Makkans to stop the Muslims, to the turmoil in the area and divided minds among the people. His passion and anger made him boil. He decided to kill the Prophet^P no less, whom he thought was the root of all of what was happening.

With a gloomy, sombre look on his face, he headed with determination towards the area where the Prophet was. On his way he met a friend, whose name was Na'seem Ibn Adbullah. They talked to each other, and this friend told him, "Why don't you look to your own family first and put them right?" By this term he meant that Umar's sister had become a Muslim and if Umar^R was to do anything, he ought to start at home, first and foremost! That just about crushed Umar^R! How could his very own sister have become a Muslim?

It was unbearable and unbelievable for him. It was too much for him to take. He was boiling with anger.

Umar^R changed direction as a result, and he wanted to see this sister immediately. He was furious and fuming when he entered her house. She and her husband had been Muslims for some time, and in their house there was a Muslim guest reading the Qur'an for them. When they heard that someone had entered their house, the guest hid himself. But, for a few moments after entering her house, Umar^R could hear something unusual. The Qur'an was being read. By now he was not only furious, but also curious.

"What did I hear?" Umar^R shouted.

"Nothing," his sister answered defensively.

But by then Umar^R had caught hold of her husband Sa'eed. In a fit of anger he attempted to hit him.

Umar's sister tried to intervene and, instead of preventing her husband from being hit, she got hit by mistake. That was the climax, and Umar^R was jarred and shaken severely when he found out that he had hit his sister instead. You see, Umar^R loved his family very much.

She was cut on the head and the blood started to pour down her face, making her look pitiful. Umar^R felt very bad about that, and his anger left him immediately. Now he began to feel sorry for what had happened. He was feeling guilty, and he became very loving towards his sister!

His sister and her husband told him defiantly that they had become Muslims, and they didn't care, even if Umar^R wanted to hurt them or destroy them for that.

The emotions were quite high at that precise moment. Umar^R had gone through a great deal of turmoil for the past hour or so, and felt very bad about hitting his sister by mistake.

He wanted to find out for himself why his sister had become such a fearless Muslim and what was really so attractive about Islam. So, Umar^R asked his sister to let him read the Qur'an too. Fatima gave the scroll to him after he had washed to make himself clean and pure before touching it.

In the name of Allah, Most gracious, Most Merciful.

Ta-Ha.

*We have not sent down the Qur'an to thee to be (an occasion)
for thy distress, but only as an admonition to those who
fear (Allah).*

*A revelation from Him Who created the earth and the heavens
on high. (Allah) Most gracious is firmly established on the
throne of (authority).*

*To him belongs what is in the heavens and on earth, and all
between them, and all beneath the soil.*

*If thou pronounce the word aloud, (it is no matter): For verily
He knoweth What is secret and what is yet more hidden. Allah!*

*There is no god but He! To Him belongs the Most beautiful
Names.*

(Qur'an 20:1-8).

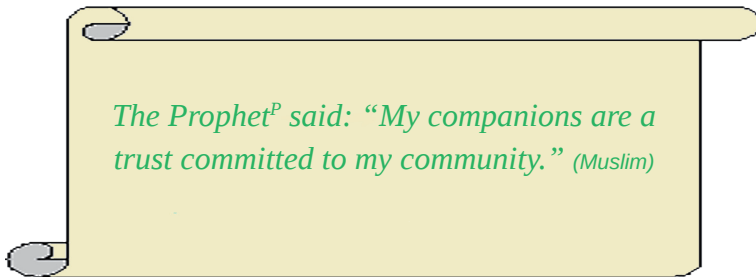
As he read, Umar^R suddenly knew that these were the most beautiful words he had ever heard and that this religion must be the true one.

His heart had softened after reading the passages of the Qur'an, and a cool gentleness had crept inside of him, and he had the urge now to change, to become a Muslim; just imagine! He wanted to be a friend of the Muslims and not their enemy; he wanted to have the honour of being a Muslim, to be its defender, its supporter and not its destroyer!

Umar^R walked the streets with a changed heart. He was very eager to now meet Prophet Muhammad^P, but on friendly terms. His intention by now was not to kill Prophet Muhammad^P. Nay, it was just the opposite; to serve God, and to declare his change to Islam.

Prophet Muhammad^P and the Muslims were in a meeting. They heard footsteps and someone said that Umar^R was coming. There was a hush, a hush of expectation; a feeling of impending trouble. Umar^R asked permission to enter, and upon entering the house he came face to face with Prophet Muhammad^P and the Muslims. Everyone was silent, but with a feeling of tension and expectation. Their surprise was quite high and they were most delighted when they heard Umar^R asking to be accepted into Islam. What a happy, beautiful surprise! He was, of course, accepted right away and with pleasure.

Umar^R, who was at first so much against Prophet Muhammad^P and Islam, who had persecuted the Muslims, had now so suddenly and dramatically become an enthusiastic and energetic Muslim. He would talk to others about Islam from the depth of his heart, and he would urge and encourage everyone to enter this great Religion of Allah.



He even started praying in the open at the Ka’ba itself and the Muslims of the day happily joined him. For them, it was an encouragement of the first degree to do so. The Muslims hadn’t dared to do so before, and they’d used to worship in congregations in places far away, on the outskirts of Makka.

They hadn't dared to worship at the Ka'ba before, afraid that the pagans around would react most severely and that the damage to the Muslims would be too prohibitive. But with Umar^R around they could do so with some feeling of security.

The Quraish were certainly very unhappy with the news of Umar's conversion to Islam; it was a big blow to them. On top of all the frustrations that the Quraish were having, they saw the Muslims, along with Umar^R, praying in unison and quite freely, and that was at the Quraish's heart of hearts, the Ka'ba itself! It was shocking to them to see the sight of the prayer for the Almighty, being done at the Ka'ba itself! A prayer for Allah and nothing else. All the Muslims would kneel, prostrate themselves, then stand in reverence, all united in action and intention, all worshipping God and nothing else. That was unsettling for the unbelievers at that time, and it was quite a blow.



CHAPTER NINETEEN

Christians Welcome Islam

It was a fact-finding delegation of twenty Christians who lived near Makka. They came to see what Prophet Muhammad^P was preaching.

The delegation asked Prophet Muhammad^P about Islam, and he explained about Islam and recited to them from the Qur'an. They discussed many matters with him and they became very impressed. As a matter of fact, they became so impressed that all twenty decided to change to Islam and, on going back to their people, they started to preach Islam! They converted a good many local Christians to Islam, and they became a good focus for it!

This incident infuriated and frustrated the unbelievers of Makka and their leaders even further. The feeling of failure in their hearts was becoming quite deep, they couldn't tolerate to see all this success of Islam nibbling at their power base and influence.

Even the leaders of the Quraish themselves, those who posed as formidable enemies of Islam, began to doubt themselves.

Abu Jahl, Abu Sufyan and the like, questioned themselves: "For what real reason are we so cruel to Muhammad^P and the Muslims? How come the Muslims keep increasing in number?"

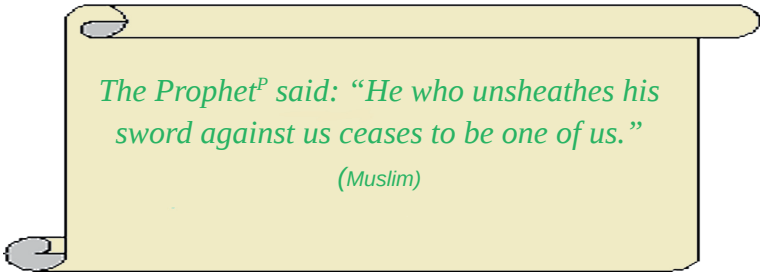
"Why do they stand so bravely in the face of all kinds of trouble and torture? Why has every effort of ours to stop Islam failed?"

The crowd of listeners to Prophet Muhammad's teachings was steadily on the increase. They used to come to a house as a meeting place, to hear him preaching Islam, to worship the Almighty with him, and to recite the holy Qur'an.

One day, Abu Sufyan, Abu Jahl and a third arch enemy of Islam, each going separately, came to hear the preaching and Islamic discussions that the Prophet^P was conducting. None of them knew that the others had come to hear Prophet Muhammad^P. Late in the evening and when the congregation dispersed, to the surprise of Abu Sufyan, he met Abu Jahl and the other leader of the opposition.

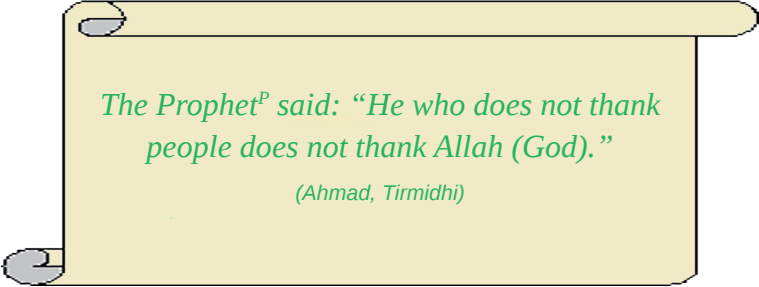
It was a moment of great embarrassment for them all. Each was taken by surprise to see that they all had come for the same purpose, to hear Prophet Muhammad^P! They claimed that it was only a matter of curiosity that they came to listen to the Prophet^P, but none of them would believe the others. They knew deep in their hearts that this was not the truth.

But the night after, all of them returned. They felt they had learned from the congregation of the night before, and they had enjoyed what they had heard, and they had become very inspired.



The Prophet^P said: "He who unsheathes his sword against us ceases to be one of us."

(Muslim)



The Prophet^P said: “He who does not thank people does not thank Allah (God).”

(Ahmad, Tirmidhi)

When the congregation was over, they met one another again, and were even more embarrassed to see one another for a second time.

On the third night, the experience repeated itself, and when they saw each other afterwards they took an oath not to go back to Prophet Muhammad’s teaching sessions again! This shows you how attractive and inspiring those congregations of the Prophet Muhammad^P were. Even his worst enemies couldn’t resist the temptation to attend, not once or twice, but three times!

With Muslims persecuted constantly, others ridiculed and cursed regularly, Prophet Muhammad^P had his share of abuse and trouble too. And on top of that, having a group of influential Muslims far away in Abyssina, how would you react, and how would you feel?

It was painful time for the Muslims, especially for the Prophet^P. But the Prophet^P would not even blame anybody for that. He never even used a single bad word against anyone, neither lost his temper nor pushed the Religion on anyone by force: instead he embraced all people with his care, love and tenderness.

His patience and endurance in the face of all those trying times and difficulties were beyond human capacity, it was truly superb. By keeping his poise, his calmness, and being ready to help at all times, he was a magnificent example for all.

He was always very pleased when someone came to embrace Islam. He was a very good teacher and a very good example.

The Muslims found him to be the best example as a human being, rich with the best of qualities. At home he was the kind loving father, and the most ideal husband a woman could ever dream of. He helped at home with the chores and he even used the broom to sweep the floor. He saw to it to mend his sandals too, and this was at a time when such a thing was taboo!

His example in being persistent, persevering, energetic, patient, considerate, kind, loving, caring and helpful, was imitated by the Muslims around, as much as they could. He, of course, was under the scrutiny of everyone, and his enemies were always on the lookout for a weak spot in him, but to their dismay, they could never find one.

The Quraish started a war of propaganda. The aim was to reach people who came to the Ukaz fair, as well as people from other places. Those gatherings took place during the scared months of the year.

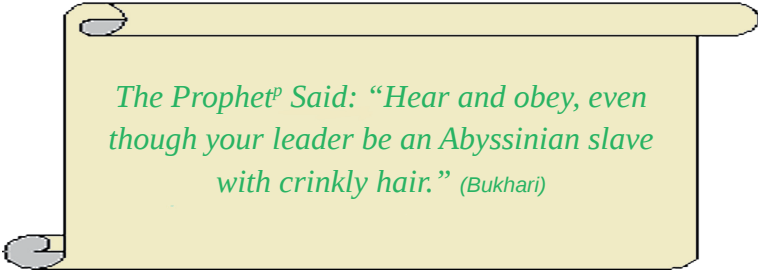
The Quraish and other unbelievers of Makka wanted to counteract Prophet Muhammad^P and the Muslims in their call to God and Islam, which seemed to attract so many new people. The Quraish were very afraid that the new Religion was going to destroy their commerce and

its livelihood, but this point aside, it had become a terrible obsession for them to try to stop the spread of Islam or, better still, to destroy it.

They accused Prophet Muhammad^P of being a magician, a fortune teller, and a wizard of speech. To their dismay, when their campaign was in full blast, they found out that their campaign had attracted people's attention more towards Prophet Muhammad^P than away from him!

As a result, they became one of the means of helping him, rather than hurting him as they had planned! Therefore, a good many influential people from outside the area kept listening to the Prophet^P preaching and reading from the Qur'an rather than fighting him as Quraish had hoped for. These non-Makkans at Ukaz liked what they heard very much. As a matter of fact, some of them liked what they had learned so much that they decided to become Muslims.

Then, they became the means to spread Islam in their own tribes, thus helping Islam spread to different parts of Arabia, areas that were at a good distance from Makka.



The Prophet^P Said: "Hear and obey, even though your leader be an Abyssinian slave with crinkly hair." (Bukhari)



CHAPTER TWENTY

The Will to Overcome

Pagan Quraish and other unbelievers were becoming quite alarmed at their repeated failures to stop Islam. They had deep anxieties that shook their very hearts. They knew well that their arguments were very weak and that they were bound to fail if they confronted the Muslims. They could think of only one measure left which promised to be successful.



Under pressure from Abu Jahl, the Quraish decided that the time had come to take more drastic measures. They decided that the best way to curb the spread of Islam would be to place a ban on the whole clan of Hashim who, with the exception of Abu Lahab, were determined to protect their kinsman whether they believed him to be a Prophet or not.

A document was drawn up according to which it was undertaken that no one would marry a woman of Banu Hashim or give his daughter in marriage to a man of Banu Hashim; and no one was to sell anything to them, or buy anything from them. This was to continue until the clan of Banu Hashim themselves distanced themselves from Prophet Muhammad^P, or until he renounced his claim to Prophethood.

No less than forty leaders of the Quraish set their seal to this agreement, though not all of them were equally in favour of it, and some of them had to be won over.

The clan of Muttalib refused to forsake their Hashimite cousins, and they were included in the ban. The document was solemnly placed inside the Ka'ba.

It was a passive form of punishment, but very cruel and very severe.

The valley to which they were confined was outside Makka. It was rugged and almost treeless. The valley was spacious, but very restrictive, considering that it was kept under constant guard by the Quraish to ensure the ban was not broken.

Not all the tribes enforced the letter and spirit of the ban. Some defied the ban out of sympathy for its victims.

Hisham Ibn Amar of Amir had no Hashimite blood, but his family had close marriage connections with the clan; and under cover of the night he would often bring a camel laden with food to the entrance of Abu Talib's quarter. Then he would take off its halter and strike the camel a blow on its flank so that it would go past their houses; and on another night he would load it with clothes and other goods.

Apart from such help from unbelievers, the Muslims themselves of the other clans, especially Abu Bakr^R and Umar^R, designed various plans to overcome the ban.

After two years of boycott, Abu Bakr^R could no longer be counted as a wealthy man. But despite such help, the effect of the ban was such that it bordered on famine.

However, during the sacred months the ban was not enforced and the Prophet often went to the Ka'ba, and the leaders of Quraish took advantage of his presence there to insult him.

The ban on the clans of Banu Hashim and Muttalib had lasted two years or more and showed no signs of having any of the desired effects.

It had moreover the undesired and unforeseen effect of attracting attention to the Prophet^P and making the call for Islam the talk of the town.

During the period of the ban, several Qur'anic injunctions were revealed to the Prophet^P which gave the Muslims tremendous courage and hope that they would overcome. It was as though the Muslims were being strengthened and cleansed by the hardships they'd suffered and were being tested in their faith.

However, many of the Quraish began to have second thoughts about the ban, especially those who had close relatives amongst its victims. Many felt the time had come for a change of mind to take place, and the first person to act was that same Hisham who had so often sent his camel with food and clothes for the Hashimites. But he knew that he could achieve nothing by himself, so he went to the Makhzumite Zuhayr, one of the two sons of the Prophet's aunt Atikah, and convinced him that they rally support to annul the ban.

Early the next day, those whose minds were made up to annul the ban met at the Ka'ba, and Zuhayr addressed those gathered there: "O people of Makka, are we to eat food and wear clothes while the sons of Banu Hashim perish, unable to buy and unable to sell? By God, I will not be seated until this evil ban be annulled."

"Thou liest!" said his cousin Abu Jahl. "The document imposing the ban shall not be torn up."

"Thou are a better liar," said Zam'ah. "We were not in favour of it being written, when it was written."

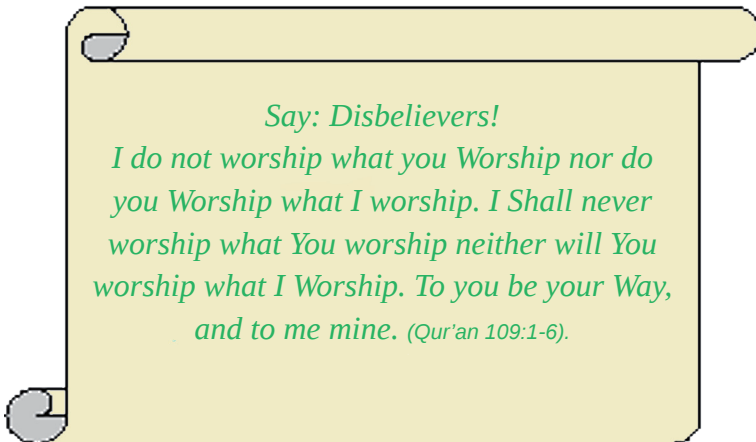
Abu Jahl began to accuse them of having plotted it all overnight. Mutim cut him short by going into the Ka'ba to fetch the document.

He came out in triumph with a small piece of parchment: The worms had eaten the document, all except for words:

IN THY NAME, O GOD.

There was much relief in Makka after the ban was lifted, and for the moment hostilities against the Muslims were relaxed.

Meantime the leaders of the Quraish concentrated their efforts on trying to convince the Prophet^P to agree on a compromise. This was the nearest approach they had yet made to him. Walid and other chiefs proposed that they should all practise both religions. The Prophet^P was saved the trouble of formulating his refusal by an immediate answer which came directly from Heaven in a surah of six verses:



CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

His Loved Ones Pass Away

That beloved uncle of Prophet Muhammad^P, Abu Talib, was seventy-seven years old when the siege began. Exposure, lack of food and nourishment, and existing in such a rough and tough manner for three long years, was too much for anybody to take, let alone a seventy-seven-year-old man. He suffered as all others did, but his protection and love for Prophet Muhammad^P kept on and on, and as strong as ever. At the ripe age of eighty, and only a few months after the siege was over, he became very sick. Still, the Quraish's leaders came to persuade him.

Prophet Muhammad^P was sent for, and when he came they talked to him. In his usual, calm way, Prophet Muhammad^P said: "I ask you to say one word, and it will make you the leaders of Arabia and of the other countries."

Abu Jahl then said, "All right, answer in ten words."

Muhammad^P answered confidently, "Say: God is One, we quit worshipping anything else besides Him."

"He never gives up! What a solid faith!" they thought.

When they had gone, Abu Talib said to the Prophet^P: "Son, you did not ask of them anything out of the way." These words filled the Prophet with longing that he should enter Islam. "Uncle," he said,

“say the words, that through them I may intercede for you on the day of resurrection.”

“Son of my brother,” he said, “if I didn’t fear that Quraish would think I had but said the words in dread of death, then I would say them. Yet would my saying them be but to please thee.”

Then, when death drew near to Abu Talib, Abbas saw him moving his lips and he put his ear to him and listened and then he said: “My brother has spoken the words you urged him to speak,” But the Prophet said: “I heard him not.”

Khadija^R could not stand the suffering of the siege either. Having reached the age of sixty-five, and having suffered so severely at the siege, Khadija^R got sick. She became very sick after a few days, then she passed away.

The loss of Abu Talib and Khadija^R was just about the most difficult thing Prophet Muhammad^P could stand. Their love, support, kindness and care were essential to him and most appreciated by him. He became grieved a great deal, for such was that calamity. Prophet Muhammad^P was so saddened that he called that year of death, “the year of sorrow.”



CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

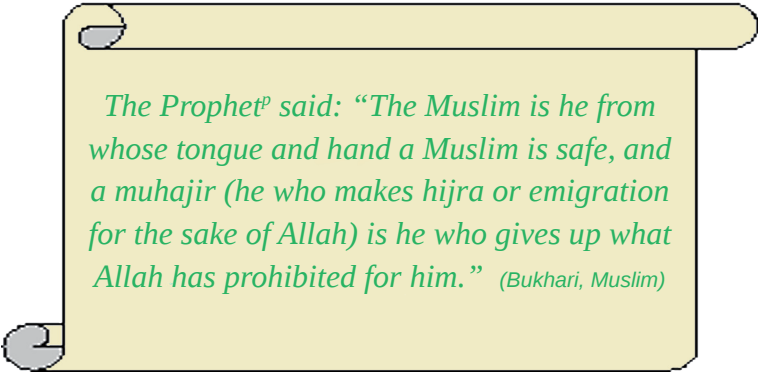
He Responded with Love



Fatima, the daughter of Prophet Muhammad^P was cleaning the dirt and mud thrown at him. His head face and clothes were all messed with dirt.

You see, Prophet Muhammad^P was passing through a street in Makka and one of the Quraish wanted to hurt him just for the fun of it. So he threw dirt at the Prophet^P as he was passing through. There was no provocation and no reason for that action whatsoever. It was another infantile act, a childish act to hurt for the sake of hurting.

Prophet Muhammad^P, full of poise and dignity, didn't say anything. Words alone won't be enough to express the pain inside. He just looked at himself and shook his head. He was covered with dirt, but rather than react with anger, he received the insult calmly and looked at the man with a meaningful look but without saying a single word. He turned around and went home.



The Prophet^P said: “The Muslim is he from whose tongue and hand a Muslim is safe, and a muhajir (he who makes hijra or emigration for the sake of Allah) is he who gives up what Allah has prohibited for him.” (Bukhari, Muslim)

When Fatima^R saw her father with dirt all over him, she remembered her mother and the whole panorama of the past years of suffering went through her head. It was too much to see her father, the Prophet^P of Allah, covered with dirt. It was too much for her to take all this suffering, something that seemed to be endless. Why should her father be the target of all this?

“How could they, how could they?” she thought. Her eyes became full of tears, but her heart was crying ten times as hard. “Don’t cry my daughter, Allah will protect your father,” was his cool reply. You see, he never despaired of the mercy of his Lord.

This answer soothed her and calmed her to some extent, because she shared her father’s belief, but she hated to see him suffer so much and so long at the hands of so many uncouth people.

The fifty-year-old Prophet’s efforts with the pagan Makkans and the people who went to Ukaz fair were local, so to speak. A good idea occurred to him and that was to deliver the message to a different town. Beside, maybe the new town would promise some degree of hope and protection against all the persecution that was going on locally. In so doing, there was a chance, a faint chance, that it could be easier to spread the message of Islam in new areas.

Since the death of Abu Talib, the tension in Makka was reaching new heights every day. Things were looking quite gloomy. In a little, far-away town, Prophet Muhammad^P thought things might be different. So he chose the town called Ta’if.

It was a long journey on foot, sixty miles long. He and Zaid went on walking and walking. The trip took several days of hard travel on foot.

On the way, they stopped at two places, where he preached to two different tribes, but unfortunately they were no different than those in Makka and they refused to listen to him.

The two continued their journey, however, until at last they were in Ta'if. A big temple was there with an idol on the centre. The idol was called Al-Lat. In the temple, Prophet Muhammad^P stood up and gave a speech. He called for the belief in Allah and His teachings and he talked about the new Religion called Islam.

The people listened for a short while, but the chiefs of the main tribe, called Banu Tha'qif, interrupted Prophet Muhammad's speech many, many times. They did that on purpose, asking him many questions, thus disrupting his efforts.

They also tried to be smart with him, and they became sarcastic.

They did that because what Prophet Muhammad^P was saying was seen as being as big a challenge to their influential position in Ta'if, as Islam was to Quraish in Makka. They were actually scared of Prophet Muhammad^P and of the new Religion that he was preaching. They were afraid of its impact on the people.

Because of the interruptions and the remarks of those chiefs of Banu-Tha'qif, the people who were listening lost interest. They dispersed slowly, but they kept talking about the new man from Makka who was degrading their idol, Al-Lat.

The trip to Ta'if was a big disappointment to him, but Prophet Muhammad^P never knew discouragement. After all, he was carrying the words of God which had kept pouring in so often for the last ten years. This was not an everyday affair, it was a Divine Message. Unfortunately, he was not received well by the leaders of Tha'qif. On

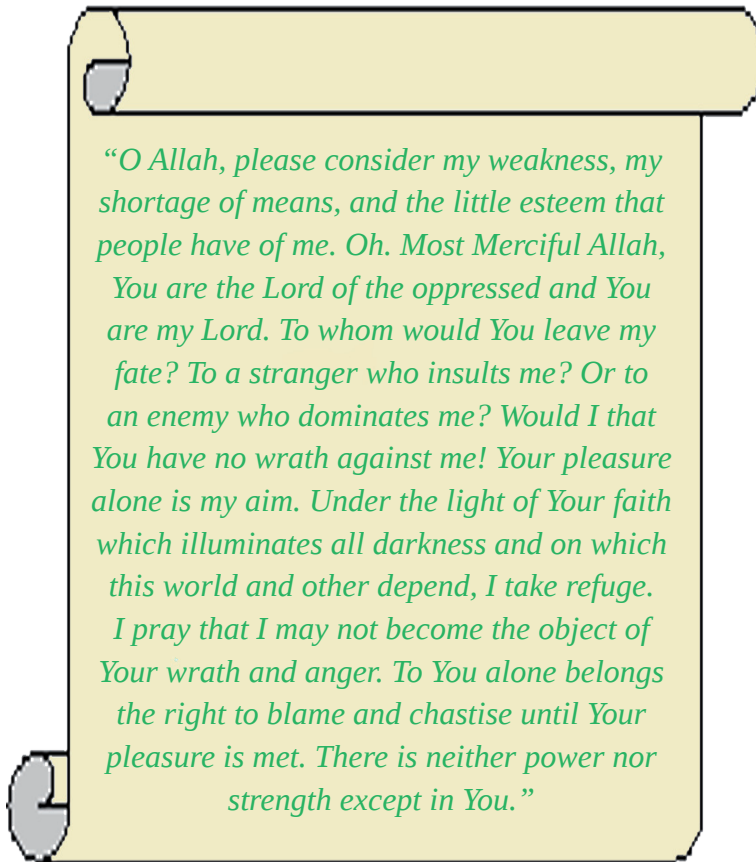
the contrary, they even encouraged their slaves, their children and some wicked people to follow the Prophet^P and to hurt him.

Both Prophet Muhammad^P and Zaid, were followed by the rowdy gang which was using bad language, shouting, cursing, and throwing rocks and stones at the two. Though the two hurried as fast as they could, the stones kept falling on them, but mainly on the Prophet^P.

He got hurt, and started to bleed here and there. The blood poured from his cuts and his feet became swollen. His feet became so sore that he was not sure whether he was running or not.

He was weary, hurt and sad, and took shelter near a wall which belonged to Utbah and Shaybah, sons of Rabi'ah.

There he sat under a vine pondering his situation, within sight of the sons of Rabi'ah. He raised his hands to heaven and prayed with evident pain:



For some time, the sons of Rabi'ah watched the Prophet^P until a feeling of compassion and sympathy for him began to stir within them.

They called a young Christian slave of theirs named Addas, and said to him: "Take a cluster of these grapes and put them on this platter then give it to that man, and bid him to partake thereof."

Addas did as they ordered. Before the Prophet^P partook of the grapes, he said: “In the name of Allah.”

Addas was surprised and said, “That is not what natives of this country usually say.” Prophet Muhammad^P then asked him about his Religion and his country of origin, and when he learned that he was a Christian from Nineveh, he said, “Are you then from the City of Righteous Jonah, son of Mathew?” Still more surprised, “What do you know about Jonah, son of Mathew?” Addas asked. “He is my brother?” was the answer. “He was a true prophet and so am I.” Moved with emotion, Addas bent over the Prophet^P and kissed his head and his hands and his feet.

The two sons of Rabi’ah were surprised at what they saw, although they remained unmoved by the Prophet’s religious claim. And when Addas came back to them, they asked with a sense of disgust: “What made thee kiss that man’s head and his hands and his feet?” He replied: “Master, there is nothing on earth better than this man. He hath told me of things that only a Prophet could know.”

“O Addas, do not allow this man to convert you from your faith. Your faith is better for you than his.”



CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

His Journey to Meet God

It was the tenth year since the beginning of Islam. Prophet Muhammad^P had already passed through many gruesome experiences, such as the siege, the deaths of Abu Talib and Khadija^R, the humiliation at Ta'if, and the overall climate of opposition.

In spite of much success at converting people to Islam, still more than eighty influential Muslim men were far away at Abyssinia, along with some women and children. The Muslims seemed to be scattered, and they were under the constant pressure of persecution and trouble.

It was at this very critical time that Prophet Muhammad^P had a remarkable journey. It was a unique and magnificent journey which came at the exact moment when Prophet Muhammad^P needed it most, the moment when he felt that his efforts were being blunted at every turn and from every quarter. It was a journey that showed him with his very own eyes the Glory of the Almighty Allah and the working of the universe. This journey gave him a great deal of psychological comfort. It confirmed in his mind the Magnificence and Majesty of the Almighty Allah. This renewed his determination to work for Islam.

Briefly told, one night, as the Prophet^P lay sleeping in the same spot where Abdul Muttalib used to sleep, next to the Ka'ba, he was awoken by Gabriel^{AS}. The Prophet Muhammad^P related: "Gabriel^{AS}

came to me and spurred me with his foot whereupon I sat upright, yet I saw nothing and lay down once again. A second time he came; and third time, and then he took me by the arm and I rose and stood beside him, and he led me out to the gate of the Mosque and there was a white beast, between a mule and an ass, with wings at his sides wherewith he moved his legs; and his every stride was as far as his eye could see.”

The Prophet^P then told how he mounted the white beast, called Buraq; and with Gabriel^{AS} at his side, pointing the way and measuring his pace to that of the heavenly steed, they sped northwards beyond Madina and beyond Khaybar, until they reached the temple in Jerusalem. (On this site the al-Aqsa mosque was later built.)

There the Prophet^P found Abraham, Moses, and Jesus (Peace be upon them) among a group of Prophets. Then he was brought two jugs, one containing wine and the other milk. He took the jug of milk and drank from it, but left the jug of wine, and Gabriel^{AS} said: “You have been rightly guided to the fitrah, the true nature of man, and so will your people be, Muhammad^P. Wine is forbidden you.”

Then, as had happened to others before him – to Enoch^{AS} and Elijah^{AS} and Jesus^{AS} – Muhammad^P was taken up out of this life to heaven.

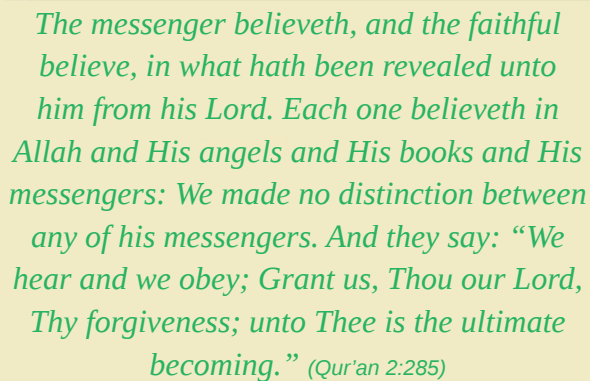
And as they passed through heaven he met again those Prophets with whom he had prayed in Jerusalem. But there they had appeared to him as they had been during their life on earth, whereas now he saw them in their celestial reality, even as they now saw him, and he marvelled at their transfiguration. Of the Prophet Joseph^P he said that his face had the splendour of the moon at its full, and that he

had been endowed with no less than half of all existing beauty. Yet this did not lessen Prophet Muhammad's wonderment at his other brethren, and he mentioned in particular the great beauty of Aaron.

Of the gardens that he visited in the different heavens he said afterwards: "A piece of Paradise the size of a bow is better than all beneath the sun, whereupon it riseth and setteth; and if a woman of the people of Paradise appeared unto the people of earth, she would fill the space between Heaven and here below with light and with fragrance."

The summit of his ascent was the Lote Tree of the Uttermost End, the sidrat al-muntaha, where no Prophet and been before.

Then he was taken into the Light of the Divine Presence of Allah, and was instructed that Muslims should pray fifty times a day; and it was then that he received the Revelation which contains the creed of Islam:



The messenger believeth, and the faithful believe, in what hath been revealed unto him from his Lord. Each one believeth in Allah and His angels and His books and His messengers: We made no distinction between any of his messengers. And they say: "We hear and we obey; Grant us, Thou our Lord, Thy forgiveness; unto Thee is the ultimate becoming." (Qur'an 2:285)

They made their descent through the seven heavens as they had ascended. The Prophet^P recalled: “On my way back I passed by Moses^{AS} and what a good friend to you he was! He asked me how many prayers had I been ordained to perform. I told him fifty prayers and he said: ‘The congregational prayer is a weighty matter, and thy people are weak, so go back to your Lord and ask Him to reduce the number for you and your community.’ I did so and He took away ten.

“But every time I returned unto Moses^{AS} he sent me back until finally all the prayers had been taken from me except five for each day and night.

“Then I returned unto Moses^{AS}, but still he said the same as before; and I said: ‘I have returned unto my Lord and asked Him until I am ashamed. I will not go again.’ And so it is that he who performs the five prayers in good faith and in trust of God’s bounty, unto him shall be given the equivalent benefit of fifty prayers.”

When the Prophet^P and Gabriel^{AS} had made their descent to the temple in Jerusalem, they returned to Makka the way they had come, overtaking many caravans.

On the morning following these events and the Prophet’s return to Makka, he told the Quraish what had happened. His enemies were immediately triumphant, for they now felt they had good cause for mockery. Every child of the Quraish knew that a caravan takes a month to go from Makka to Syria and a month to return. And now Muhammad^P claimed to have gone there and back in one right.

Even some Muslims were amazed by this and wanted the Prophet^P to explain. Some ran with the news to Abu Bakr^R who said: “If he said so, then it’s true. And where is the wonder of it?”

“He telleth me that tidings come to him from heaven to earth in one hour of the day and night, and I know him to be speaking the truth. And that is beyond the petty objection that ye have raised.”

He then went to the mosque to repeat his confirmation. “By Allah, if so he saith, then it is true.” It was for this that the Prophet^P gave him the name As-Siddiq, which means the great confirmer of the truth.

Moreover, some of those who had found the story incredible began to have second thoughts, for the Prophet^P described the caravans he had overtaken on the way home and said where they were and about when they might be expected to arrive in Makka.

All that the Prophet^P had said was borne out when the caravans arrived at the time he said they would, carrying all that he had described.

Meanwhile, the period of mourning for Khadija^R passed, and Prophet Muhammad^P thought of marrying again in the hope of finding comfort in a new companion. He also thought that marriage might present a new opportunity for cementing the bond of brotherhood and commitment to the earlier embracers of Islam.

Khawalah^R, the wife of Uthman Ibn Mazun^R, had been very attentive to the various needs of the Prophet’s household ever since Khadijah’s death; and one day when she was in his house she suggested to him that he should take another wife. When he asked her whom he

should marry, she said: “Either A’ishah^R the daughter of Abu Bakr^R or Sawdah^R the daughter of Zam’ah^R.”

He therefore asked Abu Bakr^R, his dear friend, for the hand of his daughter, A’ishah^R. Since she was still too young to marry, the engagement was announced. However, he got married to her three years later, when she reached the age of eleven.

During the same period, Prophet Muhammad^P also married Sawdah^R; she was the widow of one of the Muslim companions who’d immigrated to Abyssinia but had died upon his return to Makka.



CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

The Good News

Prophet Muhammad^P did not have to wait more than a few years before the first signs of victory began to loom on the horizon, from the direction of Yathrib. Muhammad^P was related to Yathrib in ways other than tribe. He had relatives in Yathrib.

In Yathrib lived Banu al Najjar, uncle of his ancestor Abdul Muttalib, and hence his relative. To that grave, Amina, the loyal wife, as well as Abdul Muttalib, the father who'd lost his son at the very height of his youth and power used to come for yearly visits. Moreover, the Prophet^P also remembered well his previous visits to his father's grave, and how his mother had died in Abwa on the way back.

It was no surprise to Prophet Muhammad^P that the first sign of victory came from a town to which he was so closely associated, a town which stood in the direction of al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, toward which he prayed and where stood the shrines of his two predecessors, Prophet Moses and Jesus (Peace be upon them).

No wonder that circumstances prepared the town of Yathrib for this great destiny, that Muhammad^P might achieve victory therein, and that it might become the capital from which Islam was to conquer and to spread over the world.

As the year passed and the holy months and the pilgrimage season returned, twelve men from Yathrib set out for Makka. They met the

Prophet^P at al Aqabah and entered with him into an alliance known as “The first agreement of al Aqabah”. In this agreement they agreed to adhere to the absolute unity of Allah, neither to steal nor commit adultery, neither to kill their children nor knowingly to commit any evil, and not to fail to obey Allah in His commandment of any good.

They were satisfied that, in case they succeeded in living the life of virtue and obedience, their reward would be paradise; otherwise, their judgement belonged to Allah, His being the power to punish as well as to forgive.

On their return to Yathrib, Muhammad^P sent with them Mus’ab Ibn Umayr who had by that time returned from Abyssina. He was to recite the Qur’an to them and teach them Islam on the whole. He lodged with As’ad Ibn Zurarah, one of the six who had entered Islam the previous year. Mus’ab also had to lead the prayer because, despite their Islam, neither Aws nor Khazraj, the two main tribes of Yathrib, could yet endure to give one another the right to be ahead of each other.

The rivalry between the Aws and Khazra was of long standing.

There had been nonetheless frequent intermarriages between the two tribes and, as a result of one of these, As’ad, the Khazrajite host of Mus’ab, was the first cousin of Sa’d Ibn Muadh, chief of one of the clans of Aws. Sa’d strongly disapproved of Islam. He was therefore angry, yet at the same time embarrassed, to see his cousin As’ad together with Mus’ab and some newly converted Muslims sitting one day in a garden in the midst of his people’s territory, in earnest conversation with members of his clan.

Determined to put an end to such activities, yet not wishing to be involved in any unpleasantness himself, he went to Usayd who was next in authority to himself, and said: “Go thou to these two men who have come to our quarters to make fools of our weaker brethren” - He was no doubt thinking of his younger brother, the now dead Iyas, who had been the first man of Yathrib to enter Islam - “and drive them out; and forbid them to come to our quarters again. If As’ad were not my kinsman I would save thee this trouble but he is my mother’s sister’s son, and I can do nothing against him.” Usayd took his lance and went and stood over them and said, with as fierce an expression as he could muster: “What bringeth the two of you here, to make fools of our weaker brethren? Leave us, if ye have any care for your lives.”

Mus’ab looked at him and said gently: “Why not be seated and hear what I have to say? Then, if it pleases thee, accept it; and if not, keep thyself clear of it.”

“That’s fairly spoken,” said Usayd, who liked both the appearance and manner of the Prophet’s envoy; and striking his lance in the ground he sat down beside them.

Mus’ab spoke to him about Islam and recited the Qur’an to him; and Usayd’s expression changed, so that those who were present could see Islam in his face from the light that shone in it. “How excellent are these words and how beautiful!”

There was a well in the garden where they were sitting, so he washed himself and purified his garments and testified ***There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad^P is the Messenger of Allah.*** They showed

him how to pray, and he prayed. Then he said: “There is a man behind me who, if he follows you, will be followed without fail by every man of his people, and I will send him to you now.”

So he went back to his clansmen, and even before he reached them they could see that he was a changed man. “What hast thou done?” said Sa’d.

“I spoke unto the two men,” said Usayd, “and by God I saw no harm in them. But I forbade them to continue and they said: ‘We will do as thou wilt.’”

“I see thou hast been of no avail,” said Sa’d, taking the lance from his hand and setting off to where the believers were still sitting peacefully in the garden.

He argued with his cousin Asad and scolded him for taking advantage of their kinship.

But Mus’ab intervened, speaking to him just as he had spoken to Usayd, whereupon Sa’d agreed to listen to him, and the result was finally the same.

When Sa’d had performed the prayer, he rejoined Usayd and those who were with him and together they went to the assembly of their people. Sa’d addressed them and said: “What know ye of my standing amongst you?”

“Thou art our leader,” they answered, “and the best of us in judgement, and the most outstanding in leadership.”

“Then I tell you,” he said. “I swear I will speak neither to your men nor to your women until ye believe in Allah and His messenger.” And by nightfall there was no man or woman of his clan who had not entered Islam.

Mus’ab lived with the Muslim of al Aws and al Khazraj and taught them Islam while their numbers increased with new converts every day.

When the holy months returned, Mus’ab travelled to Makka and reported to Prophet Muhammad^P the progress of the Muslims at Madina and their solidarity and support for him. He also said that a greater number of them would be arriving that season to perform the pilgrimage.



CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Towards A New Society

The Prophet^P knew that the well-watered land between two tracts of black stones that he had seen in a vision was Yathrib, and he knew that this time he too would have to emigrate.

Not long after Mus'ab's departure, some of the Muslims of Yathrib set upon the pilgrimage as had been arranged between him and them, in all seventy-three men and two women, hoping to make contact with the Prophet^P. When Prophet Muhammad^P learned of their arrival, he thought of concluding another pact with them which would be limited to the preaching of Islam in the way followed during the last thirteen years. Beyond the preaching of gentleness and perseverance and sacrifice under attack, the times and their present dangers called for an alliance by which Muslims would help one another to prevent as well as to repel injury and attack.

Secretly Muhammad^P contacted the leaders of the group and learned of their good preparation for a task such as this. They agreed to meet at al Aqabah during the night on the second day following the pilgrimage. The Muslims of Yathrib kept this appointment secret and did not inform the unbelievers among their own tribe.

When the time came, they went to the place where they agreed to meet the Prophet^P, moving as secretly and quietly as possible. When they reached al Aqabah, men and women ascended the mountain and there awaited the arrival of the Prophet^P.

Prophet Muhammad^P arrived with his uncle al Abbas Ibn Abd al Muttalib. Al Abbas, who had not yet converted to Islam, knew from his nephew that this meeting was to conclude an alliance which might incite the Quraish to a war of hostility even though it was designed to achieve peace and security.

Prophet Muhammad^P had informed his uncle that, together with some members of Banu al Muttalib and Banu Hashim, he had agreed with the new group from Yathrib that they would protect him personally. Anxious to strengthen his nephew and people against a war whose losses might fall heavily upon Banu Hasim and Banu al Muttalib, al Abbas sought to make sure that among this group from Yathrib he would find real helpers and allies. The Prophet's uncle, al Abbas, was the first to open discussion. He said:

“O men from Khazraj, Prophet Muhammad's eminence and prestige among us are known to you. We have protected him even against those of his own people who think as highly of him as we do. Among us, he stands strong and secure. But he insists on joining your party.

“If you find yourselves capable of fulfilling toward him what you have promised, then you may proceed. But if you would betray him and send him over to his enemies once he has joined your party, you had better now say so and leave him alone.”

After hearing this speech of al Abbas, the men from Yathrib said, “We have heard what you said, O Abbas,” and turning to the Prophet^P they continued, “O Prophet of Allah, speak out and choose for yourself and your Lord what you desire.”

Prophet Muhammad^P, after reciting some verses from the Qur'an, preached his faith in Allah in moving terms. He then said to the men from Yathrib, "I make this pact with you on condition that the trust you pledge me shall bind you to protect me even as you protect your women and children." Bara rose and took his hand and said: "By Him who sent thee with the truth, we will protect thee as we protect them. So accept the pledge of our loyalty, O Messenger of Allah, for we are men of war, possessed of arms that have been handed down from father to son."

A man from Aws then broke in upon him and said: "O messenger of Allah, there are pacts between us and some Jews which we are going to sever. Should your cause succeed later on among your own tribe, would you return to them and leave us alone?" Prophet Muhammad^P smiled and said, "Nay, I'm yours and you are mine."

"Whom you make war against, him I make war against. Whom ye make peace with, him I make peace with."

The people were about to rise and give their pledge to Prophet Muhammad^P when al Abbas Ibn Ubadah interrupted and said:

"O men of Khazraj! Are you aware what you are about to pledge to this man? You are about pledge with him to make war against all sorts of men without discrimination. So if you think that when you suffer the loss of wealth and when some of your nobles are slain you will forsake him, forsake him now, for if you forsake him then it will bring shame upon you in this world and next. But if you think you will fulfil your pledge, then take him, for therein, by Allah, is the best of this world and the next."

All the people present answered together, “We take him despite all threats to property, wealth and life. Tell us, O Prophet^P of Allah, what will be our reward if we remain true to this oath?” With his usual self-reliance the Prophet^P answered, “Paradise”. They stretched out their hands to him, and he to them, and the pledge was concluded.

Thereafter, the Prophet^P said, “Elect twelve representatives who will be responsible to me regarding your behaviour and conduct, as well as who may look to the affairs of their people.”

So they appointed twelve representatives, nine from Khazraj and three from Aws, since the Khazraj delegation consisted of sixty-two men and two women, and the Aws of only eleven.

The Prophet^P addressed them in the following words:

“You are the guarantors of your people, just as the disciples were guarantors of theirs before Jesus^{AS}, son of Mary. I, for my part, am the guarantor of my people.” Such was their second pledge which included the words, “We have pledged to listen and to obey in health and in sickness, in fortune and misfortune, to tell the truth wherever we might be, and at all times to fear none in the cause of Allah.”

The morning had hardly come when the Quraish, learning of the new pact, were upset by it. The Quraish leaders went to al Khazraj in their own quarters and blamed them for what they had just done. The Quraish repeated that they sought no war against them and asked them why they had pledged with Muhammad^P to fight them on his side. The unbelievers of al Khazraj denied that any of this had taken

place. The Muslims on the other hand, kept silent and were saved from embarrassment when the Quraish believed their co-religionists.

Thus the news was neither confirmed nor denied, and the Quraish allowed the matter to stand until new proof could be brought forth.

The people of Yathrib returned to their city before the Quraish had reached any certainly about what had happened.

Later when the Quraish learned the truth, they ran after the people of Yathrib who'd departed the day before, but could catch up with none except Sa'd Ibn Ubadah. They took him to Makka in chains and tortured him until Jubayr Ibn Mut'am and al Harith Ibn Umayyah ransomed him as their agent in Yathrib when they passed by there on their way to al Sham.

Neither in their fear of them nor in their attempt to catch up with the people of Yathrib, who pledged with Muhammad^P to fight against them, did the Quraish underestimate the danger. For thirteen long years they had known and observed Prophet Muhammad^P. They had exerted enough effort in their war against Prophet Muhammad^P to exhaust their own as well as his energies.

The Quraish knew the Prophet^P to be a man holding onto his cause, come hail or storm water. They knew him as an unwavering man who feared neither harm nor death. For a moment, it seemed to the Quraish that, after all the injuries they inflicted upon him, after blockading him within Makka, and frightening the tribesmen enough to keep them from joining him, Prophet Muhammad's cause was about to fall.

They predicted that the Prophet's activity would from then onwards be restricted to his followers alone and that these would soon fall apart under their constant pressure.

The pledge between the Prophet^P and the Muslims from Yathrib had brought a new factor into the situation and gave him and his followers some hope of victory.

However, the Quraish were rightfully fearful of the future, since the pledge of al Aqabah rendered the Muslims safe against attack and gave them freedom to practice their new faith, to preach it to others, and to welcome the new converts under their protection.

The Quraish thought, therefore, that unless the Islamic Movement was uprooted completely, the future would continue to be threatening and the victory of Prophet Muhammad^P would be a most disturbing event.

The Quraish thought very hard about how they could counter-attack Prophet Muhammad^P in order to prevent the growth of Islam. He too gave the same problem no less thought. He looked upon the pledge as a gateway which Allah had unlocked before him in order to bring power and glory to Allah's Religion, to His truthful words. The war between him and the Quraish had then reached a new level of tension by becoming a matter of life and death for both parties.

Prophet Muhammad^P trusted, however, that victory belonged to the truthful. He decided to rally his people to trust in Allah, in utter disregard of the Quraish and their plotting. He therefore must march forward but with wisdom, precision and sure steps. The new

situation called for the greatest possible statesmanship and the ablest generalship in time of battle.

Subsequently, Prophet Muhammad^P commanded his companions to follow al Ansar in Yathrib. Ansar literally means, “the helpers”, the name given by Prophet Muhammad^P to the first Muslims of Yathrib (Madina). He ordered them to exit from Makka in very small groups so that they would not give cause to the Quraish to suspect or attack them. The Muslims began to leave individually or in small groups.

When the Quraish realized what they were about, they began to return those whom they could catch to Makka to suffer punishment. This Makka countermeasure was carried out with such determination that a man and wife were separated whenever a pair wanted to exit from Makka. Those who disobeyed were locked up in jail.

The Muslims, nonetheless, continued to leave from Makka and to emigrate to Yathrib. Prophet Muhammad^P remained where he was, nobody knowing whether he, too, was planning to emigrate or not. None suspected him.

Previously, he had permitted his companions to emigrate to Abyssina without going there himself; he had stayed behind and continued to call the Makkans to Islam. Indeed, even Abu Bakr^R asked the Prophet^P for permission to emigrate to Yathrib. The Prophet advised, “Don’t hurry; perhaps Allah may yet give you a companion for your trip.”

However, the Quraish were quite fearful lest the Prophet^P himself emigrate to Yathrib. The Muslims in that city had become so numerous

that the authority to rule the city was almost theirs. The Muhajirun, who were arriving at Yathrib in numbers, strengthened and increased Muslim power. Muhajirun literally means, “the emigrants”, applied to those Muslims of Makka who made their Hijra (emigration) before or after the Prophet^P to Madina.

Should Prophet Muhammad^P himself go there? The Quraish feared that under his wise and farsighted leadership and persistence, the people of Yathrib might even seek to attack Makka or cut off their trade route to al Sham (Syria). If this ever became a reality, the Muslims would avenge the boycott and isolation of the Muslims in kind by cutting Makkan trade routes.

On the other hand, even if the Quraish were to succeed in keeping Prophet Muhammad^P in Makka and thus prevent him from joining his companions, the Quraish were still exposed to the danger of the people of Yathrib attacking them in defence of their Prophet^P.

Hence the Quraish decided that their only option was to kill the Prophet^P and get rid of this persistent trouble once and of all. But if they succeeded in killing him, Banu Hashim and Banu al Muttalib would surely seek to avenge his blood, and the civil war which they feared so much would break out within Makka and bring a greater danger than that which they feared might come from the side of Yathrib.

In al Nadwa, their community house, the Quraish gathered in order to find a means to carry out their plot. One of them suggested, “Let us catch him and lock him up in jail. Thus he will suffer the same fate

as other possessed people and poets like Zuhayr, al Nabighah, and others.” This view found no supporters.

Another suggested, “Let us carry him out of our country and banish him and then forget about him altogether.” This too, found no supporters because the Quraish feared that Prophet Muhammad^P might join followers in Yathrib and lead them against Makka – a frightful possibility, indeed.

Finally, they concluded that the only answer was that each one of their clans delegate a strong youth and arm him with a sharp sword so that all of these assassins could kill the Prophet^P together in one stroke. In that way, responsibility for his death would be equally divided among all, thus making revenge almost impossible.

In this way, the Quraish would put an end to the “troublemaker who had broken their unity and sapped their power”.

The Quraish thought well of this counsel and carefully chose their assassins. They expected that the story of the Prophet^P was soon to come to an end, that his cause would soon be buried and forgotten, and that those who had migrated to Yathrib would soon return to their tribe, their former religion and gods, and that the Quraish would resume the unity and leadership that it had almost lost.

No one doubted that Prophet Muhammad^P would seize any opportunity to carry out his plan for emigration. But no one knew of any plans he might have had; not even Abu Bakr^R, who had been commanded to be on the alert and ready ever since he asked the Prophet^P for permission to emigrate and the Prophet^P advised him to

wait. Prophet Muhammad^P remained in Makka until he learned of the Quraish's plot to assassinate him and until none but the fewest Muslims were still left there with him.

He wanted from the command of his Lord to make the Hijrah (emigration for the sake of Allah). Soon Angel Gabriel^{AS} came with the command from Allah that he should emigrate. It was noon, an unusual time for visiting, but the Prophet^P went straight to the house of Abu Bakr^R who knew at once, as soon as he saw him at that hour, that something important had happened. "Allah allowed me to leave the city and to emigrate," he said.

"Together with me?" asked Abu Bakr^R.

"Together with thee," said the Prophet. A'ishah^R used to say afterwards: "I knew not before that day that one would weep for joy until I saw Abu Bakr^R weep at those words."

When the two men planned to leave Makka, they were absolutely certain that the Quraish would follow them in their trail in order to seize them and bring them back. Hence, Prophet Muhammad^P decided to surprise his enemies by leaving at a time hardly thinkable to them.

The young men chosen to kill him had agreed to meet outside his gate after nightfall. The Prophet^P and Ali^R were soon aware of their presence; and the Prophet^P took up a cloak in which he used to sleep and gave it to Ali^R, saying: "Sleep thou on my bed, and wrap thyself in this green Hadrami cloak of mine. Sleep in it, and no harm shall come to thee from them." He further asked Ali^R to remain in Makka

until he had returned all things left with the Prophet^P to their rightful owners. Then he began to recite the Surah that is named after its opening letters, Ya-Sin: and, when he came to the words, *And We have enshrouded them, so that they see not*, he went out of the house; and Allah took away their sight so that they did not see him, and he passed through their midst and went on his way.

The Quraish men waiting to kill the Prophet^P felt reassured whenever, looking through a hole in the door, they saw somebody sleeping in the Prophet's bed.

Prophet Muhammad^P picked up Abu Bakr^R at the latter's house and from there they proceeded through a back door southward toward a cave of Thawr. The southerly direction of their flight was inconceivable to everyone. When they had gone a little way beyond the outskirts of Makka, the Prophet^P halted his camel, and looked back and said: "Of all Allah's earth, thou art the dearest place unto me and the dearest unto Allah, and had not my people driven me out from thee I would not have left thee."

Nobody knew their hiding place in the cave except Abdullah, son of Abu Bakr^R, his two sisters, A'ishah^R and Asma, and their servant Amir Ibn Fuhayrah. Abdullah spent the day in Makka listening to what the Quraish said and plotted about the Prophet^P and then reported it to the pair at the hideout under cover of night. Amir grazed the sheep of Abu Bakr^R and passed by the cave in the evening in order to give them some milk and meat.

Upon Abdullah's return from the cave, Amir would follow him with all his sheep and then conceal any trace of his steps. For three long

days, the pair remained in the cave, whilst the Quraish were running around searching for them.

Meanwhile, Prophet Muhammad^P spent most of his time praying to Allah and asking His blessings, and Abu Bakr^R continually sought to find out whether they were being discovered and to look after their security.

The young men of the Quraish who had been chosen to kill the Prophet^P continued their search and came close to the cave, fully armed and ready for the kill. When they found a shepherd in the vicinity, they asked him about the Prophet^P and Abu Bakr^R. He answered, “Perhaps they are within the cave, although I have not seen anyone go in or out.” When he heard the shepherd’s answer, Abu Bakr^R trembled with fear and expected the Quraish to break into the cave any moment. He withdrew into a corner and, trusting in Allah, remained motionless.

Some members of the Quraish party climbed up to the cave, and the foremost among them turned round as soon as he saw the cave entrance. His companions asked him, “Why have you not gone into the cave?” He answered, “Its entrance is covered with cobwebs, and there is a pair of wild pigeons at the entrance. Obviously, no one could have gone in without disturbing the pigeons and destroying the cobwebs.”

At that moment, Muhammad^P prayed while Abu Bakr^R continued to shake with fear. To Abu Bakr^R, who pressed closer to the Prophet^P, the latter whispered, “Do not grieve; Allah is with us.” According to some Hadith books, it is reported that when the Quraish party arrived

at the cave entrance, Abu Bakr^R exclaimed: “If any one of them looks at his feet he will find us,” and that the Prophet^P had answered, “O Abu Bakr^R, grieve not, for verily Allah is with us.”

The Quraish men were further convinced that the cave was empty when they saw the entrance to the cave covered – indeed blocked – with branches growing from a tree nearby. They then agreed to leave and called one another for their return to Makka. Only then did the two refugees within the cave feel reassured. Abu Bakr’s faith in Allah and his Prophet^P became stronger, and the Prophet prayed: “Praised be to Allah! Allah is greater than all!”

The two men were successful in their hiding in the cave. However, the Quraish’s announcement of a hundred-camel reward to whomever would bring them back, or furnish information which would lead to their capture, was sufficient to mobilize the wealth-seeking Makkans for their search, even if it was a criminal one. Still, the Arabs of the Quraish had additional motivation to conduct such a search, for they regarded the Prophet^P as their enemy. And they were so revengeful and strong in their hate that no consideration could stop them from exploiting the weak and injuring the harmless.

A man soon arrived at Makka to report that on his way he’d met three riders whom he thought were the Prophet^P and his companions. Upon hearing this report, Suragah Ibn Jushum at once said: “Those are the sons of so and so.” His purpose was to lead his companions into ignoring the report so that he might capture the Prophet^P single-handedly and get the reward of a hundred camels.

A moment later, he returned home, loaded himself with arms, and ordered his servant to take his horse to the out skirts of the city so that no one would see him go. There, he arrayed himself for battle, mounted his horse, and galloped towards the spot where the Prophet^P was reported to have been seen. The Prophet^P and his two companions had at the time taken shelter under a tree to rest a little, to eat a meal and to freshen up.

The time was close to evening. Prophet Muhammad^P and Abu Bakr^R began to ready their beasts to resume their ride. Suragah was still as far from them as the eye could see. Tired with fatigue from all its galloping, Suragah's horse fell twice on the way. When the travellers came into his sight, and he realised he could now capture or kill them, Suragah forgot that his horse had fallen twice already. He spurred it once more and hurried it toward them. The horse fell to the ground with its rider. At this turn, Suragah felt very fearful that the gods were against him carrying out his scheme and that he might be exposing himself to grave danger should he spur his horse forward for the fourth time.

After stopping, he called to the travellers: "I'm Suragah Ibn Jushum. Wait for me so that I may talk to you. By God, I shall do you neither harm nor injury." When he arrived, he asked the Prophet^P to write him a note with which to prove his present encounter. At the Prophet's command, Abu Bakr^R wrote a note to this effect which Suragah took and returned home.

His unfortunate venture softened him, and he spread the news that the riders were not Muhammad^P and his party at all!

Prophet Muhammad^P and his two companions set forth toward Yathrib across mountains, hills and deserts, whose sands were glowing with heat. Since they were off the beaten track, they hardly found anything with which to lessen the hardships of sun and thirst.

Furthermore, they were ever fearful that the Quraish or some other people might surprise and overtake them. Their only consolation was their patient trust in Allah and the truth revealed to His Prophet^P. For seven days they travelled, lying low during the heat of the day and moving with great haste under cover of night.

In the stillness of night and the brilliance of its stars lay their only security and assurance. When they reached the quarters of the tribe of Banu Sahn, where the elder chieftain Buraydah came over to meet them, their fears lessened, and for the first time, their hearts sped with hope and assurance of victory. They had almost reached their journey's end.

During the Prophet's long and tiring trip, the news reached his companions in Yathrib that he had emigrated from Makka in order to join them.

Aware of the enmity of the Quraish and of their attempts to follow and to seize the Prophet^P, the Muslims waited anxiously for his arrival and looked very much forward to hearing the details of his escape.

Many of them had never seen the Prophet^P before, although they had heard a great deal about his dynamic personality and unique character. Naturally, they were quite anxious to meet him. We can imagine the zeal of these men when they knew that a number of

notables from Yathrib had followed the Prophet^P even though they had never seen him before. Their knowledge of him depended on his companions who had spoken to them of their love for him and who had been staunchly carrying his message.

As the Prophet^P neared his arrival in Madina, a new chapter in the history of mankind was about to be written. The Ummah (community carrying out God's will) has finally landed.



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ISLAMIC DAWAH MOVEMENT *of Southern Africa (IDM)*

THE ISLAMIC DAWAH MOVEMENT OF SOUTHERN AFRICA (IDM)

Introduction: IDM is primarily involved in promoting the message of Islam to all the people of Southern Africa. With humble beginnings in 1977, it has now grown to be one of the largest dawah organizations in the country and the Southern African region, with over 35 years of experience, expertise and professionalism backing it.

The Dawah Network Unit is the largest in the sub-continent, with scores of Islamic Centres under its portfolio and over 50 duaat employed. The IDM is continuously building Masaajid, classroom blocks, boreholes, Imaam's quarters and clinics in Southern Africa. This Unit conducts a host of dawah outreach programmes continuously throughout the year.

The Human Resource Development Unit has assumed sub-continental proportions, with the organization of major workshops, seminars and in-service training, incorporating the Southern Africa region; on fiqh, dawah, leadership and management, socio-political, and economic issues; often in conjunction with other international and regional organizations.

The Publications and Research Unit is playing a significant role in the making of a truly “Iqraa” Community in Southern Africa. This Unit researches and publishes, for free distribution, topics relevant to the Southern African scenario. It incorporates the bookshop and the translation of the Quran into 3 major languages of Southern Africa.

The Education and Training, Skills Development, and Capacity Building Unit: Running as a thread and interspersed with the other activities is the significant educational and education-related activities grouped together under the banner of the Education and Training, Skills Development and Capacity Building Unit. Under this unit, scores of scholarships are made available; and various different types of education-related grass-roots based activities are conducted on an on-going basis. These activities include computer classes, ABET (Adult Basic Education Training) classes, pre-schools, sewing and embroidery classes, home based gardening skills programme, in-service training, Train the Trainers courses, adult Islamic classes, and youth training camps.

The Welfare Unit encompasses the feeding of hundreds of children daily at Madaaris, building of clinics and boreholes, and a host of other welfare-related activities.

Conclusion: IDM is currently in a favourable position to effectively enhance and accelerate the Islamisation process in the Southern African region. *Alhamdulillah*■

THE MISSION OF IDM

The mission of IDM is to promote the message of the unity of God to all the people of Southern Africa so that they may achieve their God given potential of excellence and purity; and in this way contribute to the moral, spiritual, social, intellectual and economic growth of the nations as a whole.■

IDM PUBLICATIONS AND RESEARCH UNIT

IDM Publications and Research Unit is a division of the Islamic Dawah Movement of Southern Africa. The primary thrust of the unit is to search, research and publish selective and relevant topics on Islam especially for the region of Southern Africa. It has published innumerable titles, (books and leaflets) as well as translations of the Quran, in 3 major local languages, *Alhamdulillah*. The unit concentrates on already published works, which are out of print, but are relevant to the region and in keeping with our aims and objectives. IDM has published titles primarily in English. However, its publications include titles in various local languages including Xhosa, Zulu, Afrikaans, Oshiwambo and Burundi languages.

A major objective of this Unit, through its publications, is to eliminate ambiguity and misconceptions of certain issues within the value system of Islam; hoping thereby to present the real and authentic Islam to both the Muslims and Non-Muslims alike.

The IDM Publications and Research Unit intends to continue to publish a variety of topics on Islam that would primarily aid in a better understanding of the true Islam amongst the people of Southern Africa, and thereby help to catalyse the process of Islamisation regionally and globally. The overall aim and objective of this Unit is to present Islamic principles and values to Muslims and Non-Muslims in order to help them understand this religion and way of life, which advocates unity, justice, brotherhood, tolerance and peace, which is Islam.■



IDM Publications and Research Unit
Division of the Islamic Dawah Movement
of Southern Africa

P.O. BOX 48009, Qualbert, 4078, Durban, South Africa
Tel: (+27-31) 304 6883 Fax: (+27-31) 305 1292
Email: idm@ion.co.za www.idmdawah.co.za

 [islamic.dawah](https://www.facebook.com/islamic.dawah)  [idm_sa](https://twitter.com/idm_sa)