

APPENDIX

Islam: The Message and the Messenger (Unabridged)

الرسالة و الرسول

Mecca: The Consecrated City

The Biblical story of **Abraham** states that he migrated from Ur in Southern Mesopotamia to Haran, on one of the upper Euphrates tributaries, in northern Syria. In Haran, God appeared to him and commanded: “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be blessing” (Genesis 12:1–2). This land was Palestine. The myth dates this event to the second millennium BCE.

The myth also states that **Sarah** gave Abraham her Egyptian slave, **Hagar**, to be his concubine in hopes that God might give him a child through her, as Sara could not produce children because of her advanced age. Hagar gave birth to a child named **Ismael**. Abraham’s joy was great. As Sarah watched Hagar looking after her newborn son, Ismael, her jealousy grew stronger every day, especially when she noticed that Abraham was showing great love to Hagar and Ismael.

The second chapter takes place far away from Palestine. Sarah requested that Abraham send Hagar and Ismael away. Abraham traveled with Hagar and Ismael from Hebron in south Palestine to a desolate valley in the Arabian Peninsula which came to be known as **Mecca**—a forty-day trip by camel. Abraham left Hagar and her son in that uninhabited place, with little food—mainly dates—and a small amount of water, and went back to Palestine where he had left Sarah. He was sorry to leave them in the desert; however, he believed that God himself had guided him to that place. As he left, Hagar shouted to him: Are you abandoning us here on God’s order? When his answer was affirmative, she said: “He who has ordered you to do that will not abandon us.”

On his way back to Palestine, Abraham was still concerned about the fate of the family that he had abandoned. He stopped to pray, addressing his God:

Our Lord, I have settled some of my offspring in a valley where there is no vegetation, by Your Sacred House, our Lord, so that they may perform the prayers. So make the hearts of some people incline towards them, and provide them with fruits, that they may be thankful.

(Chapter 13, Ibrahim)

رَبَّنَا إِنِّي أَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ رَبَّنَا لِيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ فَاجْعَلْ أَفْنِدَةً مِنَ
النَّاسِ تَهْوِي إِلَيْهِمْ وَارْزُقْهُمْ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْكُرُونَ (37)
سورة إبراهيم (13)

Hagar devoted herself to her young child. For a few days she and her son survived on the dates and water Abraham had left. Soon, however, her supply of food and water was exhausted. The two were soon very hungry and thirsty. She was in a valley between two hills: al-Safa and al-Marwah *المروى و الصفى*. She kept running between the two hills exploring the area around her, hoping to find somebody to help. When she had run between the two hills seven times, she heard a voice very close to her, but she could not see anyone. It asked her who she was. She answered, “I am Hagar, the mother of Abraham’s son.” The voice asked her, “To whom has he entrusted you in this barren place?” She replied: “He entrusted us to the care of God.” The angel rejoined: “He has then trusted you to the All-Merciful, the Compassionate.” During this time, the boy, Ismael, was in the bottom of the valley between the two hills, rubbing the earth with his foot.

As she finished the conversation with the angel, and while the boy was rubbing his foot against the earth, water gushed forth between his feet. Hagar shouted, “God is Supreme.” She rushed back to her son. After giving her child enough to drink, she drank herself and thanked God for His grace. The water continued to gush forth and attracted birds. An Arabian tribe called the **Jurhum** was traveling north across the desert when they saw a bird flying nearby. They realized that a spring must be in the area. They moved toward the spring to wash and drink. They then met Hagar and realized that the spring belonged to her. She welcomed the Jurhum tribe and invited them to encamp. They liked the place, and Hagar was very happy to have them settle down in the area. This was the beginning of settled life in the valley of Mecca. Ismael grew up among the Jurhum tribe, and when he became a young man he married a Jurhum girl who gave him many sons and daughters. In effect he became one of the Jurhum tribe.

Abraham visited Hagar and Ismael every now and then. On one of his visits, Abraham saw in his dream that he was commanded to sacrifice his son, Ismael, for God’s sake. Ismael, who was in his teens at that time, did not deny his father:

Then, when he was old enough to accompany him, he said, “O my son, I see in a dream that I am sacrificing you; see what you think.” He said, “O my Father, do as you are commanded; you will find me, Allah willing, one of the steadfast.”

(Chapter 23, as-Saffat)

فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْيَ قَالَ يَا بُنَيَّ إِنِّي أَرَىٰ فِي الْمَنَامِ أَنِّي أَذْبَحُكَ فَانظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَىٰ ۚ قَالَ يَا أَبَتِ افْعَلْ مَا تُؤْمَرُ ۚ
سَتَجِدُنِي إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ (102)

(سورة الصافات 23)

Abraham and Ismael went to a place that became known as **Mina** منى and prepared to obey God’s orders. Satan tried to dissuade Abraham from sacrificing his son. Abraham’s submission to God’s will was firm, so he stoned Satan in three different spots. Just at the point when Abraham was about to cut his son’s throat, an angel appeared and told him to stop.

When they had both submitted to God, and he had laid his son down on the side, We called out to him, “O, Abraham! You have fulfilled the vision.” Thus We reward the doers of good. This was certainly an evident test. And We redeemed him with a great sacrifice. And We let him be praised by later generations. Peace to be upon Abraham. Thus We reward the doers of good. He was one of Our believing servants.

(Chapter 23, as-Saffat)

فَلَمَّا أَسْلَمَا وَتَلَّهُ لِلْجَبِينِ (103) وَنَادَيْنَاهُ أَنْ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ (104) قَدْ صَدَّقْتَ الرُّؤْيَا ۚ إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (105) إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ الْبَلَاءُ الْمُبِينُ (106) وَفَدَيْنَاهُ بِذَبْحٍ عَظِيمٍ (107) وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ (108) سَلَامٌ عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ (109) كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (110) إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (111)

(سورة الصافات 23)

On another visit, Abraham told his son that God had ordered him to erect a house in that place to serve as a consecrated temple. Both father and son worked hard to lay the foundations

and erect the building. As they completed the building, they prayed and asked God to accept their work and bless their seed. The Quran quotes their prayer:

As Abraham raises the foundations of the House, together with Ishmael, “Our Lord, accept it from us. You are the Hearer, the Knower. Our Lord, and make us submissive to You, from our descendants a community submissive to You. And show us our rites, and accept our repentance. You are the Acceptor of Repentance, the Merciful. Our Lord, and raise up among them a messenger, of themselves, who will recite to them Your revelations, and teach them the Book and wisdom, and purify them. You are the Almighty, the Wise.”

(Chapter 1, al-Baqara)

رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمِينَ لَكَ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُّسْلِمَةً لَّكَ وَأَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الرَّحِيمُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (129)

سورة البقرة (1)

We showed Abraham the location of the house: “Do not associate anything with Me, and purify My House for those who circle around, and those who stand to pray, and those who kneel and pray.” And announce the pilgrimage to humanity. They will come to you on foot and on every transport. They will come from every distant point. That they may witness the benefits for themselves, and celebrate the name of Allah during the appointed days, for providing them with the animal livestock. So eat from it, and feed the unfortunate poor. Then let them perform their acts of cleansing, and fulfill their vows, and circle around the Ancient House.

(Chapter 17, al-Hajj)

وَإِذْ بَوَّأْنَا لِإِبْرَاهِيمَ مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ أَنْ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِي شَيْئًا وَطَهِّرْ بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْقَائِمِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ (26) وَأَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا وَعَلَىٰ كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَأْتِينَ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجٍّ عَمِيقٍ (27) لِيَشْهَدُوا مَنَافِعَ لَهُمْ وَيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَّعْلُومَاتٍ عَلَىٰ مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِنَ بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ لَعَلَّكُمْ يَتَّقُونَ (28) ثُمَّ لِيَقْضُوا تَفَثَهُمْ وَلِيُوفُوا نَدْوَاهُمْ وَلِيَطُوفُوا بِالْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ (29)

سورة الحج (17)

God accepted the work done by Abraham and Ismael and answered their prayers. He made the building they erected into a center of worship to which people from all over the world came on pilgrimage. God told Abraham that it was his will that Mecca should be a consecrated city where fighting was forbidden. Its animals were to move about safely without fear of being hunted. It was forbidden to cut down its trees. People were secure and safe there. Such has been the status in Mecca ever since Abraham built that house which was the first House of God ever built.

The pagan Arabs believed that this sanctuary, the **Ka'bah**, was built first by Adam, the first man. They also believed that Adam's original building was

destroyed by the Great Flood, then rebuilt by Noah. They also believed that after Noah, it was forgotten for generations until Abraham rediscovered it while visiting Hagar and Ismael. The truth is that no one knows who built the Ka'bah, or when it was built. Most likely the discovery of **Zamzam** زمزم in the middle of the desert by the wandering Bedouin tribes of Arabia was the reason for the sanctity of the area. It is likely, then, that the **Ka'bah** الكعبة was erected in that valley not just as a sacred place, but as a secure place to store the consecrated objects used in the rituals that had evolved around Zamzam.

The Quraysh, Custodians of the Ka'bah

The Jurhum tribe was the first to settle in Mecca. In time, other tribes came and settled there. The Jurhum, who were considered the “maternal uncles of Ismael,” became the custodians of the Ka'bah. As such, the Jurhum were the leaders of Mecca. They continued to hold their position as custodians of the Ka'bah for a long time. However, as time passed, they abused their position, which resulted in them losing the honor of the custody of the Ka'bah to another tribe, the **Khusa'ah** خزاعة. The Jurhum did not surrender willingly. As they left Mecca, they collected all the treasures of the Ka'bah, buried them in the well of Zamzam, leveled the well, and removed all traces of its location.

The Khusa'ah tribe held the custodianship of the Ka'bah and the leadership of Mecca for a long time, until the **Quraysh** tribe, under the leadership of **Qusayy ibn Kila'b**, took over. Qusayy was the fifth grandfather of the Prophet, Muhammad bin Abdulla'h. Qusayy, who was an intelligent, honorable young man of the Quraysh, married the daughter of the Khusa'ah chief **Hulayl ibn Hubshiyah**. Hulayl recognized the qualities of leadership in Qusayy and was very fond of him. On his deathbed, Hulayl made it known that Qusayy was his choice as custodian of the Ka'bah and ruler of Mecca.

After settling disputes with his rivals, Qusayy asked all the clans of Quraysh to join him in his effort to organize the city. He earned the support and respect from all the clans of his tribe. He built a big hall next to Ka'bah to serve as a meeting place for the Quraysh and called it **Dar al-Nadwah** دار الندوة. In this building he gathered representatives of all clans for consultations. He also established the tradition of **Rifadah** الرفادة where he offered the pilgrims food they needed when they arrived in the city. He gathered the Quraysh notables and set the rules of al-Rifadah: “The pilgrims when they visit God's House are God's guests. You must be hospitable to them. Let us then provide them with food and drinks in the days of pilgrimage until they have left our city to return to their homes and families.”

Qusayy was succeeded by a number of leaders from his offspring who continued the same traditions of looking after the tribe and taking care of the pilgrims. **Hasidim**, Qusayy's grandson, put hospitality to pilgrims on an unprecedented level. He provided all the funds needed for Rifadah from his own wealth, which came from trade. He was interested in offering his commercial expertise to all members of his tribe so that he could enhance the wealth of the entire community. He started the **biannual commercial trips**: in the summer a large commercial caravan went from Mecca to Syria, and a similar one went to Yemen in winter. Each caravan was a joint enterprise in which all Meccan people shared. It brought profit to the people and prosperity to the city.

One of the most prominent successors of Hashim was his son Abd al-Muttalib, who continued the tradition of Rifadah. However, he faced the problem of the water shortage in

Mecca. There were only few scattered wells, which hardly were sufficient for the needs of the population. One night he dreamed a voice was telling him to “dig the good one.” This dream was repeated for several nights. In his dream, Abd al-Muttalib asked the voice, “What is the good, blessed one?” For the first several nights he did not get an answer. At last, one night the voice answered: “Dig Zamzam.” The following morning Abd al-Muttalib started digging between al-Safa and al-Marwah. He dug for three days until his shovel hit something metallic. When he removed the sand around the metallic object, he discovered two gold deer and other valuables, including a large quantity of shields and swords. He recognized that these were the objects that the Jurhum had buried in Zamzam when they left Mecca. He continued digging, and soon he found the well. He shouted: “God is supreme. This is indeed Ismael’s well. This is Zamzam, the drinking water of pilgrims.” Abd al-Muttalib and his offspring dedicated the well for the benefit of the pilgrims and continued to provide them with all the water they needed.

Social and Economic Life in Arabia before Islam

During the sixth century CE, nomadic life (*badawah* البداوة) was the rule in northern Arabia. Settled life in the steppes was almost impossible, due to the scarcity of resources. Nomads relied on herding sheep and goats, and breeding horses and camels, for their existence. Nomadic life was harsh, characterized by constant struggle, because there were too many people competing for too few resources. They were constantly wandering in search of water and grazing land for cattle. Always hungry, on the brink of starvation, they fought with other tribes for water, pastureland, and grazing rights. Consequently the *gazu* الغزو (**acquisition raid**) was essential to the *badawah* economy. In times of scarcity, tribesmen would invade the territory of their neighbors for the purpose of stealing camels, cattle, or other valuables; however, they avoided killing anybody. The *gazu* was not considered a crime or morally wrong; it was a rough means of redistributing wealth when there was not enough to satisfy the needs for survival.

The tribe was the basic unit of social life in nomadic Arabia; and the tribal society was governed by a traditional tribal ethic. The nomads’ survival was dependent on a strong sense of tribal solidarity on the basis of sharing all available resources. **“The tribal ethic was founded on the principle that every member had an essential function in maintaining the stability of the tribe, which was only as strong as its weakest members. The tribal ethic was meant to maintain social egalitarianism so that regardless of one’s position, every member could share in the social and economic rights and privileges that preserved the unity of the tribe.”**

During the sixth century, the Bedouins invented a saddle that enabled camels to carry far heavier loads than before. Camels then replaced donkeys for transporting the merchants’ luxury goods such as gold, precious stones, ivory, wood, spices, cotton, and silk from India; incense, ebony, ostrich feathers, gold, and ivory from East Africa; incense, myrrh, and other spices from Yemen; gum from Zufar; and pearls from the coast of Bahrain. As Mecca was conveniently located in the center of the Hijaz, it became the trade station for the caravans traveling north to Syria. Settled life was possible in this location after the rediscovery of the spring of Zamzam.

The head of the tribe, called the *shaykh* الشيخ, was unanimously elected by the tribe. The shaykh was the most highly respected member of the community, and usually one of the oldest. He represented the ideals of *murawah* المروءة; that is, bravery, honor, hospitality, strength in battle, concern for justice, and dedication to the collective good of the tribe. All decisions related to the interest of the tribe were made by the shaykh after consultation with other prominent

members of the tribe, such as the *qa'id* القائد war leader; **the kahin** الكاهن, the cultic official; and the *hakam* الحكم, the arbitrator. The shaykh's main responsibility was to protect those who could not protect themselves: the poor and the weak, the young and the elderly, the orphaned and widowed.

Maintaining law and peace in the tribe was the responsibility of the shaykh, who enforced the traditional **law of retribution**. This law was based on the concept of "an eye for an eye." It was the responsibility of the shaykh to maintain peace and stability in his community by ensuring the proper retribution for all crimes committed within the tribe. In cases where negotiation was required, then a *hakam* who acted as an arbiter and would make a legal decision.

Actions committed against other tribes were not considered crimes. Stealing, killing, or injuring another person was not considered morally wrong. However, if someone from one tribe harmed a member of another, the injured tribe—if strong enough—could demand retribution. In such a case, it was the responsibility of the shaykh to ensure that other tribes understood that any act of aggression against his people would be equally avenged. At the same time, it was his responsibility to negotiate a settlement if a member of his tribe committed a crime.

A **sedentary** (*hadarah* الحضارة) lifestyle was possible in northern Arabia in areas where enough water was available to establish and maintain agriculture. There were a few agricultural communities in the region where this was possible; **Ta'if and Yathrib** were among them. A sedentary lifestyle also became possible when a tribe accumulated enough wealth through other means. This happened in the north at the border with Syria, for example, when the tribe of Gassan settled on the border and became clients of the Byzantine Empire, defending Byzantium against Persia. It was also possible when a tribe accumulated enough wealth through trade, as happened in Mecca when it became a trade station.

Several factors were behind the establishment of sedentary life in mountainous, arid Mecca. The first and most important one was the discovery of an underground water source, the miraculous spring of Zamzam. Mecca's location in the center of the Hijaz made it a trade station for the caravans traveling north to Syria, and the availability of plentiful drinking water cemented its status. It was not just water that attracted travelers to Mecca, however; the sanctity of Zamzam and the mythology behind the discovery of the spring were even more important. Nature's gifts to the Bedouins laid down the foundation for the society's transformation from a *badawah* to a sedentary one. However, the human element—that is, the vision of the leaders of the Quraysh—was behind Mecca's transformation into the capital city of Arabia.

Mecca, the Consecrated City, Becomes the Financial Center of Arabia

During the second half of the sixth century CE, Mecca became the most prosperous city in Arabia. This transformation is attributed to the vision and wisdom of its leaders. The policies they established in governing the city and the measures they adopted in dealing with the other tribes enabled them to make Mecca the capital of Arabia. The first step in this direction was taken by Qusayy, who laid down the foundations of the institutions of government. The system of government he established was based on a balanced distribution of responsibilities and functions. He adopted a policy of involving the heads of all clans in decision making. Dar al-Nadwah was the place where the representatives of all clans met to discuss all matters that concern the community. He was always seeking their input before making important decisions. It was a government by consensus. By the standard of the time, that was quite an advanced system of government which helped Mecca to change from a semi-Bedouin town into a civilized city.

The Quraysh established the **Haram** الحرم، a zone with a twenty-mile radius with the Ka'bah at its center, where all violence and hostilities were forbidden. The Ka'bah transformed the entire surrounding area into sacred ground where fighting among tribes was prohibited and weapons were not allowed. The Quraysh made special agreements with Bedouin tribes, who promised not to attack the caravans during the season of the trade fairs; in return, these Bedouins were compensated for the loss of income by being allowed to work as guides and protectors of the merchants. The pilgrims who traveled to Mecca during the pilgrimage season enjoyed the peace and the security of the sacred grounds.

Quraysh leaders were aware of the great value of the Ka'bah as a spiritual center. They realized that combining trade and religion would advance the economy of their city. Guided by this principle, they reconstructed the architecture of the sanctuary so that it became a spiritual center for all Arab tribes. They collected the totems of the tribes and installed them in the Haram so that the tribesmen could worship their patronal deities when they visited Mecca. Unlike the other sanctuaries in Arabia, the Ka'bah was unique, as it became a universal shrine. Every god in pre-Islamic Arabia resided in the Ka'bah, which led to a deep spiritual attachment not only to the sanctuary, but also to the city of Mecca. The Quraysh created a lucrative trading zone in the city where pilgrims brought along merchandise to trade. By linking the religious and economic life of the city, Qusayy and his descendants developed an innovative religio-economic system that relied on control of the Ka'bah. During the pilgrimage season, Mecca hosted pilgrims, merchants, and commercial caravans. All caravans passing by the city would camp at the outskirts of the Meccan Valley, where their loads were assessed by Mecca's officials; these officials collected a modest fee (tax) on all commerce that took place in the valley. The caravans would then enter the city and clean themselves at the well of Zamzam before introducing themselves to the "Lord of the House" and starting the circumambulation rituals around the Ka'bah.

Mecca during the sixth century was not just a trade station for the caravans traveling north; it was the financial center of Arabia. The Quraysh organized two commercial trips every year: to Syria in the summer and to Yemen in winter. These caravans, in which all clans participated, brought wealth to the community. They ranged in size from several hundred camel loads to almost a thousand camel loads. Meccan merchants also traveled to many parts of Africa and Asia.

Alongside the emergence of long-distance international trade, intertribal trade within Arabia began to emerge around the **seasonal suqs** أسواق (**marketplaces**). The *suqs* established regular, organized links between the sedentary communities of the peninsula. They also set the foundation for the rules of the secure zone around Mecca. The most important of these was the prohibition on fighting and raiding for four months of the year (these were the *ashhur haram*, "forbidden months" الأشهر المحرمة), which happened to be the months during which all of the *suqs* of the Hijaz and more than half of the *suqs* in the peninsula were held. Bedouin tribes began to exchange goods with one another. Merchants brought their goods to a series of regular markets that were held each year in different parts of Arabia; these were timed so that traders circled the peninsula in a clockwise direction. The first *suq* of the year was held in Bahrain, followed successively by the *suqs* in Oman, Hadramat, and Yemen. The cycle concluded with five consecutive *suqs* in and around Mecca. The last *suq* of the year was held in Ukaz immediately before the month of the *hajj*, or pilgrimage to Mecca.

The Quraysh took all measures to preserve peace in the Haram zone, especially during the sacred months to prevent any disruption of commercial activities. The Quraysh were successful



in achieving this goal for most of the time, except during the al-Fijar wars, which lasted for a period of four years in the late sixth century CE. A series of battles took place between the Quraysh and the Hawazin in response to a quarrel between two merchants that had occurred in the vicinity of Ukaz during one of the four holy months. The man from Hawazin was murdered by a man from Quraysh. These battles became known as the *hurub al-Fijar* (sinful wars حروب الفجور). It is reported that Mecca was forced into fighting after having opted to withdraw, out of respect for the sacred month. The other tribe, the Hawazin, did not abide by the prohibition against fighting during the holy months, so the war continued for four years.

Shortly after the end of the *hurub al-Fijar*, a visiting Yemeni merchant from **Zubayd** agreed to sell some of his goods to a prominent Meccan merchant, **al-A's ibn Wa'il**. Ibn Wa'il bought them all but did not pay him. When the man realized that he was about to lose everything, he appealed to several clans of the Quraysh to support him. They all declined to stand against the Meccan merchant. It became obvious that the law of retribution did not function when one party in a dispute was wealthy and powerful. In his desperation, the Yemeni from Zubayd stood on top of a hill overlooking the Ka'bah at sunrise, when the men of Quraysh gathered there. He made his appeal to them, stating his case in a passionate and desperate manner. He reminded them of

their position as the custodians of the Sacred House of worship. **Al-Zubayr ibn Abd al-Muttalib**, an uncle of Muhammad, stood up and said that the injustice must not be allowed.

A meeting was organized in the house of **Abdullah ibn Jud'an**. Representatives of many clans of the Quraysh were present. The attendants gave their pledges, swearing by God that they would stand united, supporting anyone in Mecca who suffered any injustice, whether he was a Meccan or an alien. The alliance then forced ibn Wa'il to return the goods to the man of Zubayd. The alliance became known as the **al-Fudul Alliance** تحالف الفضول, and their agreement became known as al-Fudul Covenant. This covenant aimed at preserving commercial integrity and preventing the exclusion of Yemenites or merchants of other tribes from the Meccan market.

The Quraysh managed to secure a monopoly on north-south trade so that they alone were allowed to service the foreign caravans. They also were able to control the intertribal trade, because the *suqs* were arranged in a way that benefited Mecca the most. The seasonal rotation around the peninsula that ended in Mecca and stayed there for four months emphasized the position of Mecca as the financial center of Arabia. Its location in the center of the Hijaz, surrounded by vast desert, gave Mecca relative isolation from Byzantium and Persia, the great powers of the region. Neither of them had any interest in the difficult terrain of Arabia, so the Quraysh could create a modern economy without imperial control. The separation from the great powers led to an independent economy that was immune to the decline of these empires' fortunes. In the late part of the sixth century and the start of the seventh, Persia and Byzantium were engaged in debilitating wars with one another which resulted in both being weakened. Because these wars were fought across Syria and Mesopotamia the trade routes in these regions were abandoned. The Quraysh took advantage of the situation by gaining control of the intermediary trade between north and south. This period also witnessed the decline of Yemen and serious conflicts among several trading peninsular tribes. All these factors enhanced Mecca's position and contributed to the success of the Quraysh in their efforts to monopolize trade in Arabia.

Mecca's competitors realized that its innovative religio-economic system was behind its growth and increased wealth. This is why the Abyssinians tried to destroy the Ka'bah after constructing their own pilgrimage center in Sana'h. They targeted Mecca's sanctuary, not because the Ka'bah was a religious threat, but because Mecca was an economic rival.

Mecca enjoyed its position as the largest city in Arabia. The Quraysh leaders became extremely wealthy. The prominent merchants controlled most of the wealth. The wealthy people were controlled by the rules of the market economy—ruthless competition, greed, and individual enterprise—not the communal spirit and tribal ethics. The wealthy clans were engaged in fierce competition with one another for wealth and prestige. Instead of sharing their wealth with the other members of the community, they were hoarding it and building private fortunes. They not only ignored the plight of the poor, but exploited the rights of orphans and widows. The principles of *murawah* seemed incompatible with the market economy. Cruelty, unjust practices, and depriving others of their rights by force went unpunished. This inevitably led to tension and the destruction of the fabric of Meccan society.

The Great Powers Surrounding Arabia

The Near East in the sixth century CE was divided between two great empires: the **Roman Empire** in the west and the **Persian Empire** in the east. The Roman Empire was known as the **Eastern Roman Empire** or the **Byzantine Empire**. The western part of the Roman Empire had

ceased to exist in the fifth century after it was overrun by barbarians. The Byzantine Empire, with its capital, Constantinople, survived and was able to expand in the sixth century. It included Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt, North Africa, and southeastern Europe. It also controlled the Mediterranean Islands and part of Italy. The **Persian (Sassanian) Empire** was known as Iran or Iranshahr. The Sassanids came to power in 224 CE, and retained their dominance until the mid-seventh century. Their territory included modern-day Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, eastern Syria and Turkey, part of the Caucasus, and the Persian Gulf.

The two empires were engaged in many wars between the fourth and sixth centuries in an effort to protect or extend their territories. Both empires were interested in controlling the key zones of Mesopotamia and Armenia and establishing alliances with lesser states in the region. The Christian kingdom of Aksum was a Byzantine client-state. Byzantium also controlled Arab tribes on the border of Palestine and Syria. The Sassanians established several protectorates over Arab tribes on the East Arabian coast and in Oman.

Both empires were interested in financial and economic gain from profitable trade with the Orient. Different products were brought from the East to the Mediterranean basin: southern Arabian incense, Chinese silk, Indian pepper and cotton, spices, and other products from the Indian Ocean region. Arabia occupied a strategic position in trade with the Orient, which led both Byzantium and Persia to intervene in its affairs. In 525 CE Byzantium encouraged Aksum to invade the kingdom of Himyar in Yemen in order to control the Red Sea trade route to the Indian Ocean. In 575 CE, the Sassanians marched into southern Arabia and ousted the Aksumites from Yemen and appointed a governor from the Himyarites to rule Yemen as a client-state.

At the beginning of the seventh century CE, Persia started a massive military campaign against Byzantium, and between 611 and 620 CE was able to achieve major victories against Byzantium, seizing most of Anatolia, all of Syria-Palestine, and Egypt. In 614 CE, Persian forces entered Jerusalem and took away the True Cross. But in 622 CE, the Byzantine Heraclius emperor began his military campaign against the Persians. His campaign was successful, ending in decisive victory in 628 CE with Byzantium regaining all its territories, including Jerusalem. They were also able to expand the Byzantine Empire to include most of Mesopotamia. Two years later, Byzantium recovered the Holy Cross.

In the third and fourth centuries, the Byzantine emperors declared themselves champions of Christianity. In the sixth century the majority of the Near Eastern population were Christians, but they were divided into several sects. The official church of the Byzantine Empire was the Greek Orthodox. Christians following the teachings of Bishop Nestorius (Nestorianism) were forced to leave the Byzantine Empire after Nestorius was deposed for heresy by the Council of Ephesus in 431 CE; they took refuge in the Sassanian Empire. Another Christian sect, the Monophysites, was declared heretical by the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE. Monophysitism was the creed of most Christians in Aksum, Egypt, Syria-Palestine, Mesopotamia, Armenia, and Iran.

The Sassanian kings embraced Zoroastrianism as their official religion. The majority of the



population of Iran and southern Mesopotamia were Zoroastrians. Although both the Byzantine and the Sassanian empires embraced the official religions of their countries, large populations of Jews were scattered throughout the Near East in major cities such as Alexandria, Jerusalem, Tiberias, Antioch, Hamadan, Rayy, Susa, Constantinople, and Ctesiphon. Communities of all the three revealed scriptural religions—Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism—were also found in Arabia.

The Abyssinians

The Abyssinians were the third major empire bordering Arabia. Established around 400 BC, they embraced Christianity in the third century CE. They controlled the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea coast, and occasionally Western Arabia. They also controlled Yemen between 521 and 570 CE.

The Himyarites

It is believed that around 2500 BCE, Yemen was settled by the Qahtanian Arabs, who founded the empire of Saba (Sheba). Between 1300 and 650 BCE, they built the Dam of Ma'rib, which helped them to irrigate two adjacent valleys. This irrigation system allowed the empire to grow into a prosperous civilization that controlled the surrounding areas.

Around the second century CE, the Qahtanians were divided into two branches: Himyar and Kahlan. The Himyar branch stayed in Yemen, while the Kahlan branch was forced out. They spread north throughout the Arabian Peninsula. The following tribes belong to the Kahlan: Khuza'ah, Aws, Khazraj, Ghassan, and Lakhm.

After expelling the Kahlan, the Himyarites controlled Yemen between 115 BCE and 450 CE. However, the fractured empire was never able to regain its control over Arabia. It was intermittently invaded by Abyssinians, Persians, and Romans. Around 450 CE, cracks appeared in the ancient Ma'rib Dam, leading to great flooding in the region.

Besides the Qahtanians, a second group of tribes called the Adnanians originated in the central Arabian Peninsula (Hijaz and Najd). Among these were the Hawazin, Ghtafan, Thaqif, and Quraysh.

The Ghassanids

The Ghassanids were among the Kahlans who were expelled from Yemen by the Himyarites. They settled in northern Arabia and established their own kingdom, which included parts of modern-day Syria, Jordan, and Palestine. Their capital was Jaliyah, located in what is now the Golan Heights. They allied themselves with the Romans and defended the Roman territories against the Lakhmids and Persians. They were Monophysite Christians.

The Lakhmids

The Lakhmids were also among the Kahlans who were expelled from Yemen. They settled in northeastern Arabia. They were supported by the Persians against the Ghassanids and the Romans and provided the same service of protecting their borders. They became Nestorian Christians.

Religious Beliefs in Arabia before Islam

The Arabian Peninsula was dominated by paganism before Islam. While the term “paganism” does not have a definite meaning, it was introduced by the Monotheists to describe those who do not believe in the oneness of God. In sedentary pre-Islamic Arabia, many people believed in a single high god without rejecting the existence of other, subordinate gods. The German scholar Max Müller termed this concept Henotheism. The earliest evidence of Henotheism in Arabia can be traced back to a tribe called the Amir who lived near modern-day Yemen in the second century BCE, and who worshipped a high god called dahu-Samawi, ‘The Lord of the Heavens.’ By the sixth century CE, Henotheism had become the standard belief of the vast majority of sedentary Arabs, who accepted **Allah** as their high god.

Allah was originally an ancient rain/sky deity who had been elevated into the role of the supreme god of the pre-Islamic Arabs. Allah, as the high god in the Arab pantheon, was difficult for ordinary people to reach. His intercessors were easier to reach. The most powerful among his intercessors were his three daughters, **al-Lat** (the goddess), **al-Uzza** (the mighty), and **Manat** (the goddess of fate). Arabs believed that God had married the djinn and produced angels as his daughters through that marriage. These divine mediators were not only represented in the Ka'bah, but they had their own individual shrines: Al-lat in Ta'if; al-Uzza in Nakhlah; and Manat in Qudayd.

The Ka'bah was a small, roofless structure that housed the 360 gods of pre-Islamic Arabia, representing every god recognized in the Arabian Peninsula. Among the most famous were

Hubal, the Syrian god of the moon; **al-Uzza**, the powerful goddess the Egyptians knew as Isis and the Greeks as Aphrodite; **al-Kutba**, the Nabataean god of writing and divination; **Jesus**, the incarnate god of the Christians; and Jesus's holy mother, **Mary**.

The original Ka'bah was nine arms in height. At the beginning of the seventh century CE, the Quraysh decided to rebuild it; the height was then increased to eighteen arms. When Abdullah ibn al-Zubayr rebuilt the Ka'bah some ninety years later, he expanded it to its present height of twenty-seven arms.

During the holy months, pilgrims from all over the peninsula would make their way to Mecca to visit their tribal deities. As they reached the Ka'bah, they sang songs of worship and danced in front of the 360 gods; then the pilgrimage rituals began. Two of the rituals were performed around the Ka'bah: Jogging seven times between the hills of Safa and Marwah, الصفا والمروه to the east of Ka'bah; and gathering as a group and jogging around the Ka'bah seven times. The origin of the first ritual is the myth of Hagar jogging between the two hills looking for help, when water gushed forth between her son's feet. The origin of the second ritual, *tawaf* طواف (circumambulation), is a mystery. Pagan Arabs believed that this ritual was initiated by Abraham after he completed the construction of the Ka'bah. As the pilgrims jogged around the Ka'bah, they were following the course of the sun around the earth, and this way they were putting themselves in harmony with the fundamental order of the cosmos. A black stone (الحجر الأسود)—a piece of meteoric basalt—embedded in the eastern wall of the Ka'bah helped them to orient and count the seven times of circumambulation. The pagan Arabs believed that this stone had fallen from the sky, linking heaven and earth.

Other duties of pilgrimage were done outside the boundaries of the Haram area in about a twenty-kilometer radius around Mecca. These rituals included visiting **Mount Arafat**, عرفا. It was commonly held that no pilgrimage was valid unless the pilgrim was present at Arafat on the ninth day of Dhul-Hijjah, the last month of the lunar year. This visit to Arafat was followed by an all-night vigil on the plain beside the mount, an area called **Muzdalifah**, المزدلفه, the home of the thunder god. The final ritual was hurling pebbles at three pillars in the valley of **Mina** منى, symbolizing stoning Satan. Finally, the pilgrims sacrificed their most valuable female camels.

The monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism were present in pre-Islam Arabia, and influenced the religious beliefs of the Arabs. The pagan Arabs were familiar with **Judaism** and the Old Testament. They considered themselves descendants of Abraham. They believed that Abraham had rebuilt the Ka'bah and created the pilgrimage rites that took place there. In the sixth century CE, Arabs associated their god, Allah, with the Jewish god Yahweh. Jews in Arabia, whether in Yemen or in the north, were converts. There were Jewish merchants, Jewish Bedouins, Jewish farmers, Jewish poets, and Jewish warriors through Arabia. Jewish men took Arab names; Jewish women wore Arab headdresses. The primary language of the Jews of Arabia was the Arabic, not Aramaic. Judaism in Arabia was different from traditional Judaism. The Arab Jews shared many of the same religious ideals of pagan Arabs.

Christianity surrounded Arabia to the northwest (Syria), the northeast (Mesopotamia), and the south (Abyssinia). Many Arab tribes had converted to Christianity, the largest among them being the Ghassanids in the north. The Byzantine emperors sent missionaries to spread Christianity among pagan Arabs. Christianity's presence in the Arab Peninsula influenced the pagan Arabs in many ways. Arabs were familiar with the New Testament. A picture of Jesus the incarnate god was placed in Ka'bah, as well as a picture of his mother, Mary.

Zoroastrianism was the dominant religion of the Persian Empire. In the tenth and eleventh centuries BCE, its prophet Zarathustra preached a unique monotheistic religion based on the sole

god **Ahura Mazda**, “the Wise Lord.” Although Zoroastrianism was a non-proselytizing religion, the Sassanian military presence in the Arabian Peninsula resulted in a few tribal conversions to Zoroastrianism.

The presence of these three monotheistic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism—had an effect among the people of Arabia, and created a breeding ground for new ideologies. A unique Arab monotheistic movement, **Hanifism** الحنف, appeared in the Hijaz around the sixth century CE; this also had an important effect on future Arab religious beliefs.

Muslim historians mention the most prominent *hanifs*. In his biography of the Prophet Muhammad, ibn Hisham names four men: **Waraqa ibn Nawfal**, **Uthman ibn Huwairith**, **Ubayd Allah ibn Jahsh**, and **Zayd ibn Amr**. These four men made a solemn pact to follow the religion of Abraham, whom they considered to be neither a Jew nor a Christian, but a pure monotheist, a *hanif*, which means in Arabic “to turn away from idolatry.” The four *hanifs* bonded together in strong friendship and started to preach the new religion. In the end, two of them—Waraqa and Uthman—converted to Christianity. Ubayd Allah converted to Islam and was one of the Muslims who emigrated to Abyssinia. While in Abyssinia he embraced Christianity and died a Christian. Zayd continued preaching Hanifism and criticizing idolatrous worship. He tried to save every young girl who was to be buried alive by her father. Such activities angered his uncle al-Khattab, who managed to banish him to an area outside Mecca. However, Zayd managed to escape and left Arabia. He traveled widely in Syria and Iraq. While traveling, an aged Christian priest told him that the time was ripe for the appearance of a new Prophet in Arabia. Therefore he immediately decided to return to Mecca. Unfortunately, he was murdered on his way home.

The Hanifism movement flourished throughout the Hijaz, especially in major population centers such as Ta’if and Yathrib. Among the *hanif* leaders in the Hijaz were Abu Amir ar-Rahib, Abu Qais ibn al-Aslat, Khalid ibn Sinan, and Qass ibn Sa’idah. Hanifism was a mature Arab monotheistic movement. The *hanifs* believed in one god, the Creator, who did not need mediators between him and humans. They were committed to an absolute morality. Zayd, who was a poet, said:

“I serve my Lord the compassionate,”
“The forgiving Lord may pardon my sin.”
“Beware, O men, of what follows death!”
“You can hide nothing from God.”

Many scholars believe that the Prophet Muhammad was influenced by Hanifism. Ibn Hisham mentions that the Prophet had met Zayd.

On one of the hot days of Mecca, Muhammad and his childhood friend Ibn Haditha met Zayd at the upper part of the Meccan Valley when they were returning home from Ta’if. In Ta’if, they had slaughtered and roasted a lamb in sacrifice of the idols [most likely al-Lat].

Muhammad asked Zayd: “Why do I see you, O son of Amr, hated by your people?”

“I found them associating divinities with God and I was reluctant to do the same,” Zayd replied. “I wanted the religion of Abraham.”

Muhammad accepted this explanation without comment and opened his bag of sacrificed meat. “Eat some of this food, O my uncle,” he said. But Zayd reacted

with disgust. “Nephew, that is a part of those sacrifices of yours which you offer to your idols, is it not?” Muhammad answered that it was. Zayd became indignant. “I never eat of these sacrifices, and I want nothing to do with them,” he cried. “I am not one to eat anything slaughtered for a divinity other than God.”

So struck was Muhammad by Zayd’s rebuke that many years later, when recounting the story, he claimed never again to have “stroked an idol of theirs, nor. .. sacrificed to them until God honored me with his Apostleship.”

This narrative indicates that a young pagan Muhammad could have been scolded by a *hanif*. It is a common belief in Islam that even before being called by God, Muhammad never took part in the pagan rituals of his community. But the ancient traditions clearly show Muhammad deeply involved in the religious customs of Mecca: circumambulating the Ka’bah, making sacrifices, and going on pagan devotional retreats called *tahannuth*. Indeed, when the pagan sanctuary was torn down and rebuilt (it was enlarged and finally roofed), Muhammad took an active part in its reconstruction. In addition, the Quran does state that God found Muhammad “erring” and gave him guidance:

And your Lord will give you, and you will be satisfied.
Did He not find you orphaned and sheltered you?
And found you wondering, and guided you?
And found you in need, and enriched you?

(Chapter 30, adh-Duha)

أَلَمْ يَجِدْكَ يَتِيمًا فَآوَى (6) وَوَجَدَكَ ضَالًّا فَهَدَى (7) وَوَجَدَكَ عَائِلًا فَأَغْنَى (8)

سورة الضحى (30)

Muhammad Pre-Revelation

Muhammad was born into the clan of Hashim, one of the most prominent clans of the Quraysh, in the latter half of the sixth century CE. Muslim historians picked the year 570 CE as Muhammad’s birth year in order to institute a firm Islamic chronology. The clan of Hashim were the custodians of the Ka’bah, and had the privilege of providing the pilgrims with water. Muhammad’s grandfather, Abd al-Muttalib, was one of the most visionary rulers of Mecca and the most respected leader of the Quraysh. He had been the first merchant to organize his own independent trade caravans between Yemen and Syria.

Abdullah, Muhammad’s father, was the youngest of Abd al-Muttalib’s ten sons, and the most favored by his father. In his early twenties, Abdullah married Aminah, the daughter of Wahb ibn Abd Manaf, who was the chief of the Zuhra clan. It was a happy marriage, and both partners soon became very fond of each other. Shortly after Abdullah got married, his father advised him to join a trade caravan bound for Syria. His goal was to prepare his youngest son to become a successful merchant. As Abdullah was about to start on his journey, Aminah gave him the happy news that she was pregnant.

Traveling in the desert in the blazing summer was very hard on Abdullah. On his return to Mecca, he became very sick. His condition was very serious, and he was forced to stay behind in Yathrib to recover and regain his strength. Unfortunately, he died away from home. His death at

that young age was devastating for Abd al-Muttalib in his old age, as well as for Aminah, the young bride who was expecting a baby who would now be fatherless.

While Aminah was pregnant, she heard a voice tell her, “You are pregnant with the Lord of this people, and when he is born, say: “I put him in the care of the One from the evil of every envier, then call him Muhammad.” Sometimes Aminah would see a light shining from her belly by which she could make out “the castles of Syria” (a reference, perhaps, to Muhammad’s prophetic succession to Jesus, as Syria was an important seat of Christianity). This story is remarkably similar to the Christian story of Mary, who, when pregnant with Jesus, heard the voice of the Lord declare, “You will be with child and will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the son of the Most High.” (Luke 1:31–32).

When Aminah delivered her baby, her father-in-law, Abd al-Muttalib, who was greatly saddened by the loss of his son, was delighted, and overcame his grief with his hopes for a bright future for the newborn child. He thanked God for giving him a boy to bear the name of his deceased son. Aminah named her baby Muhammad, which means “often praised” or “worthy of praise.” It was a totally unfamiliar name in Arabia.

The tradition among the elites of Mecca was to send their children to the desert to be nursed by a Bedouin wet nurse. They believed that when a child was nursed in the desert, he was certain to grow up strong and healthy. As an infant, Muhammad was placed in the care of a Bedouin foster mother, **Halimah**, to be nursed. He stayed with Halimah for four years, and then he was returned to his mother.

When Muhammad was six years old, he traveled to Yathrib with Aminah to visit the clan of al-Najjar, his maternal uncles. (Abd al-Muttalib’s mother belonged to the al-Najjar clan). After they stayed for a month in Yathrib, Aminah decided to return to Mecca. Shortly after they started their journey, Aminah fell ill. It was a quick and fatal illness. She died on the road and was buried at Abwala.

After Aminah’s death, Muhammad was placed in the care of his grandfather, Abd al-Muttalib. Muhammad received special treatment from his grandfather, who kept him close by all the time; he had him sit on his couch beside him when he met with other Meccan notables. Abd al-Muttalib was concerned about Muhammad’s future care upon his death, so he called his son Abu Talib and asked him specifically to look after Muhammad, his nephew, when he himself had died. Abd al-Muttalib chose Abu Talib for this task because Abu Talib and Abdullah, Muhammad’s father, had the same mother (from the al-Najjar clan).

Upon the death of Abd al-Muttalib at age eighty-two, Abu Talib assumed the responsibility of taking care of Muhammad, who was eight years old at the time. Muhammad was extremely distressed over the loss of his grandfather; he felt that he had lost the man whose kindness to him could not be equaled by any other. Abu Talib honored his father’s request, taking care of Muhammad throughout his entire life, from when he was young to when he became a man. Abu Talib gave Muhammad, the Prophet, his steadfast support in the face of strong opposition from the Quraysh until the day he died.

When Abd al-Muttalib died, Muhammad inherited nothing, as his more powerful relatives controlled the estate. He went to live with his uncle Abu Talib, who became the chief of the Hashim. Abu Talib was greatly respected in Mecca, even though his business was failing. It was Abu Talib who protected Muhammad from falling into the debt and slavery, which was the typical fate of orphans in Mecca. Abu Talib provided Muhammad a home and the opportunity to work for his caravan. He was very fond of his nephew. Hamzah, the youngest of Abd al-

Muttalib's sons, instructed Muhammad in martial arts, making him a skilled archer and competent swordsman. His uncle Abbas, a banker, was able to get Muhammad a job managing the caravans traveling north to Syria.

The young Muhammad was well-liked in Mecca. He was handsome, with a compact, solid body of average height. His hair and beard were thick and curly, and he had a strikingly luminous expression and a smile of enormous charm. He was decisive and wholehearted in everything he did. When he turned to speak to somebody, he would swing his entire body around and address him full face. When he shook hands, he was never the first to withdraw his own. He inspired such confidence that he was known as al-Amin, "the trustworthy." But his orphaned status constantly held him back. He asked his uncle, Abu Talib, to marry his cousin Fakhitah, but Abu Talib had to refuse his request for her hand, gently pointing out that Muhammad could not afford to support a wife.

Muhammad was talented and proved himself as a skillful merchant who knew how to strike a deal. He was well known in the community for his honesty and morality, which earned him high respect in Meccan society. He had no money of his own to establish a business, nor was his uncle Abu Talib able to provide him with a good start. The only option left for him was to prove himself as an agent, trading on someone else's behalf. Apparently, he had no difficulty securing such a position because of his known reputation for honesty and good character. He was successful in his trade efforts at different markets and bazaars. The turning point in his life was working as an agent for a rich widow, **Khadijah bint Khuwaylid**. His outstanding performance as a trader prompted her to hire him to lead one of her caravans to Syria. His first trip was a great success; he was able to make twice as much profit as she had hoped.

Khadijah, being a wealthy widow, received several marriage proposals. She realized, however, that her money was what had prompted these proposals, so she declined them all. She was a woman of great intelligence and strong character. Her business relationship with Muhammad made her recognize that money was not the greatest priority for him. She considered the idea of marrying Muhammad after consulting her uncle Waraqa ibn Nawfal, who recognized that Muhammad was destined to have great future.

Khadijah then sent a close friend of hers, Nufaysah bint Munyah, to make an indirect approach to Muhammad. When she met him, she said: "Muhammad, what is keeping you from getting married?" He answered, "I do not have enough to meet the expense of my marriage." She said, "What if you are not called to meet that expense? What would you say to a woman of beauty, wealth, and position who is willing to marry you; would you marry her?" He said, "Who is that woman?" She said, "Khadijah." He asked, "Who can arrange such a marriage for me?" She said, "Leave that to me." His response was, "I will do it willingly."

This conversation was followed by direct communication between Khadijah and Muhammad, which ended in a formal marriage ceremony.

It was a happy marriage. Most biographers of the Prophet put his age at twenty-five and Khadijah's at forty. Some reports suggest that the Prophet was around thirty, and Khadijah was reported to have been thirty-five or younger. In view of the fact that she gave Muhammad six

children, the report of Khadijah being younger than forty is most likely accurate. Abdullah ibn Abbas, the Prophet's cousin, states that she was not a day older than twenty-eight.

Muhammad spent twenty-five happy years with Khadijah. The marriage gave Khadijah a man whom she could love, respect and trust. He was a most caring and loving husband. Khadijah bore Muhammad four daughters and two sons. The first was a boy, who was named al-Qasem. Then came four daughters: Zaynab, Ruqayyah, Umm Kulthum, and Fatimah. Abdullah was the last child. Al-Qasim lived only few years, while Abdullah died in infancy. The first three daughters died while Muhammad was living in Madina, while Fatimah survived him, but died six months after his death. Although polygamy was common in Arabia, Muhammad did not have a second wife while Khadijah was alive.

Khadijah was keen on marrying her daughters to suitable men. She arranged for the marriage of her eldest daughter, Zaynab, to her favorite nephew, Abu l-'As ibn Ar-rabi', when she reached the traditional marriage age. Muhammad's maternal half-uncle, Abu Lahab, requested that Ruqayyah and Umm Kulthum be engaged to his sons Utbah and Utaybah. Muhammad and Khadijah agreed. It appeared that Abu Lahab had high expectations that his nephew would be a leader of the next generation.

Prior to his marriage, Muhammad inherited a servant named Baraka from his father. She took care of Muhammad when he was with his mother, and continued to take care of him when he was with his grandfather and uncle. On the day he married Khadijah, he freed Baraka. Khadijah also had a servant at that time, a fifteen-year-old boy named Zayd ibn Harith, whom she gave to Muhammad as a wedding gift. Zayd was from the northern tribe of Kalb, between Syria and Iraq, where he had been abducted and sold as a slave. Shortly after the marriage, Zayd met pilgrims visiting from Banu Kalb. They sent word to his family that he was safe in Mecca. Upon hearing the news, his father, Harith ibn Sharahil, came to Mecca to pay for Zayd's freedom. Muhammad freed Zayd for no money, but when he told Zayd he was free to return to his family, Zayd replied, "I would not choose any man in preference to thee. Thou art unto me as my father and mother. .. I have seen from this man such things that I could never choose another above him."

After hearing those words, Muhammad invited Zayd's father and uncle to join him at the Ka'bah, where he publicly proclaimed, "**All ye who are present, bear witness that Zayd is my son; I am his heir and he is mine.**"

By the turn of the seventh century, Abu Talib was struggling to support his large family. Muhammad approached his uncle Abbas, and suggested that they each take care of one of Abu Talib's children. Ja'far, fifteen, went to live with Abbas. Ali, who was no older than five, went to live with Muhammad.

Muhammad's marriage to Khadijah elevated his status in Meccan society. He was extremely successful in managing his wife's business and enhancing her wealth. He became well known as an affluent merchant, respected for his fair and ethical conduct. Despite his great success in business and improved social status, he did not become part of the ruling elite of Mecca. He definitely had the greatest opportunity to accumulate more wealth and reach the top position among the ruling elites. His uncle Abu Lahab saw that when he asked for Ruqayyah and Umm Kulthum to be engaged to his sons: he believed that his nephew would be the leader of next generation. But Muhammad was distressed over the serious changes in Meccan society wrought by the market economy and Mecca's religio-economic system. He realized that the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few ruling families not only altered the social and economic landscape of Mecca, but also destroyed the tribal ideals of social egalitarianism. He was troubled

by the absence of any concern for the poor and the marginalized and for the disappearance of the tribal ethic which held that “the tribe is only as strong as its weakest members.” He saw the Meccan society as stratified: leaders of the ruling families of the Quraysh were at the top, while those with no protection, like orphans and widows, were at the bottom. He was not interested in accumulating more wealth, but in finding solutions.

Muhammad was able to diagnose the serious ills of Meccan society. He was aware of the restlessness among the younger generation. The ruling elites had introduced class distinctions that were alien to the *murawah* ethical ideals. The wealthier families lived beside the Ka’bah, while the less prosperous inhabited the suburbs and the mountainous regions outside the city. He was convinced that the Quraysh had retained only the worst aspects of *murawah*: recklessness, arrogance, and egotism that were morally destructive and could bring the city down. He was convinced that social reforms were overdue.

Muhammad was not only concerned about the social and economic situation in Mecca, but about the religious aspect as well. The encounter Muhammad had had with the *hanif* Zayd ibn Amr when he was very young affected his religious beliefs. His trips to Syria put him in contact with Christian Arabs. Over the years, he was able to learn more about the concept of monotheism through the exposure to Judaism and Christianity.

Muhammad’s concern for Mecca’s troubles and problems made him seek solitude. On one of the rocky hills outside Mecca, he found a cave named **Hira** غار حراء. He began spending several nights at a time in this cave, praying and meditating. During these solitary vigils he began to have strange experiences which ultimately led to his divine revelation.

The Revelation of Muhammad

One night in 610 CE, while Muhammad was meditating alone in the cave of Hira غار حراء, he experienced the most astonishing attack. Suddenly an invisible presence embraced him, crushing his chest. He struggled to free himself but could not move. The pressure in his chest increased until he could no longer breathe. As he surrendered his final breath, light filled the cave and a terrifying voice came loud and clear: “**Recite!**” Muhammad responded, “What shall I recite?” The invisible presence tightened its embrace and said, “Recite!” Muhammad asked again, “What shall I recite?” Once more the presence tightened its grip and once more repeated the command: “Recite!” Finally as the pressure in his chest stopped, he felt these words enter his heart:

Read: In the name of your Lord who created.

Created man from a clot.

Read: And your Lord is the Most Generous.

He who taught by the pen.

Taught man what he never knew.

(Chapter 30, al-’Alaq)

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ (1) خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ (2) اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ (3) الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ (4) عَلَّمَ
الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ (5)

سورة العلق (30)

This was a terrifying experience for Muhammad. He managed to make his way back home, frightened and trembling. As he arrived home, he asked Khadijah to wrap him up. She threw a cloak over him and held him tightly in her arms until the trembling stopped. When he calmed down he explained to her what happened to him, then said, “Khadijah, I think that I have gone mad.” Khadijah replied: “This cannot be, my dear. God would not treat you thus, since He knows your truthfulness, your great trustworthiness, your fine character, and your kindness.” Khadijah went to her cousin, Waraqa, who as a Christian was familiar with the scriptures. He recognized what Muhammad was experiencing. He assured her, saying, “He is a Prophet of this people; bid him be of good heart.”

In writing the Prophet’s biography, Muslim historians present varying descriptions of the experience in the cave of Hira. Ibn Hisham states that Muhammad was sleeping when the revelation first came to him, and says that the command *iqra* (اقرأ) was intended to mean “read.” In fact, according to Ibn Hisham, the first recitation was actually written on a magical brocade and placed in front of Muhammad. Al-Tabari claims that the Prophet was standing when the revelation dropped him to his knees; he also believes that the command *iqra* is best understood as “recite.”

Muslim tradition has tended to focus on al-Tabari’s definition of *iqra* (“recite”), as it emphasized the notion that the Prophet was illiterate, which some say is validated by the Quran’s epithet for Muhammad: *an-nabi al-ummi* النبي الأمي, traditionally interpreted as “the unlettered Prophet.” But while Muhammad’s illiteracy may enhance the miracle of the Quran, there is no historical justification for it. As numerous scholars and Arab linguists have demonstrated, *an-nabi al-ummi* should be understood as “the Prophet for the unlettered” (that is, the scriptureless), consistent with Muhammad’s view that the Quran was a revelation for a people without a sacred book:

But We gave them no books to study, and We did not send them any warner before you.

(Chapter 22, Saba’)

وَمَا آتَيْنَاهُمْ مِّنْ كِتَابٍ يَدْرُسُونَهَا وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ قَبْلَكَ مِنْ نَذِيرٍ (44)

سورة سبأ (22)

It is highly unlikely that a successful merchant like Muhammad would have been unable to read and write while running his own business. Obviously, he was not a scribe, or a scholar, or a poet. But he must have been able to read and write basic Arabic, such as names, dates, goods, and services.

The terrifying experience that Muhammad had at Hira kept him in a state of confusion. An urgent issue occupied his mind and consciousness: What does this experience mean and what is next? He was assured by Waraqa ibn Nawfal that God was sending him a message and that he was now God’s Messenger. Over the following days he was waiting for answers and expecting another revelation. During this period of silence, he became very anxious and started doubting himself. Finally, when he was at his lowest, a second verse was sent down from heaven in the same violent manner. The new message was assuring and affirming that he was the messenger of God:

O, You enrobed one.
 Arise and warn;
 And magnify your Lord.
 And purify your clothes.
 And abandon abominations.
 And show no favor seeking gain.
 And be constant for your Lord.

(Chapter 29, al-Muddathir)

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُدَّثِّرُ (1) قُمْ فَأَنْذِرْ (2) وَرَبِّكَ فَكَبِّرْ (3) وَثِيَابَكَ فَطَهِّرْ (4) وَالرُّجْزَ فَاهْجُرْ (5) وَلَا تَمْنُنْ
 تَسْتَكْبِرُ (6) وَلِرَبِّكَ فَاصْبِرْ (7)

سورة المدثر (29)

Responding to God's command, Muhammad began his mission.

The Initial Call to Islam (The Secret Call)

The initial call to Islam was a secret call targeting selected members of the community. This period lasted for approximately three years. Prophet Muhammad initiated his sacred, secret mission right from home and then moved to the people closely associated with him. Khadijah was the first to accept the new religion. His cousin Ali ibn Abi Talib, who had been living with him since his early childhood; Zayd ibn Harith, his adopted son; and his close friend Attiq ibn Uthman عتيق ابن عثمان—who is known by his title, Abu Bakr As-Saddiq الصديق ابو بكر—accepted Islam next.

Abu Bakr was a well-respected merchant whose house was frequently visited by many people seeking his friendship and knowledge. He invited whomever he trusted to join the faith of Islam. A good number of his friends and acquaintances converted to Islam. Abu Bakr introduced to Muhammad a group of five men who became the main prominent leaders of the young Islamic state during Muhammad's life and the years after. Those five men were **Uthman ibn Affan al-Umawi** عثمان ابن عفان الأموي, **Az-zubair ibn Awam Al-asadi** الزبير ابن عون الأسدي, **Abdur-Rahman ibn Awf** سعد ابن أبي وقاص, **Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas az-Zuhriyan** طلحه ابن عبيد الله التيمي, and **Talhah ibn Ubaidullah At-Atimy** عبد الرحمن ابن عوف.

Among the early Muslims were Bilal ibn Rabah الحبشي بلال ابن رباح, Abu Ubaidah Amir ibn Al-Jarah from Banu Harith ibn Fihrah فهر ابن حارث من بني الجراح, أبو عبيده أمير ابن الجراح, Abu Salamah ibn Abdul-Asad الأقرم ابن عبد الأسد, أبو سلمه ابن عبد الأسد, al-Arqam ibn Abul-Arqam from the tribe of Makhzum عثمان ابن الأقرم من قبيلة مخزوم, Uthman ibn Maz'on and his two brothers Qudamah and Abdullah عبيده ابن حارث ابن Ubaidah ibn Harith ibn al-Muttalib ibn Abd Manaf, مأذون و أخويه قدامه و عبد الله المطلب ابن عبد مناف. Among the early followers were Said ibn Zaid Al-Adawi and his wife Fatima (daughter of Omar ibn al-Khattab) سعيد ابن زيد العدوي و زوجته فاطمه بنت الخطاب, Khabbas ibn al-Aratt, عبد الله ابن مسعود الهدهلي, and many others. These were known as the first of Muslim forefathers. They belonged to various clans of the Quraysh. Ibn Hisham, a biographer of the Prophet, estimated their number to be more than forty.

The first Muslims who accepted Islam during the first three years fall into three groups. The first group included young men under thirty whose families and clans were among the most influential. They were close relatives of the men who actually held power in Mecca and who

became the strongest opponents to Muhammad. The second group consisted of young men, again under thirty, from less prominent families and clans. This group was not sharply distinguished from the first group, but strongly influenced their clans and families. Some members of this group were Arabs from outside Mecca attached to clans as “confederates.” The men of the first two groups were from the upper levels of society, but they felt the same discontent with Meccan society as Muhammad did. The third group comprised a number of men who were outside the clan system; these included foreigners of Byzantine or Abyssinian origin who might originally have come to Mecca as slaves. Usually such men were nominally under clan protection, but the clan was either unwilling or unable to protect them. Hence the early Muslims came from different clans, and different social classes. Interestingly, many of them were women.

The early Muslims enjoyed equality and a brotherhood which was above blood relationships. They formed the nucleus of a community of believers which would create the most noble society humanity had ever known in its long history. Their headquarters was **the house of al-Arqam**, located near the center of Mecca. Al-Arqam was a young man about twenty-five years old who belonged to the clan of Makhzum, which was among the wealthiest and most powerful in Mecca. The house of al-Arqam was the first Islamic school. Here, the followers of the new religion received their instructions directly from the Prophet. Muhammad spent a considerable amount of time in that house looking after his companions, educating them and guiding them in their new mission.

The Earliest Message of the Quran

The main theme of the early verses of the Quran was the goodness and power of God. He is the creator of humans. He is behind all forces of nature, and all that exists around humans. He is the provider of all that humans need for sustenance and survival. He is **ar-Rahman**, الرحمان “the most merciful,” and **al-Akram**, الأكرم “the most generous.”

Perish man! How thankless he is!
From what did He created him?
From a sperm drop He created him and enabled him.
Then He eased the way for him.
Then He puts him to death, and buries him.
Then, when He wills, He will resurrect him.
But no, he did not fulfill what He has commanded him.
Let man consider his food.
We pour down water in abundance.
Then crack the soil open.
And grow in it grains.
And grapes and herbs.
And olives and dates.
And luscious gardens.
And fruits and vegetables.
Enjoyment for you, and for your livestock.

(Chapter 30, ‘Abasa)

قَتَلَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا أَكْفَرَهُ (17) مِنْ أَيِّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ (18) مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ خَلَقَهُ فَقَدَرَهُ (19) ثُمَّ السَّبِيلَ يَسْرَهُ (20) ثُمَّ
أَمَاتَهُ فَأَقْبَرَهُ (21) ثُمَّ إِذَا شَاءَ أَنْشَرَهُ (22) كَلَّا لَمَّا يَقْضِ مَا أَمَرَهُ (23) فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ إِلَى
طَعَامِهِ (24) أَنَا صَبَبْنَا الْمَاءَ صَبًّا (25) ثُمَّ شَقَقْنَا الْأَرْضَ شَقًّا (26) فَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا حَبًّا (27) وَعَيْنًا
وَقَضَبًا (28) وَزَيْتُونًا وَنَخْلًا (29) وَحَدَائِقَ غُلْبًا (30) وَفَاكِهَةً وَأَبًّا (31) مَتَاعًا لَكُمْ وَلِأَنْعَامِكُمْ (32)

سورة عبس (30)

Praise the name of your Lord, the Most High,
He who creates and regulates.
He who measures and guides.
He who produces the pasture.
And then turns it into light debris.
(Chapter 30 [al-A'la])

سَبَّحَ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ الْأَعْلَى (1) الَّذِي خَلَقَ فَسَوَّى (2) وَالَّذِي قَدَّرَ فَهَدَى (3) وَالَّذِي أَخْرَجَ الْمَرْعَى (4) فَجَعَلَهُ
غُتَاءً أَحْوَى (5)

سورة الأعلى (30)

Do they not look at the camels—how they are created?
And at the sky—how it is raised?
And at the mountains—how they are installed?
And at the earth—how it is spread out?
(Chapter 30, [al-Ghashiyah])

أَفَلَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَى الْإِبِلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ (17) وَإِلَى السَّمَاءِ كَيْفَ رُفِعَتْ (18) وَإِلَى الْجِبَالِ كَيْفَ
نُصِبَتْ (19) وَإِلَى الْأَرْضِ كَيْفَ سُطِحَتْ (20)

سورة الغاشية (30)

Monotheism was very clear in the early verses of the Quran. However there was no harsh attack or criticism of paganism. The main interest was revealing to the masses what kind of God Allah was: the Creator, the Merciful and the compassionate. It went further to remind the Quraysh that Allah is the Lord of the House, the Ka'bah.

For the security of Quraysh.
Their security during winter and summer journeys.
Let them Worship the Lord of this House.
Who has fed them against hunger, and has secured them against fear.
(Chapter 30, Quraysh)

لِإِيلَافِ قُرَيْشٍ (1) إِيلَافِهِمْ رِحْلَةَ الشِّتَاءِ وَالصَّيْفِ (2) فَلْيَعْبُدُوا رَبَّ هَذَا الْبَيْتِ (3) الَّذِي أَطْعَمَهُمْ مِنْ جُوعٍ
وَأَمَّنَّهُمْ مِنْ خَوْفٍ (4)

سورة قريش (30)

The second theme of the revelation that dominated early verses was a social one. It dealt with the decline and even the disappearance of the original tribal ethic that protected all members of the community. It carried a clear warning to the ruling elites who lacked any concern for the poor and marginalized. The Quran called for an end to false contracts and the practice of usury that had made slaves of the poor. It also emphasized the rights of the underprivileged and the oppressed; and commanded the rich and powerful to take care of them.

The command for social and economic justice was empowered with a warning: the Day of Judgment, when humans return to God for punishment or reward.

Woe to every slanderer backbiter.
 Who gathers wealth and counts it over.
 Thinking that his wealth has made him immortal.
 By no means. He will be thrown into the Crusher.
 (Chapter 30, al-Humatha)

وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٍ (1) الَّذِي جَمَعَ مَالًا وَعَدَّدَهُ (2) يَحْسَبُ أَنَّ مَالَهُ أَخْلَدَهُ (3) كَلَّا لَئِنِ بُدِّنَ فِي
 الْخُطْمَةِ (4) وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْخُطْمَةُ (5) نَارُ اللَّهِ الْمَوْجِدَةُ (6) الَّتِي تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى الْأَفْئِدَةِ (7) إِنَّهَا عَلَيْهِمْ
 مُّوَصَّدَةٌ (8) فِي عَمَدٍ مُّمَدَّدَةٍ (9)

سورة الهمزة (30)

When the sky is ruptured.
 And hearken to its Lord, as it must.
 And when the earth is leveled out.
 And casts out what is in it, and becomes empty.
 And hearkens to its Lord, as it must.
 O, Man! You are laboring towards your Lord, and you will meet him.
 As for him who is given his book in his right hand.
 He will have an easy settlement.
 And return to his family delighted.
 But as for him who is given his book behind his back.
 He will call for death.
 And will enter the Blaze.

(Chapter 30, al-Inshiqaq)

إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انشَقَّتْ (1) وَأَذِنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحَقَّتْ (2) وَإِذَا الْأَرْضُ مُدَّتْ (3) وَأَلْقَتْ مَا فِيهَا وَتَخَلَّتْ (4) وَأَذِنَتْ
 لِرَبِّهَا وَحَقَّتْ (5) يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا فَمُلَاقِيهِ (6) فَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ
 بِيَمِينِهِ (7) فَسَوْفَ يُحَاسِبُ حَسَابًا يَسِيرًا (8) وَيُنْقَلَبُ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ مَسْرُورًا (9) وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ وَرَاءَ
 ظَهْرِهِ (10) فَسَوْفَ يَدْعُو ثُبُورًا (11) وَيَصْلَىٰ سَعِيرًا (12)

سورة الانشقاق (30)

As for him who gives and is righteous.
 And confirms goodness.
 We will ease his way towards ease.

But as for him who is stingy and complacent.
 And denies goodness.
 We will ease his way towards difficulty.
 And his wealth will not avail him when he plummets.
 (Chapter 30, al-Layl)

فَأَمَّا مَنْ أَعْطَى وَاتَّقَى (5) وَصَدَّقَ بِالْحُسْنَى (6) فَسَنُيَسِّرُهُ لِلْيُسْرَى (7) وَأَمَّا مَنْ بَخِلَ وَاسْتَغْنَى (8) وَكَذَّبَ
 بِالْحُسْنَى (9) فَسَنُيَسِّرُهُ لِلْعُسْرَى (10) وَمَا يُغْنِي عَنْهُ مَالُهُ إِذَا تَرَدَّى (11)

سورة الليل (30)

Have you considered him who denies the religion?
 It is he who mistreats the orphan.
 And does not encourage the feeding of the poor.
 So woe to those who pray.
 Those who are heedless of their prayers.
 Those who put on the appearance.
 And withhold the assistance.

(Chapter 30, al-Maoun)

أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يُكَذِّبُ بِالْإِيمَانِ (1) فَذَلِكَ الَّذِي يَدْعُ الْيَتِيمَ (2) وَلَا يَحِضُّ عَلَىٰ طَعَامِ الْمِسْكِينِ (3) فَوَيْلٌ
 لِلْمُصَلِّينَ (4) الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ (5) الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَاءُونَ (6) وَيَمْنَعُونَ الْمَاعُونَ (7)

سورة المعاون (30)

Inviting the Hashim to Islam

For three years, Muhammad kept a low profile, preaching to only selected groups of people. Three years after the revelation had begun, Allah instructed him to deliver the message to the clan of Hashim.

And warn your close relatives.
 And lower your wing to those of the believers who follow you.
 And if they disobey you, say, then say, “I am innocent of what you do.”
 (Chapter 19, ash-Shu’ara’)

وَأَنْذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ (214) وَاخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (215) فَإِنْ عَصَوْكَ فَقُلْ إِنِّي
 بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ (216)

سورة الشعراء (19)

Muhammad called forty-five men from the clans of Hashim and Muttalib for a feast of mutton and milk. As he started his address, trying to explain why he called for the gathering, his uncle Abu Lahab dispersed the crowd. So the Prophet invited them again and promptly addressed the family, not giving a chance to Abu Lahab to interrupt.

He said:

I celebrate Allah's praise, I seek his help, I believe in Him, I put my trust in Him, bear witness that there is no God to be worshipped but Allah with no associate. A guide can never lie to his people. I swear by Allah that there is no God but Him that I have been sent as a Messenger to you in particular and to all people in general. I swear by Allah that you will die just as you sleep, and you will be resurrected just as you wake up. You will be called to account for your deeds. It is then either Hell forever or paradise forever.

His uncle Abu Talib replied:

We love to help you, accept your advice and believe in your words. These are your kinspeople whom you have gathered, and I am one of them, but I am the fastest to do what you like. Do what you have been ordered. I shall protect and defend you. But I cannot quit the religion of Abdul Muttalib.

Abu Lahab then said to Abu Talib: "I swear by Allah that this is a bad thing. You must stop him before the others do." Abu Talib responded, "I swear by Allah to protect him as long as I am alive."

Muhammad's call to the Banu Hashim failed to convince new members of his clan to accept Islam. In the early stage of Islam, Khadijah, their daughters, Ali, and Zayd accepted the revelation unconditionally. Muhammad's cousins, Ja'far ibn Abi Talib, and Abdullah and Ubaydallah ibn Jahsh and their sister Zaynab, were among the first followers. His uncles Abbas and Hamzah did not accept the message, but their wives did. Abu al-As, who had married Muhammad's daughter Zaynab, refused the new religion.

Public Call

After the Prophet became sure of Abu Talib's commitment to his support and protection, he expanded his preaching mission to include the entire Meccan community. Soon after his meeting with the Hashim and al-Muttalib clans, he stood on al-Safa, the small hill in the center of Mecca, close to the Ka'bah, and called out as loudly as he could to every clan, mentioning them by name and asking them to come over to him. In no time, the word spread all over Mecca that Muhammad had something important to announce. People were rushing to him from all quarters of the city. When they gathered around the hill, he said: "If I were to tell you that there were armed horsemen in the valley heading towards Mecca to attack you, would you believe me?"

"You are trustworthy, and we have never known you to tell lies," they answered.

"Well, then, I am sent to you to warn you against grievous suffering."

The Prophet continued his warning, addressing each clan by name, and said,

God has ordered me to warn you. It is not in my power to secure any benefit for you in this life, or any blessing in the life to come, unless you believe in the oneness of God. People of Quraysh, save yourselves from hell, because I cannot be of any help to you. My position is like one who, seeing the enemy, ran to warn

his people before they were taken by surprise, shouting as he ran, “Beware! Beware!”

Not a single voice was raised in approval or support as they began to disperse. On the contrary, he received insults from some of the men present, especially from his uncle Abu Lahab.

Muhammad’s public address was a significant event in the history of Islam. It was the beginning of the social reforms of the Arab society. The call for monotheism did not mean just the substitution of a single god for the collection of all the idols housed in the Ka’bah; it also meant complete change in the social, cultural, and political life of Meccan society.

Muhammad was persistent in his efforts to deliver his message to the Quraysh. He spoke to the Meccans whenever he passed by a gathering of the idolaters. He also started criticizing their beliefs and the worthlessness of their idols. Then he began worshipping Allah before their eyes in the Ka’bah and reciting the verses of the Quran in a loud voice. Few of the Meccans responded to his call or accepted Islam.

Initially, the chiefs of Mecca did not take any action against Muhammad’s preaching activities. However, as the Prophet increased his attacks against their pagan faith, they began to think that the matter was too serious to be ignored, especially when he gained more followers. A small delegation consisting of some of the most influential people of the Quraysh complained to Abu Talib about his nephew’s behavior. This delegation included Amr ibn Hisham (Abu Jahl); and al-Walid ibn al-Mughirah from Makhzum; Utbah and Shaybah, sons of Rabi’ah from the clan of Abd Shams; Abu Sufyan Sakhr ibn Harb from Ummayah, Abu al-Bakhtari al-As ibn Hisham; and al-Aswad ibn al-Muttalib from Asad. Abu Talib, who continued to follow the religion of his people, calmed them down; however, he did not promise them much.

The Quraysh knew that Muhammad intended to spread his message among the pilgrims who were coming to the Ka’bah from all over Arabia. So al-Walid ibn al-Mughirah invited them to his house to formulate a plan: how to alert the arriving pilgrims against Muhammad’s preaching activities. They decided on strategy aimed at preempting Muhammad’s plan by circulating fierce propaganda accusing him of being a sorcerer, and sometimes describing him as a mad man.

He thought and analyzed.

May he perish, how he analyzed.

Again: May he perish, how he analyzed.

Then he looked.

Then he frowned and whined.

Then he turned back and was proud.

And said: This is nothing but magic from the past.

This is nothing but the word of a mortal.”

(Chapter 29, al-Muddathir)

إِنَّهُ فَكَّرَ وَقَدَّرَ (18) فَقَتَلَ كَيْفَ قَدَّرَ (19) ثُمَّ قُنِيَ كَيْفَ قَدَّرَ (20) ثُمَّ نَظَرَ (21) ثُمَّ عَبَسَ وَبَسَرَ (22) ثُمَّ أَدْبَرَ
وَاسْتَكْبَرَ (23) فَقَالَ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ يُؤْتَى (24) إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا قَوْلُ الْبَشَرِ (25)

سورة المدثر (29)

And they said, “O, you who received the Message, you are insane.”

(Chapter 14, al-Hijr)

وَقَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِي نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الذِّكْرُ إِنَّكَ لَمَجْنُونٌ (6)

سورة الحجر (14)

And they marveled that a warner has come to them from among them. The disbelievers said, ‘This is a lying magician.’

(Chapter 23, Saad)

وَعَجِبُوا أَنْ جَاءَهُمْ مُنْذِرٌ مِنْهُمْ وَقَالَ الْكَافِرُونَ هَذَا سَاحِرٌ كَذَّابٌ (4)

سورة ص (23)

Muhammad was extremely active during the pilgrimage season moving from one camp to the other delivering eloquently his message. Although he did not gain many followers, as most pilgrims pledged their support to the chiefs of the Quraysh, he managed to create a stir in the whole area. Those people who listened to Muhammad carried the news to their tribes when they went back. Thus the Quraysh’s plan failed, and unintentionally allowed all of Arabia to learn about the new religion.

The Satanic Verses

Tension between Muhammad’s followers and the Quraysh was growing fast despite the Muslims’ efforts to control themselves. In 616 CE, some of the Quraysh attacked the Muslims while they were praying in one of the valleys outside Mecca. The incident shocked everybody, and Muhammad was pained by the incident. The Prophet contained the situation and urged his followers to continue to be patient and tolerant. He was hoping for a miracle to bring peace to Mecca.

Around that time a notorious incident occurred, known as the Satanic Verses incident, where Muhammad found himself chanting verses about the “daughters of God.” This incident is recounted by only two early biographers: Ibn-Saad and al-Tabari.

These verses are:

Did you consider al-Lat and al-Uzza
And al-Manat, the third, the other?
They are the swans exalted;
Their intercession is expected;
Their likes are not neglected.

Below is al-Tabari’s account of the incident of the Satanic Verses:

When the apostle saw that his people had turned their backs on him, he was pained by their estrangement from what he had brought them from God. He longed that there should come to him from God a message that would reconcile his people to him. Because of his love for his people and his anxiety over them, it

would delight him that the obstacle that made his task so difficult could be removed; so he meditated on the project and longed for it, and it was dear to him.

One day, Muhammad was sitting beside the Ka'bah with some of the elders, reciting a new surah in which Allah tried to reassure his critics: Muhammad had not intended to cause all this trouble, the divine voice insisted; he was not deluded nor inspired by a jinni; he had experienced a true vision of the divine and was simply telling his people what he had seen and heard. But to his surprise, Muhammad found himself chanting some verses about the three “daughters of God”: “Have you, then, ever considered what you are worshipping in al-Lat and al-Uzza, as well as Manat, the third, the other?” Immediately the Quraysh sat up and listened intently. They loved the goddesses who mediated with Allah on their behalf. “These are the exalted Gharaniq,” Muhammad continued, “whose intercession is approved.”

Muhammad had not implied that the three “daughters of God” were on the same level as Allah. They were simply intermediaries, like the angels whose intercession is approved in the same surah. As soon as Muhammad had finished his recitation, he prostrated himself in prayer, and to his astonishment the Qurayshan elders knelt down beside him, humbly pressing their foreheads to the ground. The news spread like wildfire through the city: Muhammad has spoken of our gods in a splendid fashion! The elders told Muhammad: “We know that Allah kills and gives life, creates and preserves, but these our goddesses pray to him for us, and since you have permitted them to share divine honors with him, we will join you.”

But Muhammad was disturbed by the jubilant words of the elders: He had certainly not meant to imply that the goddesses shared “divine honors” with Allah. While everybody was celebrating, Muhammad was meditating. That night, Gabriel, the spirit of revelation, came to him: “What have you done, Muhammad?” He asked. “You have recited to those people something I did not bring you from God and have said what he did not say to you!” Muhammad was immediately filled with a sense of guilt, but God consoled him with a new revelation.

We never sent a messenger before you, or a prophet, but when he had a desire Satan interfered in his wishes. But Allah nullifies what Satan interjects, and Allah affirms His revelations. Allah is Omniscient and wise.

(Chapter 17, al-Hajj)

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ وَلَا نَبِيٍّ إِلَّا إِذَا تَمَنَّى أَلْقَى الشَّيْطَانُ فِي أُمْنِيَّتِهِ فَيَنْسَخُ اللَّهُ مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطَانُ
ثُمَّ يُحْكِمُ اللَّهُ آيَاتِهِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (52)

سورة الحج (17)

Some time later, Muhammad received another revelation canceling the last three verses and substituting others for them:

Have you considered al-Lat and al-Uzza?
And Manat, the third, the other?
Are you to have the males, and He the females?

What a bizarre distribution.

These are nothing but names, which you have devised, you and your ancestors, for which Allah sent down no authority. They follow nothing but assumptions, and what the ego desires, even though guidance has come to them from their Lord.

(Chapter 27, an-Najm)

أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ اللَّاتَ وَالْعُزَّىٰ (19) وَمَنَاةَ الثَّالِثَةَ الْأُخْرَىٰ (20) أَلَكُمُ الذَّكَرُ وَلَهُ الْأُنثَىٰ (21) تِلْكَ إِذًا قِسْمَةٌ ضِيزَىٰ (22) إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا أَسْمَاءٌ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنْتُمْ وَأَبَاؤُكُمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ ۗ إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَمَا تَهْوَى الْأَنْفُسُ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ مِنْ رَبِّهِمُ الْهُدَىٰ (23)

سورة النجم (27)

Muhammad also received the following verses inviting the Quraysh to compromise:

Say, O unbelievers.
I do not worship what you worship.
Nor do you worship what I worship.
Nor do I serve what you serve.
Nor do you serve what I serve.
You have your way, and I have my way.

(Chapter 30, al-Kafirun)

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ (1) لَا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ (2) وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ (3) وَلَا أَنَا عَابِدٌ مَّا عَبَدْتُمْ (4) وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ (5) لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ (6)

سورة الكافرون (30)

Muhammad went back to the Quraysh with the new verses that amended the “Satanic” ones. This was a slap in the face for the elders, who considered the abrogation of the verses an intolerable insult. This new revelation marked the beginning of the Quraysh elites’ vigorous opposition to Muhammad. At the same time, it marked a dramatic transformation of Muhammad’s message. From this point forward, monotheism became the dominant theme of the message of Islam. The Quran was now making it clear that Allah was completely different from the deities worshipped by the Quraysh.

Say, He is Allah, the one.
Allah, the Absolute,
He begets not, nor was He begotten.
And there is nothing comparable to Him.

(Chapter 30, al-Ikhlās)

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ (1) اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ (2) لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ (3) وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ (4)

سورة الاخلاص (30)

It was perhaps at this time that new converts were required to utter the declaration of their faith recited by all Muslims today, the **Shahadah** الشهاده.

Bear witness that there is no God but Allah, and that Muhammad is His Messenger.

أشهد أن لا إله إلا الله وأشهد أن محمداً رسول الله

The Quraysh were familiar with monotheism. The Jews and Christians preached monotheism, as did the *hanifs*. But Muhammad's message was different: It said that Muslims must not only refuse to venerate the idols, but must also ensure that nothing should distract them from their commitment to God alone. Wealth, tribe, family, material properties, and even such noble ideas as patriotism must take second place. Muhammad was declaring to Mecca that the God of heavens and earth required no intermediates whatsoever, but could be reached by anyone. Thus the idols, housed in the sanctuary, and the sanctuary itself, insofar as it was a repository for gods, were utterly useless. And if the Ka'bah was useless, then there was no more reason for Mecca's supremacy as either the religious or the economic center of Arabia. Believing in Allah the Creator required human beings to imitate Him in all their dealings. Instead of despising and oppressing vulnerable people, they should behave like Allah and spread over them the wings of tenderness.

God condemned the behavior of the Quraysh's elders, who were snobbish and arrogant. They imagined that they were superior to the poor and the humbler people of Mecca, whom they considered second-class citizens. Instead of realizing their dependence on God, they regarded themselves as self-reliant, and refused to bow to Allah. They were bursting with self-importance, addressing others in an offensive manner, and flew into violent rage if others disagreed with them. They were so convinced that their way of life was the perfect one that their hearts were veiled, rusted over, sealed and locked.

God urged Muslims to behave with *hilm*, a traditional Arab virtue. Men and women of *hilm* were forbearing, patient, and merciful. They could control their anger and remain calm in the most difficult circumstances instead of exploding with rage. They were slow to retaliate, and did not hit back when they suffered injury, but left revenge to God. *Hilm* inspires positive action: to look after the weak and disadvantaged, liberate the slaves, counsel each other to patience and compassion, and feed the destitute, even when they are hungry themselves. Muslims must always behave with consummate gentleness and courtesy.

We have enjoined upon man kindness to his parents. His mother carried him with difficulty, and delivered him with difficulty. His bearing and weaning take thirty months. Until, when he has attained his maturity, and reached forty years, he says, "Lord, enable me to appreciate the blessings You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents, and to act with righteousness, pleasing You. And improve my children for me. I have sincerely repented to You, and I am of those who have surrendered."

(Chapter 26, al-Ahqaf)

وَصَبَّأَوْصَيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ كُرْهًا وَوَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا وَحَمَلُهُ وَفِصَالُهُ ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا ۚ
 حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَبَلَغَ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً قَالَ رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ
 أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَصْلِحْ لِي فِي ذُرِّيَّتِي ۚ إِنِّي تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَإِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ (15)

سورة الأحقاف (26)

And do not treat people with arrogance, nor walk proudly on earth. Allah does not love the arrogant showoffs.

And moderate your stride, and lower your voice. The most repulsive of voices the donkey's voice.

(Chapter 21, Luqman)

وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ (18) وَأَقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ
 وَأَغْضُضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ ۚ إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ (19)

سورة لقمان (21)

But he did not brave the ascent.

And what will explain to you what the ascent is? The freeing of a slave.

Or the feeding on a day of hunger,

A near of kin orphan,

Or feed a destitute in the dust.

Then he becomes of those who believe, and advise one another to patience, and advise one another to kindness.

(Chapter 30, al-Balad)

فَلَا اقْتَحَمَ الْعَقَبَةَ (11) وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْعَقَبَةُ (12) فَكُ رَقَبَةً (13) أَوْ إِطْعَامٌ فِي يَوْمٍ ذِي مَسْغَبَةٍ (14) يَتِيمًا
 ذَا مَقْرَبَةٍ (15) أَوْ مَسْكِينًا ذَا مَتْرَبَةٍ (16)

سورة البلد (30)

The servants of the Merciful are those who walk the earth in humility, and when the arrogant address them, they say, "Peace."

And those who, when they spend, are neither wasteful nor stingy, but choose a middle course between that.

And those who do not implore besides Allah any other god, and do not kill the soul which Allah has made sacred—except in pursuit of justice—and do not commit adultery. Whoever does that will face penalties.

And those who do not bear false witness; and when they come across indecencies, they pass by with dignity.

(Chapter 19, al-Furqan)

وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا
 (63)

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَنْفَقُوا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوا وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ قَوَامًا (67) وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَدْعُونَ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ وَلَا يَقْتُلُونَ النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا يَزْنُونَ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ يَلْقَ أَثَامًا (68)
وَالَّذِينَ لَا يُشْهَدُونَ الزُّورَ وَإِذَا مَرُّوا بِاللَّغْوِ مَرُّوا كِرَامًا (72)

سورة الفرقان (19)

As the Prophet continued preaching his message and attacking the Quraysh's beliefs and gods, Mecca's elders were determined to fight Muhammad and his new religion fiercely. They went back to Abu Talib and presented their case more forcefully. Abu Talib was in a dilemma. He did not like to quarrel with his people, yet he would not desert his nephew. So he discussed the matter with him, ending the discussion by saying: "You see the difficulty of my situation. Do not put my life at risk and do not burden me with what I cannot bear."

The Prophet felt that his uncle might withdraw his protection; so he stated his position clearly: "Uncle, should they give me the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left hand in return for abandoning my call, I would not do anything of the sort until God has brought his message to triumph or until I have perished."

Then he stood up and started to walk away, but his uncle called him back, reassuring him, "My nephew, you may go and say whatever you like. I will never withdraw my protection from you, and never will I let down."

Persecution: The Quraysh's Campaign of Terror Against Muslims

As Muhammad continued his active campaign of spreading the message of Islam, the Meccan establishment intensified its campaign of terror against the followers of the new religion. As mentioned earlier, the early Muslims were drawn from all clans of the Quraysh, including the poor, slaves, and the deprived as well as open-minded and liberal-thinking individuals from the powerful classes. Some of the early Muslims escaped physical persecution, as they were protected by their clans. However, they were subjected to taunts and ridicule. Those who belonged to the lower class were even subjected to physical harm.

Amr ibn Hisham, who belonged to the clan of Makhzum, masterminded the campaign of opposition in its two distinct forms: ridiculing those Muslims who had good connections with their tribes, and persecuting the weaker ones. He was known by his nickname, Abu Jahl.

Bilal was born in slavery. He was of Abyssinian descent; his master was Ummayah ibn Khalif, the chief of the clan of Jumah. After accepting Islam, Bilal was tortured daily by his master; every day he was taken out to the open desert, where he was severely beaten; and at midday, when the sun was at its hottest, he was made to lie on the sand without any clothes to protect his back from the burning sand. A large stone was put on his chest, and at the end, he was dragged with ropes over the burning sand. Repeatedly he was asked to renounce Islam. Just as often, he repeated: "He is One! He is One!" Bilal's torture lasted for a long time, until Abu Bakr paid Ummayah and freed him from slavery.

Abu Bakr freed several slaves, among them Amir ibn Fuhayrah, a slave who belonged to al-Tufayl ibn Abdullah al-Asadi. As a free man Amir worked for Abu Bakr as a shepherd. He was the one who later assisted the Prophet and Abu Bakr in emigrating to Madina.

Some of the Muslims who belonged to prominent clans were tortured by their families. Uthman ibn Affan's uncle wrapped him in a mat of palm leaves and set fire under him. He also tied him to a post and swore that he would not release him until he renounced Islam. Mus'ab ibn

Umair was imprisoned and starved by his family after converting to Islam, and was later expelled from their house.

The Prophet himself was not exempt from persecution. The Meccan leaders made their henchmen abuse him with words, gestures, and sometimes actions. They would throw dirt over his head as he prayed in the Ka'bah. On one occasion, one of them took him by the collar and others pushed him around.

The verbal insults and the physical harm inflicted on the Muslims by the Quraysh establishment prompted Muhammad to take several measures to protect himself and his followers. He made the decision to avoid praying in public to avoid open confrontation with the polytheists. He also decided to avoid any gathering of Muslims in public places. So he started to meet with the new converts secretly, at al-Arqam house.

As persecution intensified, Muhammad considered the option of migration of the most vulnerable Muslims to Abyssinia, Ethiopia, whose Christian king was known to be fair. A group of twelve men and four women left Mecca in the fifth year of Prophethood to Ethiopia. They slipped out of Mecca under cover of a dark night and headed for the sea, where two boats happened to be sailing to Abyssinia.

The Conversion of Hamzah and Umar

One day Abu Jahl passed the Prophet near the hill of al-Safa. Realizing that Muhammad was alone, Abu Jahl ridiculed Islam and assaulted him, but the Prophet refused to retaliate, instead sitting and listening to Abu Jahl's devastating insults without uttering a word. The incident was witnessed by a maid looking through a window of a house in which she worked. That evening Muhammad's uncle, Hamzah, who had been hunting, was stopped by the maid as he passed her; she told him that Abu Jahl had assaulted his nephew. Hamzah became extremely angry. He immediately went looking for Abu Jahl. When he saw him with members of his clan, he went to him with his bow in his hand. As he stood over Abu Jahl's head, he struck him with the bow with all his might, making a long cut in his forehead. "Will you insult him when I follow his religion?" he yelled. "Hit me back, if you can!" As Abu Jahl's wound started to bleed, his comrades tried to avenge him. Abu Jahl, however, realized that the situation could deteriorate, told them, "Leave Abu Imarah alone. I have indeed abused his nephew badly." Hamzah became a devout Muslim. His decision gave Muhammad and the Muslims a feeling of strength, because he was one of the most courageous fighters in Arabia.

Another event that bolstered the strength of Islam considerably was the conversion of Umar ibn al-Khattab. This occurred in Dhul-Hijjah, the sixth year of Prophethood, three days after the conversion of Hamzah. Umar until then had been a bitter opponent of Islam. Ibn Ishaq and ibn Hisham recounted the story of Umar's conversion.

Umar held the traditions of his people in high regard, and was fond of indulging in wine parties; on the other hand, he greatly admired the stamina of the Muslims and their persistent dedication to their faith. These two extreme views created a sort of uncertainty in his mind and made him tend to believe at times that the doctrine of Islam could bear better and more sacred seeds.

His sharp temper and enmity toward the Prophet led him one day to leave his house, sword in hand, with the intention of killing Muhammad. He was in a fit of anger and was irritated and fuming. Nu'aym ibn Abdullah met him along the way, and asked him where he was headed. Umar said, furiously, "To destroy the man Muhammad." Nu'aym asked him: "How will you be

safe from the Banu Hashim and from the Banu Zahrah if you kill Muhammad? Why don't you take care of your own family first and set them right?"

Umar asked, "What do you mean, my own family?" Nu'aym replied, "Your sister and her husband have abandoned your religion and become followers of Muhammad."

When Umar approached his sister's house, she and her husband, Sa'id ibn Zayd, were studying the Quran with a fellow Muslim, Khabbab ibn Aratt. When they realized that Umar was approaching, Khabbab sought somewhere to hide, while Fatima hid the sheet they were reading. As he came in, Umar asked whose voices he had overheard. Receiving no answer from his sister, he assaulted his brother-in-law. As his sister pushed him away from her husband, he struck her, making blood flow down her face. She then said, with a boldness and determination which surprised Umar himself, "Yes, we are Muslims; we believe in Allah and His Messenger Muhammad. You may do as you please."

When Umar saw the face of his dear sister smeared with blood, he felt pity and said, "Let me see what you were reading, so that I may receive what Muhammad has brought." Fatima replied, "O brother, you are unclean on account of your idolatry; none but the pure may touch it. So go and wash first." He did so and took the sheet which contained the opening verses of the *surah* "Ta-Ha":

We did not reveal the Quran to you to make you suffer.
But only as a reminder for him who fears.
A revelation from He who created the earth and the high heavens,
The Most Merciful; on the throne He settled.
To Him belongs everything in the heavens and the earth, and everything in
between them, and everything beneath the soil.
If you speak aloud—He knows the secret, and the most hidden.
Allah, there is no god but He, His are the Most Beautiful Names.
(Chapter 16, Ta-Ha)

طه (1) مَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَى (2) إِلَّا تَذَكُّرَةً لِمَنْ يَخْشَى (3) تَنْزِيلًا مِمَّنْ خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ وَالسَّمَاوَاتِ
الْعُلَى (4) الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى (5) لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَمَا تَحْتَ
النُّجَى (6) وَإِنْ تَجَهَّرَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَإِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ وَأَخْفَى (7) اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى (8)

سورة طه (16)

I—I am Allah. There is no God but I. So serve Me, and practice the prayer for prayer, for My Remembrance.

(Chapter 16, Ta-Ha)

إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي (14)

سورة طه (16)

Umar read the verses with great interest and was much fascinated with them, and then read the whole sheet again. "How beautiful this is, and how graceful!" he said. At this point, Khabbab came out and told Umar about the Prophet's prayer calling for fresh support to Islam, saying: "I

sincerely hope that you will come forward in answer to the Prophet's prayers." Umar then declared that he wanted to be a Muslim.

Umar headed for the al-Arqam house where Muhammad had been holding his secret meetings along with his companions. He reached the house with the sword swinging from his arm. He knocked at the door. The companions turned to see who the intruder was. One of them peeped through a gap in the door and turned back in worry saying: "It is Umar with his sword." Hamzah, dispelling the fears of his friends, said: "Let him in. As a friend he is welcome. As a foe, he will have his head cut off with his own sword." The Prophet advanced to receive the fearsome visitor, caught him by his garment and scabbard, and asked him the reason for his visit. At that Umar replied: "O Messenger of Allah, I come to you in order to believe in Allah and His Messenger and that which has brought from the Lord." Filled with delight, Muhammad together with his companions shouted, "Allah akbar" (Allah is great) so loudly that it could be heard at the Ka'bah.

It did not take Umar long to grasp the true nature of Islam. He also figured out what was needed to establish a distinct status for the small Muslim community. Therefore he suggested to the Prophet that Muslims should go out from their secret house to pray at the Ka'bah as a group. Muhammad agreed, and chose forty of his companions, who walked in double file from the house of al-Arqam to the Ka'bah, with Hamzah at the head of one file and Umar at the head of the other. That demonstration gave the Quraysh a clear indication that Islam was there to stay.

The conversion of Umar was a real triumph for the cause of Islam. So great and instant was the effect of his conversion on the situation that the believers who had until then worshipped Allah within their four walls in secret now assembled and performed their rites of worship openly in the Holy Sanctuary itself. This raised their spirits; at the same time it created anxiety and uneasiness among the Quraysh. Islam's followers might be few in number, but they had strength of character and powerful new converts.

The Quraysh Negotiate with Muhammad

The elders of the Quraysh developed a plan for the containment of Muhammad that depended on temptation. A delegation headed by two men known for their diplomatic talent, al-Walid ibn al-Mughirah and al-'As ibn Wa'il, went to Muhammad, offering him what they considered to be an attractive offer: "We will make you the wealthiest of us all, and we will give you the prettiest of our virgin daughters to marry. We will ask of you nothing in return except to stop abusing our gods and ridiculing our practices." They were not surprised when Muhammad rejected their offer. Deep at heart the chiefs recognized the strength of the Prophet's character and the truthfulness of his message. They also realized that the social and economic structure of the Meccan society which brought them all the privileges they enjoy would not last for ever, as it is not expected to resist the message of Muhammad for long. So they came with another offer: "We will worship your God one day and you worship our gods the following day." His response was what he had received from God, surah 109:

I do not worship what you worship.
Nor do you worship what I worship.
Nor do I serve what you serve.
Nor do You serve what I serve.
You have your way, and I have my way.

The delegation then called for a meeting attended by all the chiefs of the Quraysh to develop a new plan. Some of them suggested inviting Muhammad to the meeting for open discussion, hoping that they could reach a compromise, especially because all chiefs would be present. Muhammad accepted the invitation. The open discussion produced no new offers, and Muhammad's response was the same. At the end, their spokesman challenged the Prophet and presented specific demands:

You know that our country is so hard to live in: water is scarce and we are very poor. Pray to your Lord who sent you to us, then, and ask him to move these mountains surrounding us and make our land an open plain with rivers similar to those of Syria and Mesopotamia flowing through it. Ask Him also to raise for us a few of our forefathers, including Qusayy ibn Kilab, who was a man of his word, so that we may ask them about what you say and whether it is true or false. If you do that and if they testify for you, we will recognize your high position with God and will believe that you are His Messenger.

The Prophet's answer was, "I would not ask Him anything of the sort. I am simply sent to deliver good tidings and a warning. If you accept, you benefit yourselves. If you refuse, I will await God's judgment."

From that point on the meeting deteriorated, and the chiefs kept adding more demands: "Why do you not get something for yourself?"

"Ask your Lord to send you an angel to endorse what you say."

"Why do you not ask God to make the sky break up, then, and let it fall on our heads?"

At this point, Muhammad stood up and delivered his final word, saying, "That is up to God. If He decides to do it, He will." Then he walked away.

As the Quraysh failed to achieve their goals through negotiations with Muhammad, they escalated their ruthless campaign of repression of Muslims. The Muslims who lacked influential support and protection suffered the most. Those who enjoyed protection were not immune either; they were put under great pressure, both physical and mental. The weak and vulnerable were subjected to intense and severe torture aimed at forcing them to convert back to paganism. Abdullah ibn Abbas, the Prophet's cousin, described the intense torture methods utilized against the vulnerable Muslims:

They used to beat their victims very badly, and allow them nothing to eat or drink, until they could not even sit up. They inflicted so much pain that the victim would give or say anything he was asked just to win a short rest. The situation of some of those victims was so bad that they would answer any question put to them by their tormentors in the way acceptable to them. The disbelievers would ask, "Are the al-Lat and al-Uzza your gods?" Or "Is this cockroach your Lord whom you worship?" In their unbearable plight, the believers might answer these questions with affirmation.

The Quran acknowledged such situations, and allowed the victims to submit verbally to their tormentors, provided they remain faithful in their hearts.

Whoever renounces faith in Allah after having believed—except for someone who compelled, while his heart rests securely faith—but whoever willingly opens up his heart to disbelief—upon them falls wrath from Allah, and for them is a tremendous torment.

(Chapter 14, an-Nahl)

مَنْ كَفَرَ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِهِ إِلَّا مَنْ أُكْرِهَ وَقَلْبُهُ مُطْمَئِنٌّ بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَكِنْ مَنْ شَرَحَ بِالْكُفْرِ صَدْرًا فَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ
مِنَ اللَّهِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (106)

سورة النحل (14)

Social and Economic Boycott (Seventh to Ninth Years of the Revelation)

The Meccan leaders realized that there could be no chance for an agreement with the Muslim community. At the same time, they realized that their persecution measures had failed to restrain the growth of the Muslim community. They also had failed to persuade Abu Talib to abandon Muhammad, his nephew. So they held a meeting at Khaif Banu Kinanah, in a place called Wadi Al-Muhassab. In this meeting, they formed a confederation and decided to impose a social and economic boycott against the Banu Hashim and Banu al-Muttalib. They all took an oath not to have any business dealings with them nor any sort of intermarriage, social relations, visits, or even verbal contacts until the Prophet was released to them to be killed. This pact was put in writing in the form of a treaty that was attached to the wall of the Ka’bah, proclaiming that all of Banu Hashim and Banu al-Muttalib were boycotted, whether they were believers or disbelievers, except for Abu Lahab.

In response to this treaty, Abu Talib withdrew to a valley on the eastern outskirts of Mecca. The Banu Hashim and Banu al-Muttalib joined him. All the Hashimite clan, including the non-Muslims among them, along with Muslims of other tribes, suffered a great deal as a result of the boycott. The situation became very grave, as month by month went by with no food supplies reaching them. The Muslims and the Hashimites were starving. Occasionally there was relief as some kind-hearted people smuggled supplies in under cover of darkness. The hardship continued for nearly three years.

A man called **Hisham ibn Amr, who enjoyed a position of respect among his people**, did more than anybody else to help the Hashimites. He started smuggling food and clothes to them, and continued to do so for a long time. At the end of almost three years, he hit on a solution to end the boycott. Hisham approached five Meccan leaders as they came to the Ka’bah one morning: **Zuhayr ibn Abi Umayyad**, who belonged to the Makhzum clan; **al-Mut’im ibn Adiy**, who belonged to the clan of Abd Manaf; **Abu al-Bakhtari ibn Hisham**; and **Zam’ah ibn al-Aswad**. After they performed the *tawaf* seven times, Zuhayr addressed them, saying, “Fellow Meccans! Are we to go on enjoying our food, and wearing the best clothes, while the Hashimites are starving because no one dares buy from them or sells to them? By God, I shall not sit until this oppressive covenant of boycott is torn to pieces.” Abu Jahl, who was sitting in a corner, said: ‘You are a liar; by God, no one will touch it.’ Zam’ah then said to Abu Jahl: “You are a worse liar! We did not approve of it when it was written.” Abu al-Bakhtari then came to his support, saying: “Zam’ah is right. We do not sanction its terms.” Further support came from al-Mut’im, who simply said: “You are right and whoever disputes what you say is a liar. We

disclaim it in front of God.” Hisham, who had engineered the whole plan, also declared his support.

Al-Mut'im then rose and went to the Ka'bah to pull the covenant out and tear it. He found that nothing of the writing has remained, with the exception of the expression: “In Your name, Our Lord.”

Thus the boycott ended after three years of excessive hardship, during which the Muslim community suffered greatly but became stronger. Despite the boycott, new recruits who were strong and highly dedicated believers joined the Muslim community.

A Last Attempt at Negotiations

Shortly after the end of the boycott, Abu Talib became ill. The Quraysh leaders, realizing that the Muslim community had gained strength by having more influential members such as Hamzah and Umar, as well as others from all the clans of the Quraysh, made another attempt to negotiate with Muhammad. A strong delegation made up of the most distinguished men of the Quraysh, such as Utbah, Shaybah, Abu Jahl, Umayyad ibn Khalif, and Abu Sufyan, went to Abu Talib, enquiring about his health. They then said to him, “You know how distinguished your position is among us, and how much we respect you. You are aware of the strained relations between your nephew and ourselves. We suggest that you call him and let both him and us give you some form of pledge so that each party will leave the other alone, and a peaceful relationship can be established between him and us.”

Abu Talib called the Prophet and said to him: “These are the leaders of your people. They have asked to see you for an arrangement of give and take.” Addressing the delegation, the Prophet said: “I ask of you only one word that will give you supremacy over Arabs and non-Arabs alike.” The Meccan leaders were taken by incredible surprise, and began to wonder what sort of word would benefit them to that extent. Abu Jahl asked: “What is that word? I swear by your father that we will surely grant you your wish.” Then Muhammad said: “I want you to testify that there is no God worthy of worship but Allah.”

This interaction between the Prophet Muhammad and the leaders of the Quraysh has been reported in all the biographies, including those of Ibn Hisham and Ibn Ishaq. It is not clear whether the Prophet elaborated and explained to them how the declaration of the oneness of God would grant them the supremacy over Arabs and non-Arabs. Muhammad's message of social justice was demanded by God the Creator, who would have the final word on Judgment Day. His message was aimed at establishing justice in Arabia and beyond. He was the Messenger for all humanity. He was confident that his message would prevail in Arabia, and that the Muslim community of Arabia would spread justice throughout the entire world, leading a universal revolution aimed at justice for all.

The leaders of the Quraysh were concerned about the privileges that they had achieved by controlling the Ka'bah, which hosted all the deities in Arabia, and the position of Mecca as the trade center of Arabia. Muhammad, who had the vision of changing the world by establishing justice for all, was confident that the Muslim community of Arabia would lead the world. He was inviting the Quraysh to be part of this vision.

The Deaths of Abu Talib and Khadijah (Tenth Year of Revelation)

Shortly after the meeting with the leaders of the Quraysh, Muhammad lost his uncle, Abu Talib, who had taken care of him since he was eight years old, treating him like his own son. He was

the protector who supported him against the Quraysh leaders when he needed protection, and he refused to yield to the Quraysh's demands and pressure to desert his nephew. Now, after his death, those leaders started to abuse Muhammad and humiliate him publicly. Abu Lahab, the Prophet's own uncle, joined them in their stiff opposition and persecution. The majority of the Hashimites who did not join Islam and continued with their pagan beliefs, elected to withhold their support to Muhammad, which they had previously provided on grounds of tribal loyalty.

Within five weeks of Abu Talib's death, the Prophet suffered another great loss when Khadija, his wife of twenty-five years, died at age sixty-five. She was a kind, loving wife who had been a comfort to him throughout their life together. She was the first to believe in Islam when he received the message, and from that day on she was his main supporter.

For Muhammad, the deaths of Abu Talib and Khadijah meant the loss of both internal and external support. The death of Abu Talib made him more vulnerable to the Quraysh's attacks. At the same time, the humiliation and harm he was receiving would have been more tolerable if Khadijah had been alive to comfort him. This situation prompted him to explore new sources of support. Thinking that seeking protection outside Mecca would be the answer, he traveled to Ta'if, a mountainous town about 110 kilometers to the north, asking for support and protection. The Prophet approached the leaders of the Thaqif (Ta'if's tribe), calling on them to believe in God and to convert to Islam. For ten days he spoke to one chief after another. None gave him a word of encouragement or support; on the contrary, they expelled him from their town.

On his way back to Mecca from Ta'if, the Prophet was extremely concerned about the consequences of his failed mission. He concluded that the Quraysh might prevent him from entering Mecca, and realized that the need for protection was vital and urgent. So he stopped at **Nakhlah**, a place not very far from Mecca, to seek such protection. At Nakhlah, he approached a few leaders for help, and succeeded in securing protection from **al-Mut'im ibn Adiy**. Al-Mut'im was one of the five notables who had succeeded in ending the boycott of the Banu Hashim and al-Muttalib. He and his children and nephews took up their arms and went to the Ka'bah. He then sent word to the Prophet to enter. Muhammad approached the sanctuary and walked around it seven times, guarded by his new protectors.

Abu Jahl, who was at the Ka'bah when Muhammad was performing the *tawaf*, became extremely agitated, and immediately confronted al-Muti'm asking him: "Are you a follower or a protector?" Al-Mut'im confirmed that he was the protector. Abu Jahl then declared that the Quraysh would honor that protection; thus, Muhammad was able to return home safely. The tradition of the Arabian tribal society dictated that if an individual sought protection from a man of good standing in a town or a tribe, such a request would customarily be granted, and the granting of protection would enhance the reputation and standing of the protector.

Muhammad's failed trip to Ta'if taught him an important lesson: he must not venture outside Mecca until he could ensure a positive reception for his message that would guarantee his safety and the safety of his followers.

The Prophet's weak position affected other Muslims, especially the more vulnerable and unprotected. Even the wealthy were affected by the boycott, as it exhausted their assets and businesses. Abu Bakr, for example, lost most of his wealth, and his business declined to the point of being bankrupt. He lived in the district of the Jumah clan, whose chief was Ummayah ibn Khalif. Ummayah was the man who used to torture Bilal before Abu Bakr freed him. Now, the Muslims who lived in his district, including Abu Bakr, were subjected to all kinds of torture. Abu Bakr's Taym clan was too weak to protect him. Hence Abu Bakr considered migrating to

Abyssinia. **Ibn Dughunnah**, one of the Bedouin allies of the Quraysh who heard what was happening, took Abu Bakr under his own protection.

The Night Journey to Jerusalem (Eleventh Year of Revelation)

The losses of Abu Talib and Khadijah and the failure at Ta'if were devastating events. It is fair to say that this period of Muhammad's life was the hardest and most difficult time. Muhammad was very depressed, as he could no longer rely on his own clan, the Hashimites, for support. However, his firm belief that God was looking after him and would always protect him kept his head high and his morale strong. This belief reached its apex when he had the most marvelous experience of his life. One night, as he was asleep in the home of his cousin, Umm Hani bint Abi Talib, in Mecca, the Angel Gabriel came and woke him up and took him by the hand to the sanctuary, where he found a winged animal called **al-Buraq**, a name derived from *barq*, meaning lightning. Gabriel and Muhammad mounted the creature, and in the blink of an eye, al-Buraq flew them to Jerusalem, in Palestine.

In Jerusalem, Muhammad met Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and other noble prophets and led them all in prayer. Following this gathering, the Prophet ascended to heaven. In heaven he met other prophets who preached the message of God's oneness to mankind. In his journey he saw examples of the suffering of those who would be condemned to hell. He was then admitted into paradise and saw examples of those who would be rewarded for their deeds by enjoying the pleasures of paradise. While he was in paradise, he was informed by God of the obligatory prayers he and his followers were expected to offer. Then the Prophet returned to his cousin's home in Mecca just before dawn. The whole journey lasted only part of the night.

When Muhammad returned to his cousin's home, everyone in the house was still sleeping. As they woke up, he told Umm Hani all about his night journey to Jerusalem. Umm Hani, a firm believer, accepted his story as a true experience. However, as Muhammad was on his way to the sanctuary, she stopped him, saying: "I fear that people would not believe you if you told them what you have just told me." The Prophet made it clear that he was planning to tell everyone, "Even though they will not believe me."

When Muhammad announced his news to the Meccans at the sanctuary, his listeners reacted with disbelief. The attendants who heard the story spread the news through the entire city, saying that what they heard from the Prophet was the most incredible story ever told. Some of them went straight to Abu Bakr, who accused them of bringing him false stories. When they assured him that this was exactly what they had heard from Muhammad, he said, "If he has actually said this, he is telling the truth." Abu Bakr then went to the sanctuary, where people were still gathered around the Prophet. Abu Bakr asked Muhammad to describe Jerusalem, which he did. One of the Meccans asked him to describe the caravan the Quraysh had sent to Syria. The Prophet gave them a detailed description, including the specific time when it would arrive at Mecca. His description was accurate, and they were surprised when the caravan arrived at the time Muhammad had specified.

The nature of the Night Journey and the purpose of this marvelous experience have been studied and discussed by many theologians. The Quran clearly states the aim and purpose of the journey. It gave Muhammad the chance to see some of God's signs and His real might at a point in his life when he was experiencing extreme difficulties. The Night Journey marked the end of any sense of despair arising from those difficulties. From that point on, Muhammad was free of

any feelings of weakness, unaffected by adversity, and he was quite certain, to the last day of his life, that he would be victorious as long as he and his followers were true believers.

Glory to Him who journeyed His servant go by night from the Sacred Mosque, to the farthest Mosque, whose precincts We have blessed, in order to show him of Our wonders. He is the Listener and the Beholder.”

(Chapter 15, al-Isra’)

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَىٰ بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَى الَّذِي بَارَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَهُ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا
إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ (1)

سورة الاسراء (15)

With respect to the nature of the journey, the majority of Islamic scholars believe that the Prophet did physically, in body and spirit, go on this journey. However, some scholars believe that the journey was a spiritual one, arguing that a physical trip of this kind would involve preternatural powers. The answer of the believers to this argument is: “Whatever powers such a journey required, they were easy for God, the Creator, to provide. God has created all the laws of nature. To Him there is no such thing as natural or preternatural.”

The Night Journey has great significance: The fact that Muhammad led the other prophets in prayer demonstrated that the message of all the prophets was the same. It emphasized the continuity of these messages and affirmed the fact that the message of Islam is for all mankind, not for Arabs alone.

The Quran emphasizes this shared vision. God makes it clear that the faithful must believe in the revelation of every single one of God’s messengers:

Say, “We [Muslims] believe in Allah, and in what was revealed to us; and in what was revealed to Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob and the Patriarchs; and in what was given to Moses, and Jesus, and the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we submit.”

(Chapter 3, Al ‘Imran)

قُلْ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ
وَعِيسَىٰ وَالنَّبِيُّونَ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ (84)

سورة آل عمران (3)

The Quran is simply a confirmation of the previous scriptures, the Torah and the Gospels:

Those who have believe, and the Jews, and the Sabians, and the Christians- whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, and does what is right-they have nothing to fear, nor shall they grieve.”

(Chapter 6, al-Ma’idah)

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَىٰ وَالصَّابِئِينَ مَن آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ
عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ (69)

سورة المائدة (6)

For each of you We have assigned a law and a method. Had Allah willed, He could have made you a single nation, but He tests you through what He has given you. So compete in righteousness. To Allah is your return, all of you; then He will inform you of what you had disputed.

(Chapter 6, [al-Ma'idah])

لِكُلِّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا ۚ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكِنْ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ ۚ فَاسْتَبِقُوا
الْخَيْرَاتِ ۚ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ (48)

سورة المائدة (6)

God was not the exclusive property of one tradition; He was the source of all human knowledge. “God is the light of the heaven and the earth.” The divine light could not be confined to any individual lamp, but was common to them all, enshrined in every one of them:

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The allegory of His light is that of a pillar on which is a lamp. The lamp is within a glass. The glass is like a brilliant planet, fueled by a blessed tree, an olive tree, neither eastern nor western. Its oil would almost illuminate, even if no fire has touched it. Light upon Light. Allah guides whomever He wills. Allah thus cites the parables for the people. Allah is cognizant of everything.

(Chapter 18, an-Nur)

﴿اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ مَثَلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكَاةٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ ۚ الْمِصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ ۚ الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ يُوقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ لَا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ ۚ نُورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ ۚ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (35)﴾

سورة النور (18)

A New Strategy: Moving to a New Community

During the **tenth year of the revelation**, Muhammad faced several events that influenced his thinking and prompted him to formulate new plans. The tenth year witnessed the deaths of Abu Talib and Khadijah, a significant loss that created a serious situation for Muhammad and his followers. His attempt to find protection and support in Tai'f failed. His life was threatened as he lost the protection of the Banu Hashim, which forced him to seek protection from another clan in Mecca. In the Prophet's mind this was a temporary measure and a transitional period until he is able to develop a new strategy. He realized that he had reached a dead end in Mecca that requires him to find an alternative city or tribe, to achieve a breakthrough. This was the same thinking behind his trip to the city of Ta'if. However, Muhammad had learned a very important lesson from his experience with the Thaqif tribe: that he must ensure a good reception for his message before adventuring to a new location.

The pilgrimage season was the natural time for recruitment. In the past, Muhammad had succeeded in bringing several individuals to Islam at this time. The new plan was to recruit not just individuals, but tribes. The pilgrims from the different tribes formed their own camps and remained together throughout their stay around Mecca. So he went to each camp addressing the entire tribe. However, he also continued to approach individuals who enjoyed a position of respect among their people. Among the individuals who responded to his call was the leader of the Daws tribe, al-Tufail ibn Amr. When he came to Mecca for pilgrimage, the Quraysh elders made sure to warn him against the Prophet. Al-Tufail reports his encounter with Muhammad:

They continued to pressure me to the extent that when I went to the Ka'bah the following morning, I put cotton into my ears so that I did not accidentally hear anything he said. Nevertheless, he was praying only a short distance from me when I was in the Ka'bah, and God simply wanted me to hear his words. I recognized that what he said was certainly good. I said to myself: "You are certainly on the wrong track. You are a good poet who can distinguish good words from bad ones. What prevents you from listening to this man and judging what he says?" I waited until God's Messenger went home, and I followed him. I said to him: "Muhammad, your people have said to me this and that and warned me against listening to you until I closed my ears to anything you said. Yet God wanted me to hear what you say, and I found it good. Will you please explain your message to me?" The Prophet told me about Islam, explaining its principles, and recited a passage from the Quran to me. By God, I had never heard anything better than that. I immediately adopted Islam and declared my belief in God's oneness and the message of Muhammad.

Al-tufail did not see the Prophet again for several years. After the Battle of the Trench, he and about eighty families of his tribe who had adopted Islam joined the Prophet in the Battle of Khaybar.

The First Aqabah Pledge عهد العقبة الأول (Twelfth Year of Revelation)

During the pilgrimage season of the twelfth year of the revelation, the Prophet met a group of six men from the **Khazraj** tribe of **Yathrib** at a place called **Aqabah**, in Mina, where pilgrims would encamp for three days. He outlined to them the principles of Islam and read them a passage from the Quran. He asked them to believe in God as the only deity to be worshipped. Those men were **As'ad ibn Zurarah**, **Awf ibn al-Harith**, **Rafi ibn Malik**, **Qutbah ibn Amir ibn Hadidah**, **Uqbah ibn Amir Ibn Zayd**, and **Jabir ibn Abdullah ibn Riab**. The six men accepted the Prophet's call and declared their belief in God and the message of Islam. They also told Muhammad:

We have left our people in an unprecedented state of mutual hostility. May God make you the cause of their unity. We shall call on them to follow you and explain to them your religion which we have accepted. Should God unite them in following you, you shall enjoy with them a position of the highest prestige.

The six emissaries carried the Prophet's message to their own people. Apparently they were very active emissaries, as in no time the whole city was speaking about the Prophet and his message, and many accepted Islam. Those who adopted the new religion were hopeful that the Prophet and his message would be the catalyst that they needed in order to achieve peace and reconciliation and restore unity to their city.

The Aws and Khazraj were familiar with the concept of monotheism through their contact with the Jews, and the idea was appealing to them. However, they had not converted to Judaism because of the arrogance of the Jews, who looked down at the non-Jewish tribes, stating that Judaism was a religion reserved for the elite. So it became clear to Muhammad that Yathrib was a fertile environment for the spread of Islam.

During the next pilgrimage season of 621 CE, the original six were joined by another group of six men meeting Muhammad in the same place at Aqabah. At this meeting, the Prophet entered into a covenant with the twelve men—ten from the Khazraj and two from the Aws. The twelve men pledged to worship no deity other than God; to commit neither theft, nor adultery, nor child-murder; to utter no monstrous falsehood of their own invention, and to never disobey the Prophet over anything which was just or reasonable.

The Prophet sent Mus'ab ibn Umayr to Yathrib with the new followers. His mission was to educate the new Muslims in their new faith and to teach them the Quran. He was to lead the Muslims in prayer. He was also to call other people to adopt Islam. Mus'ab stayed with As'ad ibn Zurarah, a Khazraj with immediate relatives from the Aws. During the months that followed, Mus'ab gathered a lot of information about the people of Yathrib, and quickly learned how to deal with both tribes. He succeeded in gaining the trust and respect of the new followers of Islam, which allowed him to spread Muhammad's message rapidly. With his temperament, he was able to bring to the new faith several influential leaders of the city. Among them were Sa'ad ibn Mu'adh and Usaid ibn Hudair, the most prominent members of the Abd al-Ashal clan, a branch of the Aws tribe. Amr ibn al-Jamuh, a prominent figure from the clan of Salamah, accepted Islam as well.

Mus'ab returned to Mecca shortly before the next pilgrimage season to report to Muhammad the good news that members of all the clans and families of Yathrib had joined Islam. He provided the Prophet with valuable information about the composition of the city and the relationships among the different clans of both tribes. This information was invaluable in helping Muhammad to determine whether Yathrib was a suitable place for the establishment of the first Islamic state. The Prophet recognized the problems that needed to be addressed if he decided to make Yathrib his new city. He had to deal with the non-Muslims in the city who might form a camp of resistance to Islam and how to bring them gradually to his side. He also needed to prepare himself for all possible reactions from the Jewish population of the city. Furthermore, he recognized the urgency of developing an economic plan to help the Muslims who would emigrate from Mecca with their financial needs. There was, he realized, yet another important issue to be addressed: how to deal with the reaction of the Quraysh to the Muslim state in Yathrib.

As the Prophet considered these issues, he reached the conclusion that Yathrib was suited to host the new state. Its two tribes could be considered maternal uncles of the Prophet. His grandfather, Abd al-Muttalib, had been born to a woman from the clan of al-Najjar, a prominent Yathrib tribe. The city was already embracing Islam; a good number of followers were coming to Mecca to meet with him. The city was easily defensible, as it had natural fortifications; on both the eastern and western sides there were two extended areas of volcanic stones that would be

difficult for men, horses, or camels to traverse. Only its northern side offered access to attackers; nonetheless, a small number of guard units would be sufficient to intercept even a large army of attackers. The Aws and Khazraj tribes were known for their pride, integrity, bravery, and high standard of military excellence. When Muhammad analyzed all the available information, he became quite sure that Yathrib was where his followers should emigrate to. Logically, the first step would be to prepare for a meeting with the new followers who had arrived in Mecca as pilgrims. This meeting was planned to take place at Aqabah on the last night of the pilgrimage. As the Prophet made up his mind to move to Yathrib and establish a state for Muslims there, he divulged his plans to his uncle al-Abbas, who was not yet a Muslim, and invited him to the meeting.

The Second Aqabah Pledge عهد العقبة الثاني (Thirteenth Year of Revelation)

While everyone was fast asleep, the Muslims of Yathrib came quietly out of their tents to meet the Prophet at Aqabah. Seventy-three men and two women from Yathrib attended the meeting in the middle of the night. This meeting took place in 622 CE, the thirteenth year of the revelation. Al-Abbas, Muhammad's uncle, addressed the Muslims who came from Yathrib:

You know how highly we rate Muhammad. We have protected him against our own people, with whom we share the same opinion of his call. He is indeed well protected within his own people and in his own city. Nevertheless, he is determined to join you. If you feel that you will indeed fulfill your pledges to him and will indeed protect him from his enemies, you are welcome to do so as you please. Should you, however, feel that you may let him down, after having taken him away to your city, it would be better for everyone if you decide here and now to leave him alone, for he is well looked after in his hometown.

The answer from the attendants came clear: "We have truly understand what you have said." Then they turned to Muhammad and invited him to lay down his conditions.

The Prophet gave a brief address, starting with a passage from the Quran followed by a brief explanation of the message of Islam. He ended his speech with his conditions: **"You pledge to me that you protect me as you protect your own womenfolk and your own children."**

The pledge came from one of the leading figures of Yathrib, **Al-Bara ibn Ma'rur**: "By Him who has given you the message of the truth, we will defend you as we defend our women. Take up our pledges, for we are the children of war and the best people with arms."

Abu al-Haitham ibn al-Tayyihan, one of Yathrib's leaders, addressed the Prophet: "We have relations with the Jews which are now bound to be severed. If we live up to our pledges and God grants you victory, would you, Messenger of God, leave us then to return to your people."

The Prophet's answer was clear. Assuring them, he said, **"I belong to you as you belong to me. I fight your enemy and make peace with your friend."**

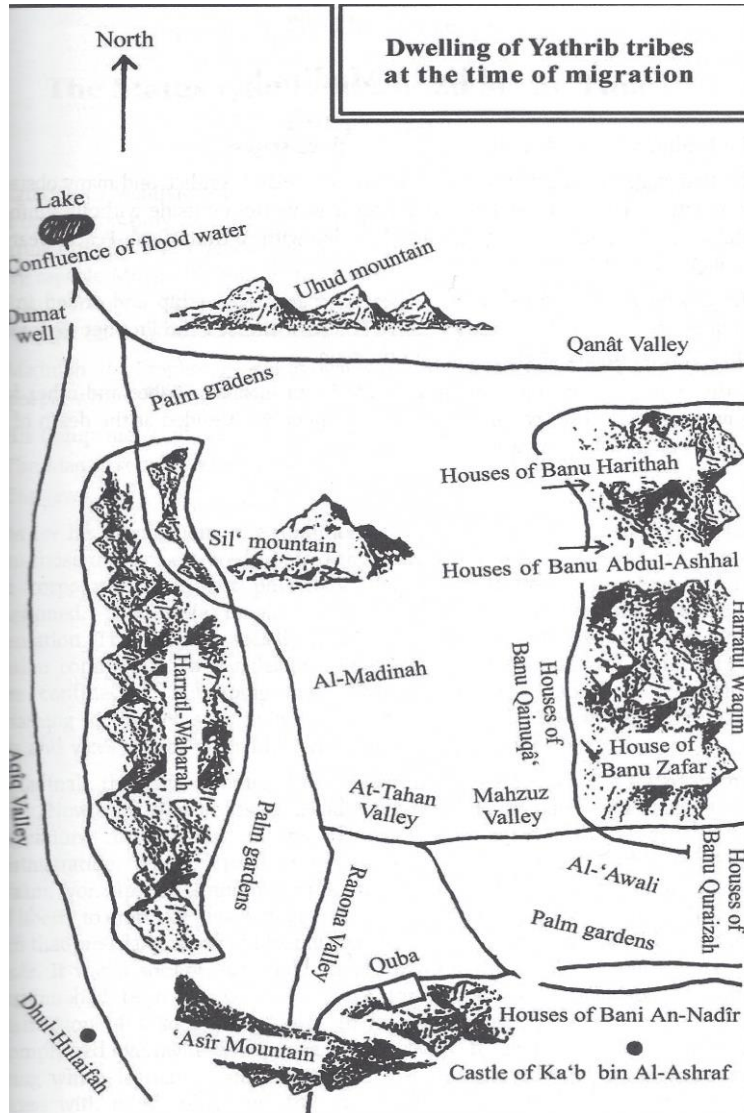
بَلِ الدِّمِ الدَّمُ، وَ الْهَدَمُ الْهَدَمُ، أَنَا مِنْكُمْ وَ أَنْتُمْ مِنِّي، أَحَارِبُ مِنْ حَارِبَتِكُمْ، وَ أُسَالِمُ مَنْ سَالَمْتُمْ

As the attendants prepared to make their personal pledges, **al-Abbas ibn Ubadah** stopped them, saying:

Do you know what you are pledging to this man? **You are committing yourselves to go to war against the whole world.** If there is any doubt in your minds or if you feel that if your wealth is looted and your honored leaders are killed you will give him up, it is more honorable for you to leave him alone now. Giving him up in such an eventuality will dishonor you in both this life and the life to come. **If, on the other hand, you feel you will honor your commitments come what may, then go ahead, because this will increase your honor in both this world and the next.**

They all said, without hesitation: **“We are committed, come what may.”** Then addressing the Prophet: **“What will our reward be if we honor our commitments?”** **The Prophet said: “Paradise.”** Then they all shook hands with the Prophet, concluding the deal.

When everyone at the meeting had given his personal pledge, the Prophet asked them to select from among them twelve chiefs (*naqib* نقيب), one for each of the clans, to be in charge of the Muslims in Yathrib. The twelve men were **As'ad ibn Zurarah**, **Sa'ad ibn al-Rabi**, **Abdullah ibn Amr**, **Ubadah ibn al-Samit**, **Sa'ad ibn Ubadah**, **al-Mundhir ibn Amr ibn Khunais**, **Usaid ibn Hudair**, **Sa'ad ibn Khaithamah**, and **Rifa'ah ibn al-Mundhir**. He also nominated one of them, **As'ad ibn Zurarah al-Khazraji**, to be the chief of chiefs (*naqib an-noqaba* نقيب النقباء)



Yathrib in the Seventh Century CE

Yathrib was situated in an oasis covering an area of about twenty square miles, surrounded by volcanic rocks and uncultivable stony land. Yathrib was different from Mecca. It was not a large city, but a series of hamlets and small villages, each occupied by a different clan. In the seventh century CE, it was a thriving agricultural settlement. The inhabitants of the oasis were a mixed population of Jewish tribes and pagan Arab tribes. A large Jewish community consisting of about

twenty Jewish tribes had lived in the city over several centuries. They were mostly Arabs who had converted to Judaism in the first century CE under the influence of Jewish preachers who had come to Arabia from Palestine or Mesopotamia. Other than preserving a separate religious identity, they were similar to other pagan Arabs. They did not live as a united Jewish community, but acted as individual clans who formed allegiances with non-Jewish Arab clans. Over time, the Jewish settlers cultivated the oasis and established a very prosperous community. Their wealth was mainly derived from the date crop. They occupied the most fertile agricultural lands, and were the masters of Arabia's most valuable crop—dates. They were also skilled jewelers, clothiers, arms makers, and vintners (Jewish wine was considered the best in the peninsula). But Yathrib's dates had made the Jews very rich. The Jewish tribes controlled the city's sole market, which allowed them to enjoy a complete monopoly over the entire economy.

The Jewish tribes lived completely separate from each other. Each tribe had its own quarter, which included an open agricultural section and another fortified one. The Jewish forts provided protected shelters for women and children in times of war. The forts were also used as barns for the storage of agricultural products, and as a safe storage place for weapons as well. Temples and schools were usually located in the forts.

During the sixth century CE, **the Banu Qayla tribe emigrated from South Arabia** (Yemen) and settled in Yathrib. There were several reasons for this emigration, including the conquest of Yemen by the Abyssinians and the major economic setback following the collapse of the Mar'ib dam. This tribe comprised two clans: **the Aws and the Khazraj**. Over time, the two clans evolved into two separate tribes. Although the Aws and Khazraj tribes had come to the oasis many centuries after the settlement of the Arab tribes who had adopted Judaism, they gradually acquired agricultural land and built their own fortresses, and by the early seventh century they had become the dominant force in the oasis.

The largest of the Jewish tribes were the Qurayzah, the Nadir, and the Qaynuqa. Relations between these tribes were not peaceful, and they were often at war with each other. The enmity between the Qaynuqa tribe on one side and the al-Nadir and the Qurayzah on the other was so severe that the **Qaynuqa** tribe were forced to abandon their farms and move into the city to become manual workers. The **al-Nadir** had their quarters about two or three miles to the north of the city, in a fertile valley called **Badhan**. The **Qurayzah** had their quarters few miles to the south of Yathrib in a district called **Mahzur**. The Qaynuqa tribe had around seven hundred men under arms, and were allied with the Khazraj. The al-Nadir tribe had a similar fighting force of some seven hundred armed men, while the Qurayzah had a larger force of around nine hundred armed men. Both the al-Nadir and the Qurayzah were allied with the Aws.

The Aws clans settled in the southern and eastern areas of Yathrib, which were known as the Upper Part, while the Khazraj clans settled in the central and northern areas, known as the Lower Part. The Aws quarters were located in the fertile areas, neighboring the al-Nadir and the Qurayzah Jewish tribes. The Khazraj lived in a less fertile land neighboring the Qaynuqa Jewish clan. The Aws and Khazraj were pagans who worshipped the deity Manat. The fighting force of the Arab population of Yathrib was estimated at four thousand strong men. The Aws and the Khazraj were engaged in almost continuous military conflict and exhausting wars with each other over the years which weakened them both. The Jews played a major part in perpetuating the hostility between the two Arab tribes in order to keep them in a state of exhaustion and weakness.

Non-Jewish residents of Yathrib suffered from the Jewish control over their city's economy, especially when they needed to borrow money. The Jews insisted on secured loans in which the

borrower was obliged to pledge their personal property as security for repayment of the loan; at times, the creditors forced the borrowers to pledge their women and children. Such transactions produced hatred between the lender and the borrower. Most of the people in Madina detested the Jews owing to such practices, as well as their usuriousness and profiteering.

It appears clear that Yathrib was completely different from Mecca; while Mecca had a single faith and a single community, Yathrib had different faiths, cultures, and communities who lived side by side. Mecca was a large, unified city, while in Yathrib there were multiple quarters separated from each other with significant fortifications and natural barriers. Economically, too, the two cities were completely different. Mecca's economy was dependent upon commerce. Although some of Yathrib's inhabitants engaged in trade, the majority were farmers, making a living from their dates and other agricultural products. Unlike the Quraysh, Yathrib's tribes retained more of the old *badawah* tribal values, both good and bad. They continued to believe in *muruwah*, but at the same time were hostile to other tribes outside their oasis or even among themselves. In short, life in Yathrib was much more complicated than in Mecca.

At the time of Muhammad's revelation, Mecca was an organized city-state with about twenty-five public offices. These included different departments, such as the army, revenue, the Ka'bah, foreign affairs, and the administration of justice. Mecca was neither a monarchy nor a republic. The city was governed by a council of ten members representing the ten principal tribes in town. The different functions of the municipality were decided by the ten tribes. The chief of each tribe was selected by the members of the tribe for life.

In contrast, Yathrib was in a state of anarchy where tribalism prevailed. The population was divided into many Arab tribes and clans, and about twenty Jewish tribes. These tribes and clans had been engaged in hostilities among themselves over several generations. At the time of the second Aqaba Pledge, the Yathrib's pilgrims were looking forward to the Prophet moving to their city in order to help them in establishing peace and order.

Emigration to Yathrib (Madina)

In 622 CE, shortly after the second Aqaba Pledge, Muhammad told the Muslims of Mecca that they were now welcome in Yathrib, and they could start emigrating to their Muslim city. Emigration occurred gradually and in small numbers, in the middle of the night. As soon as a Muslim arrived from Mecca, he immediately settled with one of the Muslims of Yathrib. Although the immigration happened in secret, the Meccans soon realized what was happening and became alarmed: a new Muslim community was forming in another city protected by other tribes. Hence, the leaders of the Quraysh adopted a policy of preventing Muslims from leaving their city. They even started chasing them and bringing them back when they left. However, the majority managed to escape and reach their final destination in Yathrib. Uthman ibn Affan and his wife (Muhammad's daughter Ruqayyah), as well as Zayd (Muhammad's adopted son) and Hamzah (Muhammad's uncle) were among the emigrants who left in secrecy. Umar was the only one to announce his intention to emigrate. He challenged the Quraysh to stop him, saying to them, "I am emigrating. He who wants to leave behind him a bereaved mother, a widow, or orphan children can meet me beyond this valley." The Prophet, who was awaiting God's instructions when to leave Mecca, asked his friend Abu Bakr and his cousin Ali to stay behind with him.

The Quraysh leaders realized that if Muhammad escaped from Mecca to Yathrib, he would become a great threat to their authority in Arabia. Therefore they met at Dar al-Nadwah to

discuss the matter. After a lengthy debate, they accepted Abu Jahl's plan: **Every clan would provide a strong, brave young man of noble birth to go to Muhammad and strike him simultaneously, so that all clans would share in his murder. The Abd Manaf clan, which included the Hashimites, was faced with the choice of either going to war against the rest of the Quraysh, who they were no match for, or accepting financial indemnity, which they agreed to pay.** The leaders then decided to carry out their assassination plot on the same night. As mentioned earlier, Muhammad had been under the protection of al-Mut'im ibn Adiy since his trip to Ta'if. This noble gentleman had died in August, 622 CE, just prior to Quraysh's meeting at Dar al-Nadwah, leaving Muhammad with no protection.

As the Prophet learned of their plot, he planned his escape. Shortly before midday, he went to Abu Bakr and asked him to prepare two camels for their departure. It was agreed that Muhammad would go to Abu Bakr's house at midnight, and the two of them would immediately start their journey to Yathrib. Alibin Abi Taleb, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, was to sleep in the Prophet's bed so that the assassins watching Muhammad's house would think that the Prophet was still at home. Ali was made responsible for returning the deposits people had given to Muhammad for safekeeping, as many pagan Meccans had entrusted the Prophet with their valuables.

At midnight, as sleep overpowered the assassins, the Prophet left his house and went straight to Abu Bakr's house, and the two men started their journey. They headed south, in the opposite direction from Yathrib, and stayed in **the cave of Mount Thawr** for three days before finally heading toward their final destination.

When the Quraysh leaders came to the Prophet's house in the morning, they found the would-be assassins were fast asleep and realized that Muhammad had escaped. Upon forcing their way into the house, they were shocked to discover that the man lying in bed was Ali. They immediately dispatched several groups of horsemen to chase and capture Muhammad, but by then Muhammad and Abu Bakr were safe in their cave south of Mecca. After three days, Muhammad and Abu Bakr resumed their journey to Yathrib, taking all necessary precautions to evade the agents of the Quraysh who were chasing them. Muhammad was aware that almost everybody in Arabia was watching for them in the hope of a reward from the Quraysh if they capture him.

The Prophet's biographers relay an incident that Muhammad encountered during his trip to Yathrib in the desert. A man called **Suraqah ibn Malik** learned from a member of his tribe, the Mudlij, that two men had passed close to the tribe's quarter. He immediately armed himself and rode his horse fast in an attempt to catch up with the Prophet. Suraqah tells his own story: "When they appeared fully in my view, my horse tumbled and I fell down. I was not deterred, so I rode on. The horse tumbled and I fell down. And when I rode on again, the horse's front legs sank into the sand and I fell down. As the horse pulled his sinking leg out, I saw that they were followed by a column of smoke. I realized that there was no way I could overpower Muhammad. I therefore shouted to them and asked them to stop. I assured them that I simply wanted to speak to them and would not do them any harm. So they stopped, and I asked the Prophet to write me a note which would serve as a token he would recognize at a later date. He asked Abu Bakr to write me the note. As I was setting off to return home, the Prophet called me and said: "What would you say, Suraqah, if you were to wear the bracelets of the emperor of Persia?" I said: "Khosaru ibn Hormuz?" He said: "Yes." I did not answer. I went back and met several people chasing in that direction. I told them that I was sure Muhammad had not gone that way." Some

years after the death of the Prophet, Umar, the second Caliph, called on Suraqah and gave him the Khosaru's bracelets to wear, in fulfillment of the Prophet's promise.

The Prophet's vision of the total success of his mission never faded, even when he was chased by the Quraysh and its spies. His goal from the start had been to spread the message of Islam throughout all Arabia and beyond. While he was evading his enemy, following a zigzag line close to the Red Sea coast instead of the traditional route to Yathrib, he was still confident in his complete victory over the powerful empire.

After twelve days of travel, crossing around five hundred kilometers, the Prophet and Abu Bakr reached the village of **Quba**, on the southern outskirts of Yathrib. The Prophet spent few days in Quba, during which he laid down the foundation of the first mosque in Islam. Ali, who had been left behind in Mecca to take care of what Muhammad had assigned to him, arrived at Quba and joined the Prophet and Abu Bakr on their way to Yathrib. Upon their arrival at the **valley of Ranuna**, a group of about a hundred men fully dressed in battle attire escorted the Prophet to Yathrib. The Prophet entered the city on **the twelfth of the lunar month of Rab'i al-Awal**, in the year which was to be the first in the Islamic calendar. This date has been calculated to correspond to **September 27, 622 CE**.

As the Prophet made his way through the city, every clan invited him to be their guest. He did not want to offend anybody, so he asked them to let his camel go where she wished. His camel continued to walk in the streets and alleys until she finally stopped at a courtyard belonging to two orphans, Sahl and Suhayl, who were under the guardianship of As'ad ibn Zurarah. The orphans offered their property as a gift, but the Prophet insisted on paying for the land, as he intended to build on this property a mosque for the city and a house for himself and his family. This land happened to be near the home of Abu Ayyub, who immediately took the Prophet's baggage into his home. Muhammad stayed at Abu Ayyub's house until the completion of the construction of the mosque and the house. **From the moment the Prophet arrived to Yathrib, the city became known as al-Madina al-Munawwarah** المدينة المنورة (the City of Light).

The first project that got the attention of the Prophet immediately after his arrival in Madina was the building of a mosque. So he called upon the Muslim community to start the construction of the mosque on the property he had purchased for this purpose. He himself went to work with his followers, and as the Muslims saw how hard Muhammad worked, they put greater effort so that they could finish the construction of the mosque in the shortest possible time. The building was completed in April, 623 CE, about seven months after the emigration (*hijra* الهجرة). On the northern wall, a stone marked the *qibla* القبلة, (direction of prayer) orienting the people towards Jerusalem, a tradition that Muhammad had initiated following his night journey to Jerusalem. The mosque was a square building about sixty-five meters long on all sides. Two rooms were built next to the mosque for the Prophet to use as a home.

The Muslim Community of Madina

In 569 CE, when Muhammad was born, Mecca was a small city-state governed by a city council composed of ten members representing the ten tribes of the city. These members were the chiefs of the tribes. Each chief was selected by the elders of the tribe for life, and upon his death a new chief was selected in the same manner. Each member of the city council was responsible for a specific function. Upon the death of that member, his responsibility was inherited by the new appointee. For example, the Banu Hashim were responsible for providing water to the pilgrims,

as they were the custodians of the well of Zamzam. Below is a list of the different municipal functions and the distribution of these functions among the different tribes of Mecca:

1. Drinking water for pilgrims: Banu Hashim
2. Banner in an independent war: Abu Sufyan's family
3. Tax to aid Pilgrims:
4. Flag during a war, along with House of Parliament: Mus'ab ibn 'Umair's tribe
5. Senate:
6. Justice in case of tort: Abu Bakr's family
7. Cavalry during war: to Khalid ibn al-Waled's family
8. Foreign relations: to Umar ibn al-Khatib's family
9. Deciding matters with holy arrows:
10. Justice of penal cases, and guardianship of offerings the temple of the Ka'bah:

Before Islam, the Prophet had participated in the life of his community as a respectful and loyal citizen of Mecca. But when Islam began, the situation changed, as he and his slowly increasing followers managed their own affairs, both religious and non-religious. The Muslims deferred to the Prophet, not to the municipal council, for any of their concerns or affairs; thus, the Muslims constituted a state within a state.

At the meeting between the Prophet and the Yathrib delegation at Al Aqaba camp during the pilgrimage in the thirteenth year of revelation, the people of Yathrib invited the Prophet to emigrate to their city with the Muslims of Mecca and pledged to provide the Prophet the protection and support (the Second Aqabah Pledge). In consultation with the Yathrib delegation, the Prophet nominated twelve chiefs, one for each of the clans, to form a council responsible for the management of the Muslims' affairs in Yathrib.

When the Prophet arrived in Yathrib (now Madina), he took charge of the Muslims' affairs, as they were looking forward to having him in their city. Muhammad himself was aware that establishing peace and order in Madina was one of the most important tasks that he was to take on. It was clear in his mind what the six men of Yathrib had told him then after they accepted his call to be Muslims. They said:

We have left our people in an unprecedented state of mutual hostility. May God make you the cause of their unity. We shall call on them to follow you and explain to them your religion, which we have accepted. Should God unite them in following you, you shall enjoy with them a position of the highest prestige.

The six men saw in Muhammad the catalyst of peace and unity. They thought of him as being the arbiter (*hakam* الحَكَم) who would be able to give judgment in any quarrel between the Aws and Khazraj tribes.

In Madina, Muhammad was not just a *hakam*, he was the unchallenged leader of the community. His followers viewed him as the Prophet who spoke with the authority of the One God. Muhammad established a new socioreligious community that united all people, regardless of their previous tribal origin. Muhammad called this new community the *umma* الأُمَّة. By enacting a series of radical religious, social, and economic reforms, he was able to build a new society which had never been seen before in Arabia—one completely different from the traditional tribal society. The only way to become a member of a tribe was to be born into it. To

be a member of the *umma*, you had only to declare the **Shahadah** الشهادة (the profession of faith): “There is no God but God, and Muhammad is God’s Messenger.” This meant that a theological statement became an oath of allegiance to the new society and its ideology. Because neither ethnicity nor culture nor race nor kinship matter in Islam, the *umma* had an almost unlimited capacity for growth through conversion.

As the leader of the *umma*, Muhammad had the authority and power to implement all the necessary reforms to unite the *umma*. He was interested in creating a society built on the principle of *hilm* and forgiveness. Such principles were essential in building a strong, cohesive community where all members were prepared to forgive each other and collectively ready to defend their community. He was successful in strengthening the unity between the two divisions of the *umma*: between the Emigrants and Helpers, and between the Aws and the Khazraj.

Although the Emigrants (**the Muhajirin** المهاجرين) were well received in Madina, they were not used to the lifestyle of their new city. They were mostly merchants, like the rest of the Quraysh, while the well-to-do Muslim inhabitants of Madina (Ansar) were mostly farmers. Such differences required a great deal of adjustment. To assist in this matter, the Prophet called a general meeting of the Ansar and told them that each head of the family should take one Meccan family, on the condition that members of both families would jointly work, jointly earn, and jointly share. This arrangement established a special bond of brotherhood. It was not just a spiritual bond; it evolved into something much stronger than any tribal or family relationship. The members of the two families became one family, sharing jobs, income, and even inheriting each other’s property, to the exclusion of other blood relations.

But such a transformation could not be achieved overnight, and not all the Muslims of Madina were committed to change. Some were not sincere in their acceptance of Islam; they were sitting on the fence, waiting to see if the new system was stable and strong. The Quran called those people the “Waverers” or the “**Hypocrites**” (**Munafiqun** المنافقون). Their leader was Ibn Ubayy, who became a Muslim, but remained resentful and critical of the new religion. His resentment originated from the fact that he had hoped to become the ruler of Yathrib. Muhammad tried to win him to his side by giving him special status in the Muslim community by allowing him to address the community during the Friday service.

The Security of the Muslim Community in Madina

The next urgent issue that the Prophet had to address was the security of the Muslim community in Madina. The Muslims of Mecca had been persecuted in their own city for many years, and were forced to escape to safe territory where they became under the protection of new tribes. The Quraysh planned to assassinate Muhammad, who was able to escape from his hometown the same night that the assassination plot was supposed to take place. The Quraysh dispatched several groups of horsemen to chase and capture Muhammad. Since Muhammad arrived in Madina, the Quraysh kept sending messages to its leaders asking them to assassinate the Prophet or expel him from their city. It was very clear that the new Muslim community of Madina was facing the threat of annihilation by the Quraysh.

In response to these threats, the Prophet invited the chiefs of all the tribes, Muslims and non-Muslims, and suggested the constitution of a confederal type of city-state that would guarantee internal autonomy to each unit, and at the same time would establish strong defense measures to protect the city from external threats. The total number of Muslims in Madina at that time was a few hundred, while the total population was about ten thousand, half of them Jews. All parties agreed to such measures. In consultation with the representatives of all tribes, a written

constitution of state was prepared. This document, which became known as the **Madina Constitution**, was the first known constitution in world history. Reading this document makes it apparent that the Jews agreed to be part of the city-state of Madina. The constitution guaranteed Jews equal status to the other inhabitants of the city, with full autonomy in all their affairs—political, religious, and judicial. The Jews enjoyed an independent juridical life, with their own courts, and governance by their own laws. The constitution established security for all citizens of the city-state based on solidarity against foreigners: the enemy of one group was to be the enemy of each and all. Very soon afterward, the Prophet persuaded the non-Muslim tribes who lived around Madina to enter into military alliance with the Madina State.

The Madina Constitution

The document that Prophet Muhammad issued in 622 CE, shortly after his arrival in Madina, was well preserved and transmitted by several Muslim historians and biographers. This document, which became known as the **Madina Constitution**, was issued by Muhammad in the form of a letter addressed to all Muslims of the city, Emigrants and Helpers (Muhajirun and Ansar) alike:

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate!

This is a document drawn up by Muhammad, the Prophet for the believers and Muslims from the Quraysh and Yathrib [Madina] and whoever joins them and takes part in their struggle for their cause: they are one nation, distinguished from all other people.

هذا كتاب من محمد النبي رسول الله بين المومنين و المسلمين من قريش و اهل يثرب و من تبعهم فلحق
إنهم أمة واحدة دون الناس .بهم فحل معهم و جاهد معهم

The document has been referred to as *kitab*; that is, a chart of rights and duties. Historians considered this document a declaration of the city of Madina as a city-state and laying down a code for its administration. It contains fifty-two sections. The first twenty-three sections lay down rules affecting the Meccan Emigrants (Muhajirun) and the Madinite Helpers (Ansar); the remaining sections discuss the rights and obligations of the Jewish tribes of Madina. In both parts, the Prophet himself was considered the final court of appeal. The document commanded that the idolaters and followers of the Jewish faith should follow the Muslims and help them in war. In other words, these people were given the right of citizenship on the condition that they cut off all connections with the Quraysh. The document also states that the Arab tribes of Madina were to reject fratricidal and internecine fighting and be prepared to follow a life of peace, and would accept the Prophet as the arbiter whose decisions were final and binding to all parties.

The central authority of the city-state had sole purview in regard to the question of war and peace. Military service was made compulsory. All the Muslims were required to help one another. The right to seek justice was transferred from individuals to the community. All Muslims were to give full cooperation in punishing anyone who committed a crime.

The following is a summary of the main sections:

- Believers and their dependents constitute a single community (*umma*).
- Each clan or subdivision of the community is responsible for blood money and ransom on behalf of its members (articles 2–11).
- The members of the community are to show complete solidarity against crime and are not to support a criminal, even when he is a near kinsman, when the crime is against another member of the community (articles 13, 21).
- The members of the community are to show complete solidarity against unbelievers in peace and war (articles 14, 17, 19, 44), and also solidarity in the granting of “neighborly protection” (article 15).
- The Jews of various groups belong to the community, and are to retain their own religion; they and the Muslims are to render ‘help’ (including military aid) to one another when it is needed (articles 24–35, 37, 38, 46).

This constitution clearly defined the position of Jews and their relationship with the Muslim state. They were considered citizens of the new Muslim state; they enjoyed religious freedom and state protection. They were required to support the state against any enemy, and never to conspire against it.

The constitution was influenced by pre-Islamic principles having to do with crimes and offenses. It was a sacred duty for each member of the tribe to give help to another member, and, if necessary, to avenge his death based on the principle of “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and a life for a life.” Over time, the demand of an actual life for a life was revised to accommodate acceptance of blood money as an alternative. In Muhammad’s time, the blood money for an adult male was a hundred camels; for a woman, fifty.

The provisions of the constitution related to vengeance and retribution are amplified by the Quran:

And those who, when wronged, defend themselves.

The repayment of a bad action is one equivalent to it. But whoever pardons and makes reconciliation, his reward lies with Allah. He does not love the unjust.

As for those who retaliate after being wronged, there is no blame on them.

Blame lies on those who wrong people, and commit aggression in the land without right. These will have a painful punishment.

But whoever endures patiently and forgives—that is a sign of real resolve.

(Chapter 25, ash-Shurah)

وَجَزَاءُ سَيِّئَةٍ سَيِّئَةٌ مِّثْلُهَا فَمَنْ عَفَا وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ (40) وَلَمَنْ انْتَصَرَ بَعْدَ ظُلْمِهِ فَأُولَئِكَ مَا عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ سَبِيلٍ (41) إِنَّمَا السَّبِيلُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَظْلِمُونَ النَّاسَ وَيَبْغُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (42) وَلَمَنْ صَبَرَ وَغَفَرَ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ لَمِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ (43)

سورة الشورى (25)

Never should a believer kill another believer, unless by error. Anyone who kills a believer by error must set free a believing slave, and pay compensation to the victim’s family, unless they remit it as charity. If the victim belonged to a people who are hostile to you, but is a believer, then the compensation is to free a believing slave. If he belonged to a people with whom you have a treaty, then

compensation should be handed over to his family, and a believing slave set free. Anyone who lacks the means must fast for two consecutive months, by way of repentance to Allah. Allah is all-knowing, Most Wise.

Whoever kills a believer deliberately, the penalty for him is Hell, where he will remain forever. And Allah will be angry with him, and will curse him, and will prepare for him a terrible punishment.

(Chapter 5, an-Nisa)

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ أَنْ يَقْتُلَ مُؤْمِنًا إِلَّا خَطَأً وَمَنْ قَتَلَ مُؤْمِنًا خَطَأً فَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُؤْمِنَةٍ وَدِيَةٌ مُسَلَّمَةٌ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ يَصَدَّقُوا ۖ فَإِنْ كَانَ مِنَ قَوْمٍ عَدُوٍّ لَكُمْ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُؤْمِنَةٍ ۚ وَإِنْ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِيثَاقٌ فَدِيَةٌ مُسَلَّمَةٌ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ وَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُؤْمِنَةٍ ۚ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ تَوْبَةً مِنَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا (92) وَمَنْ يَقْتُلْ مُؤْمِنًا مُتَعَمَّدًا فَجَزَاؤُهُ جَهَنَّمُ خَالِدًا فِيهَا وَغَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَلَعَنَهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُ عَذَابًا عَظِيمًا (93)

سورة النساء (5)

Although the Quran approved the law of retribution as a legitimate response to injury, Muhammad urged believers toward forgiveness. The Quran, in other verses, supported the Prophet's position:

But whoever endures patiently and forgives—that is a sign of real resolve.

(Chapter 25, [ash-Shurah])

وَلَمَنْ صَبَرَ وَغَفَرَ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ لَمِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ (43)

سورة الشورى (25)

Likewise, the constitution sanctioned retribution as the principal deterrent for crime, but with the stipulation that the entire community do nothing except oppose the criminal. This was a clear indication that Muhammad was laying the foundation of a society built on moral rather than utilitarian principles. The constitution also equalized the blood money of all members of the community, so that no longer could one life be considered more or less valuable than another.

Social and Economic Reforms

Justice, equality, and preserving the dignity of all members of the community were among the main teachings of Islam. A number of economic and social measures were implemented by Muhammad to achieve justice and to take care of the needy. The Prophet outlawed usury, which had been a major problem of the Meccan economic system, and was also a major concern in Madina. To enhance the new economic system of the Muslim's society, the Prophet established a new market, which—unlike the one controlled by Banu Qaynuqa, one of the Jewish tribes of Madina—charged no tax on transactions and no interest on loans.

Prior to the emigration of Muslims from Mecca to Madina, the Quran called Muslims to give part of their assets and income to the needy (*zakat* زكاة). *Zakat*, which means purification of wealth, this is a practice in which Muslims give away a part of their accumulated wealth to purify it. In the first thirteen years of Islam and before the emigration to Madina, each Muslim spent *zakat* according to his means and at his own will, whenever there was a worthy cause or a

deserving case. When the city-state was established in Madina, the revelation was more forceful, demanding that *zakat* be mandatory. In this second stage, Muslims brought their alms to be distributed to the needy to the Prophet. As the Muslim community became well established, charity became obligatory in the form of taxes collected by the state and spent according to clear instructions. In this third stage, around the year 8 AH, the *zakat* became a mandatory tithe which every member of the *umma* had to pay according to his or her means. In this stage it was raised to the rank of one of the five pillars of Islam, along with al-Shahadah, prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage. As the small city-state expanded to include larger areas of Arabia, tax collectors were posted all over the country and detailed instructions were given regarding the rate and amounts of various taxes.

The *zakat* of the time of the Prophet Muhammad included not only tax on cash, but also land revenue and a tax on domesticated animals (sheep, goats, camels, and cows), beehives, and mines (gold, silver, and iron). The *zakat* comprised the entire income of the state, and was distributed according to the revelation. The following verse of the Quran lists the eight beneficiaries:

Charities are for the poor, and the destitute, and those who administer them, and for reconciling hearts, and for freeing slaves, and those in debt, and in the path of Allah, and for the traveler in need-an obligation from Allah. Allah is All-Knowing, Most Wise.

(Chapter 10, al-Tawbah)

﴿ إِنَّمَا الصَّدَقَاتُ لِلْفُقَرَاءِ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْعَامِلِينَ عَلَيْهَا وَالْمُؤَلَّفَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَالْغَارِمِينَ وَفِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ فَرِيضَةً مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴾ (60)

سورة التوبة (10)

Righteousness does not consist of turning your faces towards the East and the West. But righteous is he who believes in Allah, and the Last Day, in the Angels, and the Scripture, and the Prophets. Who gives money, though dear, to near relatives, and orphans, and the needy, and the homeless, and the beggars, and for freeing of slaves; those who performed prayers, and pay the obligatory charity, and fulfill their promise when they promise, and patiently persevere in the face of persecution, hardships, and in the time of conflict. These are the sincere; these are the pious.

(Chapter 2, al-Baqarah)

﴿ لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَآتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ ﴾ (177)

سورة البقرة (2)

It is very clear that the Prophet Muhammad established a welfare state that went far beyond what was known in the neighboring countries of Byzantium and Iran.

Protection of Women

One of the most important social reforms in Islam was the protection of women. In pre-Islamic Arabia, women were treated as a man's property. They could neither own property nor inherit it from their husbands (Khadijah was an exceptional case). A widow, herself and her dowry, would be inherited by the husband's male heirs like any other property left behind by the deceased. A female orphan had no right to inherit her father's wealth upon his death.

Muhammad amended Arabia's traditional marriage and inheritance laws, removing all obstacles that prohibited women from inheriting and maintaining their own wealth. Women in the *umma* were given the right both to inherit the property of their husbands and to keep their dowries as their own personal property throughout their marriage. This legislation did not sit well with the male members of the community, who argued, "How can you give the right of inheritance to women and children, who do not work and do not earn a living?" Muhammad's answer was clear: "This is God's command."

Men shall receive a share of what their parents and relatives leave, and women receive a share of what their parents and relatives leave, be it little or much—a legal share. This is ordained by God.

You get one-half of what your wives leave behind, if they had no children. If they had children, you get one-fourth of what they leave. After fulfilling any bequest and paying off debts. They get one-fourth of what you leave behind, if you have no children. If you have children, they get one-eighth of what you leave, after fulfilling any bequest and paying debts. If a man or woman leaves neither parents nor children, but has a brother or sister, each of them gets one-sixth. If there are more siblings, they share one-third. After fulfilling any bequest and paying off debts, without any prejudice. This is a will from Allah. Allah is knowing and just.

These are the bounds set by Allah. Whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, he will admit him into Gardens beneath which rivers flow, to abide therein forever. That is the great attainment.

But Whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, and oversteps His bounds, He will admit him into fire, wherein he abides forever, and he will have a shameful punishment.

(Chapter 4, an-Nisa')

لِّلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ مِمَّا قَلَّ مِنْهُ أَوْ كَثُرَ ۗ نَصِيبًا مَّفْرُوضًا (7)

﴿٧﴾ وَلَكُمْ نَصِيفٌ مَّا تَرَكَ أَزْوَاجُكُمْ إِن لَّمْ يَكُن لَّهُنَّ وَلَدٌ ۖ إِن كَانَ لَهُنَّ وَلَدٌ فَلَكُمْ الرُّبْعُ مِمَّا تَرَخْنَ ۚ مِن بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُّوصِينَ بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ ۚ وَلَهُنَّ الرُّبْعُ مِمَّا تَرَخْتُمْ إِن لَّمْ يَكُن لَّكُمْ وَلَدٌ ۖ إِن كَانَ لَكُمْ وَلَدٌ فَلَهُنَّ النَّمْنُ مِمَّا تَرَخْتُمْ ۚ مِن بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُّوصُونَ بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ ۗ وَإِن كَانَ رَجُلٌ يُورِثُ كِلَالَةً أَوْ امْرَأَةٌ وَلَهُ أَخٌ أَوْ أُخْتٌ فَلِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا السُّدُسُ ۚ إِن كَانُوا أَكْثَرَ مِن ذَٰلِكَ فَهُم شُرَكَاءُ فِي الثَّلَاثِ ۚ مِن بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُّوصَىٰ بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ غَيْرِ مُضَارٍ ۚ وَصِيَّةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَلِيمٌ (12) تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ ۗ وَمَن يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ يُدْخِلْهُ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن

تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۗ وَذَٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (13) وَمَنْ يُعِصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَهُ يُدْخِلْهُ نَارًا خَالِدًا فِيهَا وَلَهُ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ (14)

سورة النساء (4)

The Quran emphasized the equality of women and men in the eyes of God:

God offers forgiveness and great reward for Muslim men and Muslim women, believing men and believing women, obedient men and obedient women, truthful men and truthful women, patient men and patient women, humble men and humble women, charitable men and charitable women, fasting men and fasting women, men who guard their chastity and women who guard their chastity, men who remember Allah frequently, and women who remember—Allah has prepared for them a pardon, and an immense reward.

(Chapter 21, al-Ahzab)

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَاشِعِينَ وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ وَالصَّانِمِينَ وَالصَّانِمَاتِ وَالْحَافِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا (35)

سورة الاحزاب (21)

The next major reform related to women was regulation of marriage. In pre-Islamic traditions, both men and women practiced polygamy. Paternity was an unimportant matter in Bedouin society; it made no difference how many husbands a woman had or who fathered her children. In sedentary societies like Mecca, where the accumulation of wealth brought the subject of inheritance to the surface, it became very important to determine the paternity of a child. So there was no place for women to have more than one husband. In the new Muslim society, polyandrous unions were prohibited, and never again could a Muslim woman have more than one husband.

In pre-Islamic Arabia, divorce was a simple matter, requiring only a statement from the man to his wife: “I divorce you.” In the new Muslim society, a three-month reconciliation period was required before the sentence of divorce could take effect.

The matter of polygamy was more complicated. Islam accepted the concept of polygamy as a necessity for the protection of widows and orphans left alone by war. The Quran sets the rules for polygamy:

If you fear you cannot act fairly toward the orphans—then marry the women like—two, or three, or four. But if you fear you will not be fair, then one, or what you already have. That makes it more likely that you avoid bias. Who are lawful for you, up to two, three, or four, but only if you can treat them all equally.

(Chapter 4, an-Nisa)

You will not be able to treat women with equal fairness, no matter how much you may desire it. But do not be so biased as to leave another suspended. If you make amends, and act righteously—Allah is forgiving and merciful.

(Chapter 4, an-Nisa)

إِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تُقْسِطُوا فِي الْيَتَامَىٰ فَانكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ مِثْلَىٰ ثُلَاثٍ وَرِبَاعٍ ۖ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ أَذْنَىٰ أَلَّا تَعُولُوا (3)

وَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيعُوا أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا بَيْنَ النِّسَاءِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتُمْ ۖ فَلَا تَمِيلُوا كُلَّ الْمِيلِ فَتَدْرُوهَا كَالْمُعَلَّقَةِ ۗ وَإِنْ تُصْلِحُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا (129)

سورة النساء (4)

It is clear that the two verses cited above, when read together, should be interpreted as rejection of polygamy.

The Prophet's Wives

The Prophet lived a monogamous life with Khadijah for more than twenty-five years. In the course of ten years in Madina, he married nine different women. Most of these marriages were not sexual unions but political ones.

The Prophet married his second wife shortly after the death of his first wife, Khadijah. **Sawda bint Zam'ah** was the cousin and sister-in-law of Suhayl, the devout pagan chief of the clan of Amir. She had been married to one of the Muslims who had migrated to Abyssinia in 616 CE. When her husband died in exile, she returned to Mecca. Sawda was an older woman who was past her youth, but she could take care of Muhammad's domestic needs. Muhammad may have also hoped to win over Suhayl.

His next two marriages linked him to the two most influential leaders of the early Muslim community. Around the time of the Prophet's marriage to Sawda, Abu Bakr, who was eager to forge closer ties with him, proposed that Muhammad should marry his daughter **A'isha**, who was six years old at the time. The marriage was consummated when A'isha reached puberty. She was the only virgin Muhammad married, and the most beloved creature to him.

In the third year of Al-Hijra, the Prophet married **Hafsah bint Umar ibn al-Khattab**. She was a widow; her husband, Khunais ibn Hudhafah, had died in the period between the battles of Badr and Uhud. This marriage linked the Prophet to Umar. (Muhammad's daughters married two other influential companions, Ali bin Abi Talib and Uthman ibn Affan.)

The Prophet married **Zainab bint Khuzaimah** in the fourth year of Al-Hijra. She was from Bani Hilal ibn Amir ibn Sa'sa'ah, and was nicknamed Ummul-Masakeen (the poor), because of her kindness toward them. She was the widow of Abdullah ibn Jahsh, who was martyred at Uhud. She died two or three months after her marriage to Muhammad.

In the month of Shawl in the fourth year of Al-Hijra, the Prophet married **Umm Salamah**. She was a middle-aged widow; her husband, Abu Salamah, had been one of the first companions who emigrated from Mecca—the couple first went to Abyssinia and then to Madina. He was wounded at the battle of Uhud, where he had remained steadfastly beside the Prophet. Although his wound healed and he became well enough to be the commander of another expedition against the tribe of Asad, he suffered a recurrence of his injury which led to his death. The Prophet's

marriage to Umm Salamah forged an important relationship with one of Mecca's most powerful clans, the Makhzum.

Zainab bint Jahsh ibn Riyab was married to Zayd ibn Harithah. As mentioned earlier, Zayd was a slave who had been given to Muhammad by his wife Khadijah as a wedding gift. Zayd originally belonged to an Arabian tribe in northern Arabia. He had been captured as a young boy by another tribe in a raid and was then sold in Mecca. Muhammad freed him, but he continued to work for Muhammad. When his father learned where his son was, he came to Mecca to free him. However, since Zayd was a free man, he elected to stay with Muhammad rather than returning to his original tribe, so Muhammad adopted him.

Muhammad arranged for Zayd to marry Zainab bint Jahsh, whose mother was Umaymah bint Abd al-Muttalib, the Prophet's paternal aunt. The Prophet's purpose behind marrying his own cousin to a former slave was to destroy all class distinctions for once and for all. Zainab and her brother consented to the marriage with reluctance to obey the Prophet, and the marriage was not a happy one: she had no love for him and could not rid herself of her class feelings. Zayd could not tolerate Zainab's attitude, and complained to the Prophet, who counseled Zainab. But the situation in Zayd's home continued to flare up every now and then. The Prophet was then instructed by God to allow Zayd to divorce his wife. He was also instructed to marry Zainab when the divorce was final. The Prophet was extremely perturbed by these instructions and kept them to himself for a long time hoping that God might relieve him of this difficult duty.

When Zayd came back to the Prophet complaining and expressing the desire to divorce Zainab, the Prophet said to him: "Hold on to your wife and have fear of God." At this point, Quranic revelations were received by the Prophet criticizing his attitude and encouraging him to allow Zayd to divorce his wife. He was again commanded to marry Zainab when she was fully divorced.

When you said to him whom Allah had blessed, and you had favored, "Keep your wife to yourself, and fear Allah." But you hid within yourself what Allah was to reveal. And you feared the people, but it was Allah you were supposed to fear. Then when Zayd ended his relationship with her, no longer wanted her, We gave her to you in marriage, that there may be no restriction for believers regarding the wives of their adopted sons, when their relationship has ended. The command of Allah was fulfilled.

(Chapter 22, The Joint Forces)

وَأَذِ تَقُولُ لِلَّذِي أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِ أَمْسِكْ عَلَيْكَ زَوْجَكَ وَاتَّقِ اللَّهَ وَتُخْفِي فِي نَفْسِكَ مَا اللَّهُ مُبْدِيهِ وَتَخْشَى النَّاسَ وَاللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَخْشَاهُ ۗ فَلَمَّا قَضَى زَيْدٌ مِنْهَا وَطَرًا زَوَّجْنَاكَهَا لِكَيْ لَا يَكُونَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ حَرَجٌ فِي أَزْوَاجِ أَدْعِيَائِهِمْ إِذَا قَضَوْا مِنْهُنَّ وَطَرًا ۗ وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ مَفْعُولًا (37)

سورة الأحزاب (22)

When Zayd divorced his wife and she had completed her waiting period, the Prophet asked Zayd to propose to Zainab on his behalf.

After the defeat of the Jewish tribe Banu Qurayzah, the Prophet selected **Rehanah bint Zaid ibn Amr ibn Khinafah ibn Sham'un ibn Zaid** for himself as a slave. He then freed her and married her in the sixth year of Al-Hijra. She died shortly after the Farewell Pilgrimage.

The Muslims defeated al-Mustalaq tribe, who were preparing an attack against Madina. According to the traditions of war in Arabia and neighboring countries, the prisoners of war became slaves. While the Prophet did not accept the concept of slavery, he felt that changing this tradition unilaterally could create a problem as long as slavery was a universal practice. So he figured out a different way to set free the prisoners of al-Mustalaq. He took **Barrah**, the daughter of the chief of al-Mustalaq, to himself as a slave, then set her free and proposed to marry her. When she accepted and became his wife, all the Muslims who had slaves from al-Mustalaq voluntarily set them free. They considered the whole tribe to be relatives of the Prophet, and did not want to have his relatives as their slaves. The Prophet gave his new wife the name **Juwayriyyah**.

Umm Habibah Ramlah Bint Abu Sufyan was married to Ubaidullah bin Jahsh and had migrated with him to Abyssinia. When Ubaidullah converted to Christianity, she refused to convert and stood fast to her religion. When Ubaidullah died in Abyssinia in the seventh year of Al-Hijra, the Prophet sent Amr ibn Umaiyah Ad-Damri with a letter to the Negus, the king of Abyssinia, asking him for Umm Habibah's hand. Umm Habiba received a dowry of four hundred dinars (the gold currency; equivalent to four thousand silver dirham), which was the highest dowry of all the Prophet's wives, who generally received four hundred to five hundred dirham. After the wedding ceremony, the Negus sent her to the Prophet in the company of Shurahbil ibn Hasanah.

Safiyyah bint Huyayy ibn Akhtab was the daughter of Huyayy ibn Akhtab, the Jewish leader most hostile to Islam. Safiyyah was part of the spoils of the battle of Khaybar. The Prophet took Safiyyah for himself as a slave, set her free, and then married her.

In the seventh year of Al-Hijra, after the peace treaty of al-Hudaybiyah and the war against Khaybar, the Prophet sent envoys to the rulers of neighboring countries with messages calling them to convert to Islam. One of the envoys, Hatib ibn Abi Balta'ah, carried a message to **the ruler of Egypt in Alexandria, Al-Muqawqis**. The ruler of Egypt was courteous to the envoy and sent to the Prophet a positive reply that fell short of accepting Islam. He also sent gifts and a maid, **Mariyah**, who was from a noble Coptic family. The Prophet accepted the gifts and married Mariyah, who gave birth to his son Ibrahim (he died while still child in the tenth year of Al-Hijra).

Maimunah bint al-Harith was a widow of noble descent; her sister was married to the Prophet's uncle, al-Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib. The Prophet married her in the seventh year of Al-Hijra after the Compensatory *Umrah*. He tried to have a wedding banquet after the completion of the *umrah* ritual at the end of the three days the Quraysh allowed the Muslims to stay in Mecca. The Quraysh leaders were concerned about the potential positive effect for the Muslims interaction with the Meccan in a wedding banquet so they insisted that Muhammad and the Muslim pilgrims should leave immediately.

Muhammad's wives have been the subject of fierce attacks against the Prophet and the religion of Islam. Contemporary scholars Muslims and non-Muslims defended these marriages. With very few exceptions, these marriages were not sexual union but political ones. The Prophet Muhammad, as the sheikh of the *umma*, aimed at forging links within and beyond his community through these marriages. His unions with A'isha and Hafsa, for example, linked him to the two most influential leaders of the early Muslim community. His marriage to Umm Salamah forged an important relationship with one of the most powerful clans, the Makhzum. His marriage to Rehanah and Safiyyah linked him to the Jewish tribes. His marriage to Mariyah, a Christian Copt, created a significant political alliance with the Christian ruler of Egypt. His objective in

marrying Umm Habiba and Maimouna was to support widows who had lost their husbands. His marriage to Juwayriyyah succeeded in freeing the tribe of al-Mustalaq from slavery.

Changing the Qibla from Jerusalem to the Ka'bah

Prior to the *hijra* to Madina, the Ka'bah was the Holy House for Muslims, just as it was for the Meccan pagans. It is the house that Abraham had built. After the revelation, the Prophet and his companions prayed in the Ka'bah and practiced the rituals of the pilgrimage as well. When the Quraysh denied them access to Ka'bah they performed the service of prayer in their houses or in the house of al-Arqam. The Muslims were then instructed to pray in the direction of the Ka'bah. After the night journey to Jerusalem, the Prophet instructed Muslims to pray in the direction of Jerusalem. Following the second Aqaba Pledge, the Prophet sent Mus'ab ibn Umayr to Yathrib to instruct the new Muslims of the city in their new faith. Mus'ab was instructed to pray in the direction of Jerusalem.

After the establishment of the Muslim community in Madina, the Prophet experienced hostility from some Jews toward him and the Emigrants. They resented the economic reforms prohibiting usury and the abolishment of taxes on merchandise. They were not respectful to Islam when they came to the mosque, and some of them would laugh at the Quran. Muhammad became disturbed by such behavior and started to study and examine the Jewish religious practices. One of these was the custom of praying toward Jerusalem. He did not accept their belief of having an exclusive religion; he was offended by the idea of a "chosen people." He was also disturbed by the concept of the Trinity adopted by some Christians. These concerns prompted him to emphasize the religion of Abraham, who was neither a Jew nor a Christian. The Quran refers to this religion as "Islam"; that is, complete submission to God. Abraham did not belong to an exclusive cult, but he was a Muslim, or "one who surrendered himself to God." When Abraham and his son Ismael built the Ka'bah, they prayed to God, saying, "O our Sustainer! Make us surrender ourselves unto Thee, and show us our ways of worship." (Chapter 1, al-Baqarah)

رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمِينَ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُسْلِمَةً لَكَ وَأَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ
(128)

سورة البقرة (1)

Muhammad and his early followers did not claim that they alone had a monopoly on truth:

Say, My Lord has guided me to a straight path, an upright religion, the creed of Abraham the Monotheist, who was not a polytheist.

Say, My prayer and worship, and my life and my death, are devoted to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds.

No associate has He. Thus I am commanded and I am first of those who submit.

(Chapter 8, al-An'am)

قُلْ إِنِّي هَدَانِي رَبِّي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ دِينًا قِيَمًا مِثْلَ آبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (161) قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (162)

سورة الأنعام (8)

In the Quran, Allah emphasizes clearly that submission is the basis of all the messages that came from him through all the prophets:

Religion with Allah is Islam. Those to whom the Scripture was given differed only after knowledge came to them, out of envy among themselves. Whoever rejects the signs of Allah—Allah is quick to take account.

(Chapter 3, Al ‘Imran)

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ وَمَنْ يَخْفَظْ بَيِّنَاتِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ (19)

سورة آل عمران (3)

In Noah’s time, this was true:

And relate to them the story of Noah, when he said to his people, “O my people, if my presence among you and my reminding you of Allah’s signs is too much for you, then in Allah I have put my trust. So come to a decision, you and your partners, and do not let the matter perplex you; then carry out your decision on me, and do not hold back. But if you turn away, I have not asked you for any wage. My wage falls only on Allah, and I was commanded to be of those who submit.”

(Chapter 11, Jonah)

وَأْتَلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ نُوحٍ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ يٰقَوْمِ إِن كَانَ كَبُرَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَقَامِي وَتَذْكِيرِي بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَعَلَى اللَّهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ فَأَجْمِعُوا أَمْرَكُمْ وَشُرَكَاءَكُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُنْ أَمْرُكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ غُمَّةً ثُمَّ اقْضُوا إِلَيَّ وَلَا تُنظِرُونِ (72)

سورة يونس (11)

Likewise, it was true in Abraham’s time:

Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was a Monotheist, a Muslim. And he was not of the Polytheists.

(Chapter 3, Al ‘Imran)

مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَكِنْ كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُسْلِمًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (67)

سورة آل عمران (3)

And in the time of Lot:

We evacuated all the believers who were in it. But found in it only one household of Muslims.

فَأَخْرَجْنَا مَنْ كَانَ فِيهَا مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (35) فَمَا وَجَدْنَا فِيهَا غَيْرَ بَيْتٍ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ (36)

سورة الذاريات (27)

In January 624, Muhammad received a revelation that the faithful were to pray in the direction of Mecca, instead of Jerusalem:

We have seen your face turned towards the heaven. So We will turn you towards a direction that will satisfy you. So turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque. And wherever you may be, turn your faces towards it. Those who were given the Book know that it is the truth from their Lord; and Allah is not unaware of what they do.

(Chapter 2, al-Baqara)

قَدْ نَرَى تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِي السَّمَاءِ ۖ فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضَاهَا ۗ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۚ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ ۗ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ ۗ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ (144)

سورة البقرة (2)

This verse of the Quran was a reminder to the Prophet's companions that they had their own religion; they were not following other religions, but God himself. It was a declaration of independence. Both Emigrants and Helpers were delighted to receive such a declaration, as the Ka'bah was rooted in Arab tradition. Prior to these developments, the Prophet's companions, the believers, were referred to as the *umma*. After the revelation of the above verses, they became known as "Muslims," or those who surrender themselves to God.

Imposing an Economic Siege on Mecca

Once the Muslim state had been established in Madina, Muhammad was occupied with urgent problems that needed immediate attention, but his main mission in life of spreading the message of Islam beyond Arabia stayed alive in his mind and in his heart. He was God's Messenger to the world, to all humans. He had to put God's revealed will into practice and create a just, egalitarian society. His Muslim society in Madina was just the beginning; he was not to be confined to an isolated oasis in Arabia. He needed a strategic plan to spread the message of God throughout Arabia and beyond.

Muhammad was aware of the challenges he was facing; however, he was determined to expand the new state to include all Arabia. Mecca was the capital of Arabia, and in order to achieve his goals and fulfill his dream, he had to defeat the nonbelievers in Mecca in order to have the capital of Arabia under the wings of Islam. The Meccans were merchants who cared about their wealth more than anything else. He planned to fight them where it hurt them the

most: their economy. An essential part of his strategic plan was to intercept their caravans. So the Prophet decided to send bands of Emigrants on raiding expeditions against the Meccan caravans on their way to and from Syria. The aim was not to shed blood, but to capture camels, merchandise, and prisoners who could be held for ransom. Most of the Emigrants were merchants who had earned their living in Mecca through trade; in Madina, there was very little opportunity for trade, because its economy was dependent on agriculture. The Emigrants had no experience in farming; furthermore, no more farming land was available. The Prophet envisioned that the Emigrants would eventually organize their own caravans. He also envisioned Madina becoming the center of trade of Arabia as well as its sanctuary (*haram*), in addition to being the most prosperous agricultural community. Muhammad realized that the raiding expeditions could lead to real war. He also knew that the nonbelievers of Mecca would retaliate, but he thought that this might be what needed to happen. He knew that bringing Mecca under the wings of Islam was not going to happen peacefully.

Muhammad believed that the rest of the tribes in Arabia would not condemn his raids, because the Quraysh had persecuted him and his followers and forced them out of their homes. Exile from the tribe violated the deepest sanction of Arabia. He strongly believed that such expeditions were not only justified on the basis of the *ghazu* (rules غزو), but also were permitted by God as an act of self-defense. The Muslims had suffered; their expulsion from Mecca was an act that had no justification.

The raiding expeditions, while few and sporadic, provided sufficient funds to cover the Emigrants' needs. They also disrupted the trade flowing in and out of Mecca; the caravans had to make unnecessary detours, and the Meccans had to provide more people to guard and protect their merchandise. Some of non-Meccan caravans changed their routes and started to go through Madina to take advantage of the security provided by the Muslims. The raids demonstrated the readiness of the Muslims to attack the caravans and their willingness to go to war if needed. They were a deliberate challenge and provocation, which must have increased the anxieties of the Meccans and at the same time sent a message to the nomads of the region that Muhammad meant business.

In January 624 CE, Muhammad sent a small raiding party of eight to twelve Emigrants under the leadership of Abd-Allah ibn Jahsh to attack a caravan returning from Yemen. The raid took place around Nakhlah, on the last day of Rajab, which was one of the sacred months. The Emigrants' party succeeded in capturing the caravan and managed to reach Madina safely with the caravan and two prisoners who were guarding the caravans. One of the guards was killed during the attack. This raid was condoned by some and condemned by others who considered the attack a violation of the sacred month. This issue was finally resolved when Muhammad received a new revelation justifying that raid:

Fighting is ordained for you, even though you dislike it. But it may be that you dislike something while it is good for you, and it may be that you like something while it is bad for you. Allah knows, and you do not know.

They ask you about fighting during the Holy Month. Say, Fighting during it is deplorable; but to bar others from Allah's path, and to disbelieve in Him, and to prevent access to the Holy Mosque, and to expel its people from it, are more deplorable with Allah. And persecution is more serious than killing.

(Chapter 2, al-Baqarah)

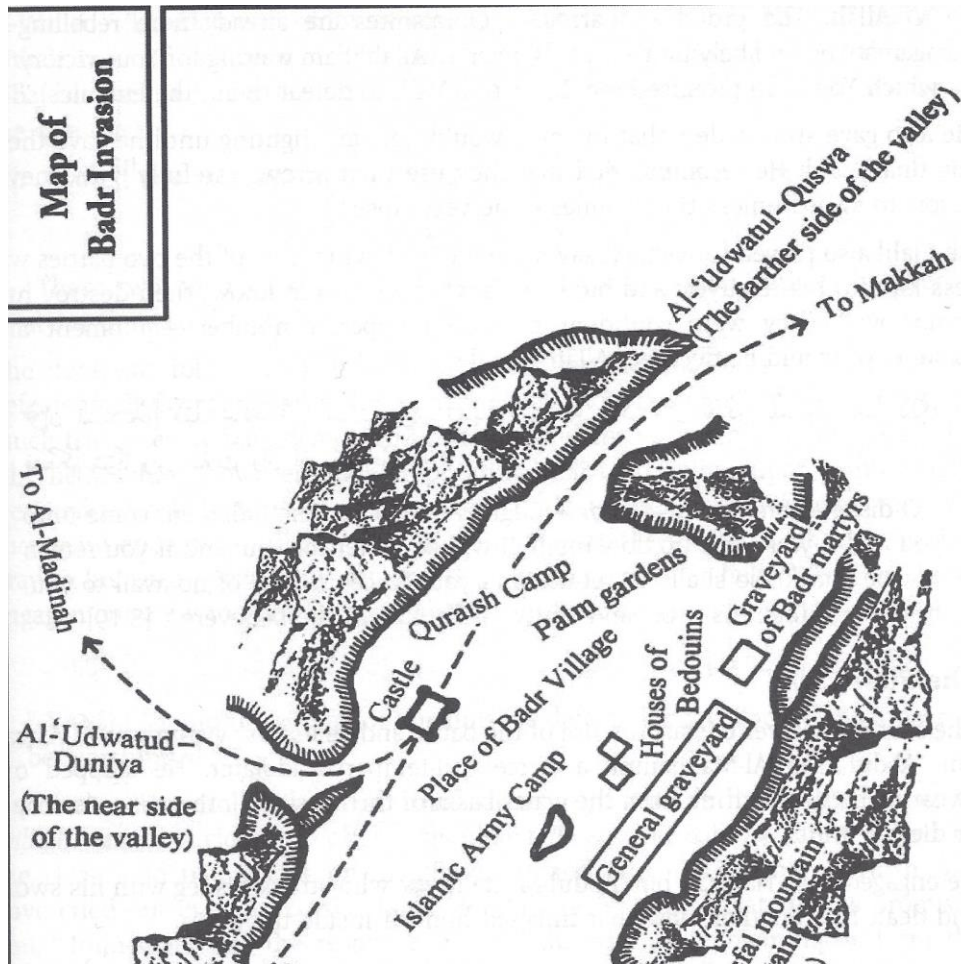
كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ وَهُوَ كُرْهٌ لَّكُمْ وَعَسَى أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَعَسَى أَنْ تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (216) يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ قِتَالٍ فِيهِ قُلْ قِتَالٌ فِيهِ كَبِيرٌ وَصَدٌّ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَكُفْرٌ بِهِ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَإِخْرَاجُ أَهْلِهِ مِنْهُ أَكْبَرُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَكْبَرُ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ وَلَا يَزَالُونَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ حَتَّى يَرُدُّوكُمْ عَن دِينِكُمْ إِنِ اسْتَطَاعُوا وَمَنْ يَرْتَدِدْ مِنْكُمْ عَن دِينِهِ فَمَا لِي بِهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ كَافِرٌ فَاُولَئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (217)

سورة البقرة (2)

The Battle of Badr (March 15, 624)

The initial raid expeditions were carried out by the Emigrants alone. After the Nakhlah raid of January 624 CE, the Helpers (Ansar) began to participate in all war activities. During the month of Ramadan (March 624), a large contingent of about three hundred Muslims led by Muhammad himself was organized to intercept an important caravan coming back from Palestine. When Abu Sufyan, the leader of the caravan, learned about the Muslim forces, he sent a message to Mecca asking for help. Abu Jahl organized a force of one thousand men and marched towards Madina. Although Abu Sufyan managed to save the caravan by utilizing a different route, Abu Jahl decided to continue his march and go all the way to the Madina territory of Badr Valley. The two armies camped at opposite sides of the valley. The Quraysh assumed that the overwhelming numbers of their army would prompt Muhammad to retreat and return to Madina. However, Muhammad decided to go to war, because if he chose to retreat from the battlefield and return to Madina, he would lose the respect of all Arabia and never be able to recover from such a defeat.

While the Quraysh were feasting and drinking in their camp, certain that the Muslims would surrender, Muhammad was preparing his army for battle. He lined up his troops in close



formation and positioned his men by the wells to deprive the Quraysh of water. He prayed, asking God for help. When the Quraysh advanced toward the Muslims, Muhammad refused to strike first, following God’s command, but when Abu Jahl’s men attacked, the Muslims responded fiercely. They bombarded the enemy with arrows and finished the fight in hand-to-hand combat with their swords. By midday, the Quraysh had fled in disarray, leaving more than fifty of their leaders dead, including Abu Jahl himself. The Muslims then began rounding up a total of seventy prisoners. Muhammad immediately ordered his troops not to kill the prisoners, as was the tribal tradition in wars. A revelation came down to ensure that prisoners of war must either be released or ransomed.

When you encounter those who disbelieve, strike at their necks. Then, when you have routed them, bind them firmly. Then, either release them by grace, or for ransom, until war lays down its burdens.

(Chapter 26, Muhammad)

فَإِذَا لَقِيتُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَضَرْبِ الرِّقَابِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَتَخْتَنُمُوهُمْ فَشُدُّوا الْوَتَاقَ فَإِمَّا مَنًّا بَعْدُ وَإِمَّا فِدَاءً حَتَّىٰ تَضَعَ
الْحَرْبُ أَوْزَارَهَا ۗ (4)

سورة محمد (4)

Abu al-As ibn al-Rabi, who was married to the Prophet’s eldest daughter, Zaynab, was one of the prisoners. He was the nephew of the Prophet’s first wife, Khadijah. Zaynab sent money for his release. She included in her offer of ransom a necklace that had been her mother’s gift to her on her wedding night. The Prophet released Abu al-As, taking no ransom from him. Zaynab was a Muslim, while her husband was not. As soon as Abu al-As arrived Mecca from captivity, he let his wife join her father in Madina.

The Prophet issued an order that any prisoner who could read and write would be set free for no ransom if he taught ten Muslim children to read and write. The ransom that was applied at that time for the release of a prisoner equaled 1000-4000 dirhams, with the exact number being based on the financial ability of the prisoner. The ransom would be waived if the prisoner was poor.

After the Battle of Badr, Muslims became the new political power in the Hijaz, and Madina was no longer just an agricultural oasis, but the seat of this power: مدينة الرسول, “the Prophet’s City.” Clan representatives from throughout the peninsula flooded into Madina to ally themselves with Muhammad.

The Battle of Badr marked the end of the rules-based order (*gazu*) and the beginning of war between the Muslims and the Quraysh. The raids for the purpose of acquiring merchandise or camels were replaced by wars for which armies had to be assembled, arms had to be acquired, and fortifications had to be erected. Muhammad knew that it was a matter of time before Mecca marched on Madina for revenge. He realized that Muslims now should prepare themselves for a long costly war, which he called **jihad**. This term, which was introduced for the first time by Muhammad after the Battle of Badr, does not mean “holy war”; rather, it is the constant struggle to put the will of God into practice. Muslims were required and urged to strive on all fronts—intellectual, social, economic, and spiritual—and to dedicate enormous effort and energy to transform the ideology of Islam, “justice and peace,” into reality. Sometimes it is necessary to go to war to achieve the goal of creating, defending, and protecting justice and peace.

As the Muslims were returning to Madina from Badr, Muhammad said, “We are returning from the Lesser Jihad and going to the Greater Jihad, the immeasurably more important and difficult struggle to reform our own society and our own hearts.”

The Doctrine of Jihad

The doctrine of jihad in Islam developed slowly in the wake of the Battle of Badr. Islamic warfare (jihad) is differentiated from pre-Islamic warfare by its ethical dimension. The Quran emphasizes the distinction between combatants and noncombatants. The killing of women, children, monks, rabbis, the elderly, or any other noncombatant is absolutely forbidden. Torture of prisoners of war is prohibited as well as mutilation of the dead, rape, molestation, and any kind of sexual offenses. The lives of diplomats are protected. Demolition of residential buildings and religious and medical institutions is prohibited. In the doctrine of jihad, only defensive wars are allowed:

And fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not commit aggression; Allah does not love the aggressors.

(Chapter 2, al-Baqarah)

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ (190)

سورة البقرة (2)

Permission is given to those who are fought against, and Allah is Able to give them victory.

Those who were unjustly evicted from their homes, merely for saying, “Our Lord is Allah.” Were it not that Allah repels people by means of others: monasteries churches synagogues and mosques—where the name of Allah is mentioned much—would have been demolished. Allah supports whoever supports Him. Allah is Strong and Mighty.”

(Chapter 17, al-Hajj)

أَذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَاتَلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ظَلِمُوا ۚ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ نَصْرِهِمْ لَلْقَدِيرُ (39) الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَقُولُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ۗ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَهَدِمَتِ صَوَامِعُ وَبِيَعٌ وَصَلَوَاتٌ وَمَسَاجِدُ يُذْكَرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا ۗ وَلَيَنْصُرَنَّ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ (40)

سورة الحج (17)

When it comes to war, the Quran commands Muslims to fight with courage and steadfastness in order to bring the conflict to an end as quickly as possible. The Quran also emphasizes the importance of mercy and forgiveness, even during armed conflict. Muslims must lay down their arms the moment the enemy asks for peace.

The term “Holy War” was not used by Muhammad or the Muslims who conquered the Roman or the Persian empires. This term was introduced to the Near East during the Crusades in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, and more recently in the twenty-first century by US president George W. Bush.

As the Crusades ended and Rome’s attention turned away from the Muslim threat and toward the Christian reform movement that affected all of Europe, the classic doctrine of jihad was challenged by a new generation of Muslim scholars. In the thirteenth century, **Ibn Taymiyya** introduced a completely different concept of jihad. Taymiyya, a conservative Muslim scholar and philosopher, called for the killing of nonbelievers who refused to convert to Islam. This position is contrary to what Muhammad was advocating. It also violates one of the most important principles in the Quran: “No compulsion in religion.”

There shall be no compulsion in religion; the right way has become distinct from the wrong way. Whoever renounces evil and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handle, which does not break. Allah is Hearing and Knowing.

(Chapter 3, al-Baqarah)

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ ۚ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ ۚ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِن بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ
لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (256)

سورة البقرة (3)

Had your Lord willed, everyone on earth would have believed. Will you compel people to become believers?

(Chapter 11, Jonah)

وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَأَمَنَّ مِنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ كُلَّهُمْ جَمِيعًا ۖ أَفَأَنْتَ تُكْرِهُ النَّاسَ حَتَّىٰ يَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ (99)

سورة يونس (11)

Say, “O disbelievers.
I do not worship what you worship.
Nor do you worship what I worship.
Nor do I serve what you serve.
Nor do you serve what I serve.
You have your way, and I have my way.”

(Chapter 30, al-Kafirun)

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ (1) لَا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ (2) وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ (3) وَلَا أَنَا عَابِدٌ مَّا
عَبَدْتُمْ (4) وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ (5) لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ (6)

سورة الكافرون (30)

Ibn Taymiyya’s new concept of jihad was accepted by other Muslim scholars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Wahhabi movement adopted Ibn Taymiyya’s position. It was also adopted by the extremist scholars of the Muslim Brotherhood, such as Sayyid Qutob. It was behind al-Qaeda’s interpretation of jihad, as manifested by the writings of **Abdullah Yusuf Azzam** (1941-1989), professor of Islamic philosophy at King Abdulaziz University. In the hands of the new radical militant groups (al-Qaeda and ISIS), jihad has become an offensive

weapon that can be used against all perceived “enemies” of Islam, whether Muslims or non-Muslims. It is worth mentioning at this point that about 98 percent of the casualties of the terror campaign of the new Jihadists have been Muslims.

Conflict with the Jews in Madina

The constitution that Muhammad wrote shortly after arriving in Madina stated that the members of the community were to show complete solidarity in peace and war. It required all inhabitants to participate in defending the oasis against any attack. The constitution also stated that the Jews were to be given equal rights and guaranteed their religious freedom.

About ten weeks after Badr, Abu Sufyan mobilized a force of two hundred horsemen and went towards the fields outside Madina. Under cover of night, he visited **Sallam ibn Mishkan, the chief of the Jewish tribe an-Nadir**, in his fortress. He obtained information about the Muslims in Madina and probably formed an alliance with the Jewish tribe. Before dawn of the following day, Abu Sufyan and his men attacked an area called Arid, nearly three miles out of Madina, where they killed two men of the Ansar and burned down several houses. When Muhammad learned about this raid, he went out at the head of two hundred men in pursuit of Abu Sufyan. The Meccan raiders were a long way ahead of the Muslim pursers and managed to escape. To move faster, the raiders dropped food and other supplies as they fled.

Muhammad was alarmed by this incident because the Jewish tribes who lived in the south of Madina, the Nadir and the Qurayzah, had large armies of more than fifteen hundred fighting men. Siding with Mecca would be a major threat to the Muslim state. Muhammad was also alarmed by the conduct of the other Jewish tribe, the Qaynuqa, who decided to break the alliance agreement with the Prophet. This was the wealthiest tribe, which controlled the oasis market. The Muslims had established their own market where no taxes or interest applied to transactions, thus competing with the Qaynuqa and affecting their profits. Muhammad visited their district, urging them to keep their commitment to solidarity and peace. Their answer was:

O, Muhammad, you seem to think that we are your people. Do not deceive yourself, because you have encountered a tribe with no knowledge of war and got the better of them; for by Allah, if we fight you, you will find that we are real men.

Shortly after this encounter, fighting broke out in the market after a Jewish goldsmith insulted a Muslim woman. Muhammad was called in as the *hakam* (arbiter), but the chiefs of the **Qaynuqa** refused to accept his judgment and moved to their fortress. Their Arab allies refused to come to their aid. After a siege of two weeks, they were forced to surrender unconditionally. The traditional punishment in Arabia for their act would have been for the men to be executed and for the women and children to be sold into slavery. Upon a plea from Ibn Ubayy for clemency, Muhammad allowed them to leave Madina immediately.

The Battle of Uhud

The victory that had been achieved by the Muslims at Badr had a significant effect on the position of the Muslim community of Madina. Badr was the first major battle between the young city-state of Madina and the well-established city-state of Mecca, which was the capital of all Arabia. The decisive victory of the Muslims in that battle established them as a major force in Arabia, equal to or possibly even greater than the Quraysh. Several Quraysh leaders were killed

in the battlefield, including Abu Jahl (Abu al-Hakam), Umayyah ibn Khalaf and his son Ali, and Utbah ibn Rabi'ah, his brother Shaybah, and his son al-Walid. The Quraysh's defeat was devastating; no one in Arabia had expected this outcome, especially since the Quraysh's army outnumbered the Muslims three to one. The Meccans were greatly humiliated; they needed a significant victory as soon as possible in order to restore their status in Arabia. In addition, the economic siege imposed on them by the Prophet and his companions had become increasingly effective, and was biting hard. It was not just a matter of wounded pride, but a matter of survival. They could not afford the loss of trade income as a result of the interruption of their trade routes.

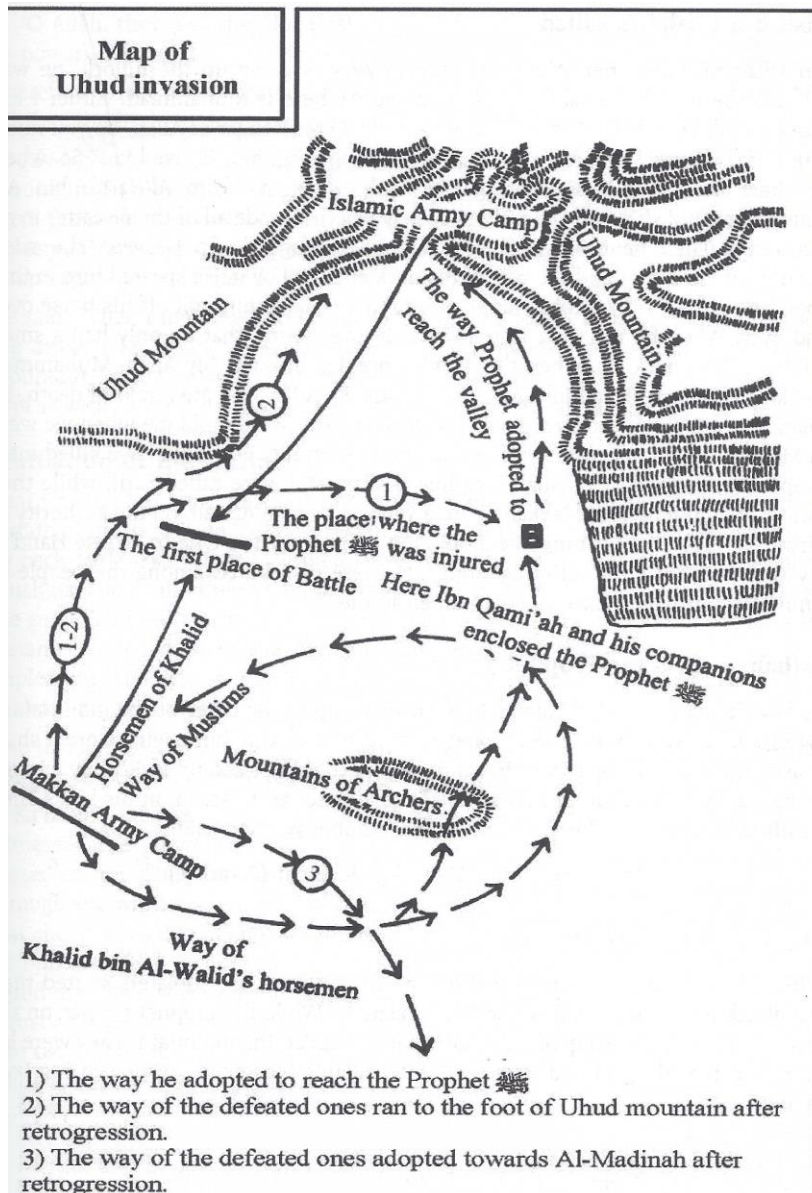
The Quraysh's trade routes to Syria came under constant threat from the Muslims in Madina, which prompted them to deviate from the coastal route; they took the route leading to Iraq, through Najd. Soon the Prophet learned of the new route and sent a force of a hundred men, led by Zayd ibn Harithah, and captured a caravan worth 100,000 dirhams. Thus the economic siege became more effective. This development made it extremely urgent for the Quraysh to prepare for retaliation. A decision was unanimously taken by the leaders of the Quraysh to utilize the value of the caravan that Abu Sufyan had saved before the Battle of Badr to fund preparations for the war against the Muslims.

As new chief of the Quraysh, Abu Sufyan managed over the following six months to build a large and well-equipped army composed of three thousand men with three thousand camels and two hundred horses. Several allied tribes contributed to this army in response to envoys who were sent to different regions of Arabia. Volunteers and supporters from Tihama and Kinanah, Abyssinians living in Arabia, and others were also in the army—including fourteen women. In addition, they were able to secure a sizable contingent of mercenaries from the tribes.

The Quraysh army left Mecca in total secrecy on March 11, 625 CE. After a journey of a little more than a week, they camped to the north of Madina on a plain in front of Mount Uhud. Al-Abbas, the Prophet's uncle who still lived in Mecca and had not yet declared his adoption of Islam, sent the Prophet a letter informing him of the Quraysh's plans.

The Prophet's informers confirmed what he had received from his uncle al-Abbas. It became clear to him that the Muslim community was facing a great danger that required immediate attention. He consulted his companions in order to achieve a consensus for an effective plan. His opinion was to carry out a defensive war by staying in the city and to fight the invaders in its streets and alleys. The majority of the companions asked the Prophet to lead them to meet the enemy outside Madina. The most prominent fighters expressed their desire to confront the Quraysh army in an open field. The Prophet accepted the will of the majority.

Muhammad managed to assemble an army of one thousand men from Madina and surrounding areas. After the mid-afternoon prayer (Asr عصر), the Muslim army marched toward the mountain of Uhud, outside Madina. When they arrived at a place called **al-Shaykhan**, they camped for the night. Before dawn, the Muslim army resumed their march until they reached an orchard between Madina and Uhud called **al-Shawt**. At that point, Ibn Ubayy withdrew his men of about three hundred fighters from the Muslim army and returned to Madina. The Prophet assured his companions that they were in a better position now since the deserters did not have the interest of Islam at heart. Muhammad and his seven hundred companions continued their



advance in the direction of Uhud.

Uhud is a mountain intersected by several valleys leading into a narrow plain. This was where the Quraysh had encamped. The Muslim army camped by the side of the mountain, close to a hill called **Mount Aynayn** which overlooked the plain. There were numerous pockets in the

slopes of Uhud where soldiers could hide if a defensive strategy were adopted. The Prophet placed fifty archers under the command of Abdullah ibn Jubayr, on top of Aynayn, ordering them to hold firm to their position and protect the rest of the army below, and not to allow the enemy to overrun their positions at any cost. They were to repel the horsemen if they tried to climb up the hill in order to attack the Muslims from behind. The archers were to stay in their positions until he gave them the orders to move. All these measures that were taken by the Prophet before the start of the battle were clear indications of his vision and superior knowledge as a military commander. In the previous military encounters, especially the Battle of Badr, Muhammad proved to be a skillful military strategist. His abilities were again demonstrated five years later during his preparations for his great conquest of Mecca in the year 8 AH.

The Quraysh army started the battle with an attempt to encircle the Muslims using their two flanks, who were led by Khalid ibn al-Walid and Ikrimah ibn Abu Jahl. Their attempt failed as they were bombarded with arrows from the archers on top of the Aynayn hill.

When the Meccans started their general attack, the archers released a steady hail of arrows onto the battlefield which forced the Meccan army to retreat. The Muslims countered the Meccan attack, concentrating on the unit which carried the flag of the Quraysh. Talhah ibn Abi Talhah, the Quraysh flag holder, was soon killed by Ali. The flag then was held by his brother Uthman, who was killed by Hamzah. Seven brothers who carried the flag were killed. Three more of their relatives were also killed as they held the flag. The flag then fell on the ground, and the Quraysh army retreated.

It was obvious that the Muslims had won the first round of the battle and overwhelmed their enemy. As the Quraysh retreated, the archers who were placed by the Prophet on Mount Aynayn, in direct violation of Muhammad's orders, abandoned their positions and ran down the mountain to claim the plunder left behind by the retreating enemy. Their leader, Abdullah ibn Jubayr, reminded them of the Prophet's orders and instructions; however, they did not listen to their commander. Only Abdullah ibn Jubayr remained on the hill with a handful of soldiers. Khalid ibn al-Walid, the commander of the right flank of the Quraysh army, grasped the opportunity and drove his troops away from the main area of fighting and climbed up to the Aynayn hill. Ikrimah ibn Abi Jahl, the commander of the left flank of the Quraysh, followed Khalid and the two finished the job by killing the remainder of the archers. Khalid and Ikrimah then launched an attack on the Muslims from behind, inflicting heavy casualties. At the same time the rest of the Quraysh army regrouped fast and went on the offensive inflicting more casualties to the Muslim's army and turning the battlefield into a slaughter. The speed with which all this happened caught the Muslims by surprise and left them confused. This state of confusion was more disastrous than the number of casualties they suffered.

A group of the Muslims formed a tight circle around Muhammad to protect him. One by one they all fell at his feet while he continued to fire his arrows until his bow snapped in his hand. As he became defenseless and seriously wounded, a strong fighter called **Abu Dujanah** ran towards him, held him tight with his arms and dragged him to the end of the camp, where the last warriors were gathered to take care of some of the wounded. The sudden disappearance of the Prophet from the battlefield created a rumor that Muhammad had been killed. The Prophet, however, was not dead. He stood firm, with a handful of his companions, among whom were Talhah ibn Ubaydallah, Shammash ibn Uthman, Abu Dujanah, S'ad ibn Abi Waqqas, Al-Hubab ibn al-Mundhir, Mus'ab ibn Umayr, Anas ibn al-Nadr and Ziad ibn Alaskan. More Muslims rallied around the Prophet and continued to fight, but both parties became exhausted. Abu Sufyan, the commander of the Quraysh, felt that they had achieved a victory which would wipe

away the memories of their defeat at Badr. Soon the fighting died down and each party gradually disengaged from the battle. Abu Sufyan walked around the battlefield looking at those who were killed; as he did not find the body of the Prophet, he became suspicious. He went back to his camp, where his people were ready to return to Mecca. As Abu Sufyan was returning to Mecca he learned that Muhammad had been saved. Full of anger and arrogance he shouted: **“Great are our deeds. The score is even. A day for us which compares with Badr. Let us meet again at Badr next year.”**

The defeat at Uhud could have been worse had the Quraysh continued their assault and chased the Muslim army all the way to Madina. Twenty-two Meccans and sixty-five Muslims had been killed, including Muhammad’s uncle Hamzah. Hamzah was not killed in a fight, but had been targeted for assassination by an Abyssinian slave called Wahshi who was an excellent marksman with the spear. His master, Jubayr ibn Mut’im, had promised to set him free if he killed Hamzah to avenge the killing of Jubayr’s uncle at Badr. Hind bint Utbah also promised Wahshi a good reward if he killed Hamzah in revenge for the death of her father, brother and other relatives. Wahshi did not take part in the battle, but looked for Hamzah and found him fighting with exceptional courage. As Hamzah was closing in on a man from the Quraysh, he came within the range of Wahshi’s spear who aimed at him hitting him in the lower abdomen. Wahshi waited until Hamzah died and pulled his spear out and left the battlefield. At the end of the fight, Hind bint Utbah started looking for the body of Hamzah among the dead. When she recognized it, she opened his stomach and took out his liver and tried to eat it, then she threw it out.

Before they returned to Madina, the Muslims checked the battlefield to make sure none of the fallen fighters was still alive; they also attended to the wounded men and provided them with necessary care. When the Prophet stood over the body of his uncle Hamzah and saw how badly it was disfigured, he felt deeply anguished and distressed.

Muhammad was concerned about the possibility of a second attack by the Quraysh, since they had learned that he had survived. Therefore, the following day, he called his men who attended the battle to join him in forming a defense line in case the Quraysh decided to return and attack Madina. They marched to a place called **Hamra al-Asad**, fourteen kilometers from Madina, and stayed there for three days. The Prophet ordered his companions to collect as much wood as they could manage, and had them light as many fires at night as possible to give the impression that the Muslim army was much larger than its actual size. Reports traveled that the Muslims had mobilized all their forces and were ready to defend the city. At the Quraysh camp, not far from the Muslims, Abu Sufyan was entertaining the idea of re-attacking the Muslims in an effort to wipe them out. Muhammad’s maneuvering put an end to the possibility of a second attack.

Back in Madina, Ibn Ubayy was resented for not fighting and for pulling his men before battle. When he rose up to speak in the mosque on the following Friday, one of the Helpers grabbed him and told him to keep his mouth shut. Ibn Ubayy had been wavering and waiting to see how things evolved before he committed. Since he was exposed, he became hostile and refused to ask Muhammad for forgiveness.

Several of the Muslim martyrs had left widows and daughters without protectors. After the defeat, a revelation came to Muhammad permitting Muslims to take more than one wife—up to four wives if need should arise—to give protection to widows and orphans. **Polygamy** was allowed in Islam, with restrictions of fairness in treatment, and yet putting in doubt men’s ability to do so.

And give orphans their properties, and do not substitute the bad for the good. And do not consume their properties by combining them with yours, for that would be a serious sin.

If you fear you cannot act fairly toward the orphans—then marry the women you like—two or three, or four. But if you fear you will not be fair, then one, or what you already have. That makes it more likely that you avoid bias.”

(Chapter 4, Women)

وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْيَتَامَىٰ فَانكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ مَثْنَىٰ وَثُلَاثَ وَرُبَاعَ ۚ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ (2) كِبِيرًا
(3) أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ۚ ذَلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ ۖ أَلَّا تَعُولُوا

سورة النساء (4)

Securing the Realm

Following the defeat at Uhud, Muhammad had to deal with many threats: the threats to his life, the retaliation of the Quraysh, the opposition from the Jewish tribes, the waverers (Hypocrites) in Madina, and the Bedouin tribes who allied themselves with Quraysh.

The Nadir Jewish tribe had collaborated with Abu Sufyan before Uhud, and probably formulated an alliance agreement with the Quraysh plotting to assassinate Muhammad. When the assassination plan failed, the men withdrew to their fortress and waited for their allies to come to their aid. Apparently Ibn Ubayy had promised to support them; however, his tribe, the Aws, denied them any help, as did the Qurayzah, another Jewish tribe. After two weeks, the Nadir surrendered and begged for their lives to be spared. Muhammad agreed and allowed them to leave Madina. They left in August 625 CE, each of them taking a camel load of belongings, but no arms were allowed.

The alliance between the Nadir, the Qurayzah, and the Hypocrites is stated in the Quran:

Have you not considered those who act Hypocritically? They say to their brethren who disbelieved among the People of the Book: “If you are evicted, we will leave with you, and we will not obey anyone against you; and should anyone fight you, we will certainly support you.” But Allah bears witness that they are liars. If they are evicted, they will not leave with them; and if anyone fights them, they will not support them; and if they go to their aid, they will turn their backs and flee; then they will receive no support.

(Chapter 28, The Gathering)

﴿ أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ نَافَقُوا يَقُولُونَ لِإِخْوَانِهِمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَئِنْ أُخْرِجْتُمْ لَنَخْرُجَنَّ مَعَكُمْ وَلَا نُطِيعُ فِيكُمْ أَحَدًا أَبَدًا وَإِنْ قُوتِلْتُمْ لَنَنصُرَنَّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ أَنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ (11) لَئِنْ أُخْرِجُوا لَا يَخْرُجُونَ مَعَهُمْ وَلَئِنْ قُوتِلُوا لَا يَنْصُرُونَهُمْ وَلَئِنْ نَصَرُوهُمْ لَيُولَيَنَّ الْأَدْبَارَ ثُمَّ لَا يَنْصُرُونَ (12) ﴾

سورة الحشر (28)

The Prophet was lenient with the Hypocrites, as he was concerned about the unity of the city. He avoided side battles within the city at this stage, instead focusing on those Muslims who were firm in their faith and would not be shaken or driven from course. And within six months of the battle of Uhud, no traces of weakness could be detected in the Muslim community.

As Muhammad settled the account with the Nadir and strengthened the position of Muslims in Madina, he directed his attention to external threats. Some of the Bedouin tribes in the area close to Madina planned to attack the city and launch looting raids without fearing any great punishment. The Muslims were on the alert; these raids met a forceful response. In June 625 CE, a Muslim force of 150 men under the command of Abu Salamah was mobilized against the Asad tribe. The Muslims were able to disperse the enemy and capture their cattle.

Two months after the encounter with the Nadir, in October 625 CE, Muhammad learned that the Muharib and Thalabah tribes were mobilizing their forces to attack Madina. A force of seven hundred Muslim men marched towards Najd. They came face to face with a large enemy force around an area called Nakhl, a great distance from Madina, which belonged to the tribes of Ghatafan. This expedition achieved its goal without a fight, as it demonstrated the readiness of the Muslims and forced the enemy to retreat, putting an end to hostilities in this region.

In regard to the direct threat from the Quraysh, the Prophet prepared his army for their appointment with their enemy at Badr. In April of 626 CE, Muhammad marched at the head of 1,500 men towards Badr, about 160 kilometers from Madina. Upon arrival they found no trace of the Quraysh's army. Abu Sufyan, who had announced at the end of the Battle of Uhud, "Next year at Badr," was uneasy about meeting the Muslims. Although he marched from Mecca toward Badr, he canceled his trip and returned to Mecca. He addressed his soldiers, saying that this year was not suitable for war, and that they could not hope to win a war in such a year of drought. Many people in Mecca accused the army of cowardice, and many Arabs started to doubt the significance of the Quraysh's victory at Uhud.

Badr was one of the seasonal markets of Arabia. People from all tribes met there during the month of Sha'ban and exchanged goods and commodities. The Prophet and his companions benefited a great deal from being at Badr during the trading fair, which lasted for eight days. Their financial gain was considerable, but their political gain was much greater.

In June, 626 CE, a major expedition took place against the Arab tribes in the area of **Dumat al-Jandal** in northern Arabia, close to Syria. These tribes had been attacking trade caravans and threatening travelers, but this time they were raising a large force to attack Madina. The Prophet raised a force of a thousand men and marched northward for fifteen nights, approximately five hundred miles from Madina, and was able to take these tribes by surprise. They dispersed without a fight, fleeing in every direction and abandoning their cattle, which the Muslims gained. This expedition confirmed the Muslims' authority in all directions in Arabia. It also sent a message that the Muslims' position in Madina was strong. The importance of this expedition went beyond the Prophet's immediate goals: he was looking to the future of Syria. All areas north of Arabia, from Palestine and beyond, belonged to the Byzantine Empire; he was sure that the Muslims, at some point in the future, would have to deal with Byzantium.

In January 627 CE, Muhammad received information that the **Mustalaq** tribe, a branch of the Khuza'ah under the leadership of al-Harith ibn Abi Dirar, was preparing an attack against Madina. A large force of Muslims led by the Prophet himself marched towards the spring of al-Maraysi where al-Harith and his men had gathered. The Muslims took the enemy by surprise, and as the two armies faced each other, the al-Mustalaq fighters were defeated, and the whole

tribe fell into captivity. The Hypocrites under the leadership of Abdullah ibn Ubayy participated in this expedition, unlike the previous ones, from which they had been excluded.

According to the traditions of war in Arabia and the rest of the world of that time, the prisoners of war, men and women, became slaves. None of the Quran verses prohibited slavery, but urged Muslims to free slaves as a way of pleasing God. The rules of the Muslim state also required all Muslims to respect and protect the slave's human rights. **The Prophet himself emphatically rejected the concept of slavery.** First and foremost, he was a messenger of God and his duty was to save mankind from subjugation and control. Muslims are supposed to surrender only to God. Immediately at the end of the battle, Muhammad, took Barrah, the daughter of al-Harith, chief of al-Mustalaq, for himself, granted her freedom from slavery and proposed to her. When she accepted, he married her and renamed her **Juwayriyyah**. The Prophet's companions could not keep the people of al-Mustalaq as slaves, as they were all now relatives of Muhammad. Thus, all the people of al-Mustalaq were freed.

Two Disturbing Incidents

During this expedition and after the battle ended, while the Prophet was away, two disturbing incidents occurred. The first one was a fight between some of the Emigrants (Muhajirun) with some of the Helpers (Ansar). When Muhammad learned about it, he became very angry. Ibn Ubayy commented on this incident, saying, "Fatten your dog and he will eat you. When we go back to Madina, the honorable among the two of us will certainly chase the humble." He then addressed the Helpers, saying:

You have only yourselves to blame for all of this. You have taken them into your own homes and given them your own money until they have become rich. I swear that if you stop helping them with what you have, they will leave you and go elsewhere. Yet they are not satisfied with all the hospitality you have given. You have exposed yourselves to danger, and you have had your men fight and die in their defense. You have made your children orphans. You have decreased your numbers while they are on the increase. I counsel you not to spend your money to help them until you see them depart.

A young boy of about fourteen went straight to the Prophet and informed him with what he had heard. The Prophet was extremely disturbed. So he gave the order to depart immediately toward Madina.

A second incident happened around the same time. It is very possible that the hurried return of the Muslim's army to Madina gave rise to the second incident, which precipitated in the spread of rumors accusing Muhammad's favorite wife, **A'isha**, of adultery.

As the returning Muslims stopped for rest in the vicinity of Madina, Safwan ibn al-Mu'attal, a young man of the tribe of Sulaym appeared, leading his camel, on which A'isha was riding. This scene prompted some people to accuse A'isha of adultery, and the rumor was started. A'isha's own account was as follows:

When the Prophet had done his business on that expedition and was on his way back, he encamped one night at a spot not far from Madina. When he made his call to march, people started to get ready; in the meantime, I went out to relieve myself. I was wearing a necklace, and I did not feel it drop off me before I

returned. Back in the camp I realized that it was gone, therefore I went quickly back to that particular spot, searching for the necklace until I found it. In the meantime, the people who prepared my camel finished their task and took up the howdah [carriage], thinking that I was inside, and lifted it onto the camel's back. When I came back to where we had encamped, there was nobody to be seen. I realized that someone would come back for me when they discovered that I was missing. I tied my dress round my body and lay down. I soon fell asleep. Safwan apparently was delayed by some business and did not spend that night in the camp. When he noticed someone lying down he came toward me. I woke up when I heard him. I did not answer him when he asked me why I had been left behind. However, he made his camel sit down and asked me to ride it, which I did. He led the camel, seeking to catch up with the army. When everybody had sat down to relax, Safwan appeared leading his camel, on which I was riding.

When Abdullah ibn Ubayy saw A'isha arriving with Safwan, he inquired who she was. When he was told that she was A'isha, he said: "Your Prophet's wife has spent the whole night with a man, and now she turns up with him leading her camel!" This statement gave rise to what became known as "the Falsehood."

Shortly after A'isha arrived in Madina, she felt ill. She stayed at her parents' house for twenty nights. When she recovered, she learned from one of her neighbors about the rumor. During that time the Prophet was extremely disturbed by the incident and the rumor, and consulted his cousin Ali, who said: "Messenger of God, God imposed no restrictions on you in matrimonial matters. There are many women besides her. If you would see fit to ask her maid, she would tell you the truth." The Prophet took Ali's advice and asked Barirah, A'isha's maid, who replied, "By Him who sent you the Message of truth, there is nothing I take against her other than being so young, she would doze off and let the hens eat the dough I had made to bake."

Shortly afterwards the Prophet confronted A'isha, saying, "If you are innocent, God will make your innocence known. If, however, you have committed a sin, then you should seek God's forgiveness and repent. If a servant of God admits her sin and repents, God will forgive You." A'isha responded: "I am innocent, and God knows that I am". This confrontation happened at the house of Abu Bakr, her father. Before the Prophet had the chance to leave, he received God's revelation. The Prophet was lying down covered with his own robe, and a pillow was placed under his head. Everybody in the room was waiting anxiously. When the Prophet came back to himself, he sat up, wiped his sweat, and said, "A'isha, I have good news for you. God has declared your innocence." The Prophet then went out and spoke to the people.

God revealed a passage of the Quran making her innocence absolutely clear. The surah opens with an abundantly clear prohibition of all adultery and fornication, followed by an equally firm prohibition against accusing any woman of committing the crime of adultery without producing four witnesses to prove the accusation. Since these rules had been made clear to the Muslims beforehand, they should have required the same evidence when A'isha was accused.

Were it not for Allah's grace upon you, and His mercy, bounty and that Allah is conciliatory and Wise.

Those who perpetrated the slanderer are a band of you. Do not consider it bad for you, but it is good for you. Each person among them bears his share in the sin. As for him who played the major role—for him is a terrible punishment.

Why, when you heard about it, the believing men and women did not think well of one another, and say, “This is an obvious lie?”

Why did they not bring four witnesses to testify to it? If they fail to bring the witnesses, then in Allah’s sight they are liars.

Were it not for Allah’s favor upon you, and His mercy, in this world and the Hereafter, you would have suffered a great punishment for what you have ventured into.

When you rumored it with your tongues, and spoke with your mouths what you had no knowledge of, and you considered it trivial; but according to Allah, it is serious.

When you heard it, you should have said, “It is not for us to repeat this. By your glory, this is a serious slander.”

Allah cautions you never to return to the like of it, if you are believers.

Allah explains the Verses to you. Allah is Knowing and Wise.

Those who love to see immorality spread among the believers—for them is a painful punishment, in this life and in the Hereafter. Allah knows, and you do not know.

Were it not for Allah’s grace upon you, and His mercy, and that Allah is Clement and Merciful.

(Chapter 18, Light)

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ جَاءُوا بِالْإِفْكِ عُصْبَةٌ مِّنْكُمْ ۚ لَا تَحْسَبُوهُ شَرًّا لَّكُم ۚ بَلْ هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۚ لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَا اكْتَسَبَ مِنَ الْإِثْمِ ۗ وَالَّذِي تَوَلَّى كِبْرَهُ مِنْهُمْ لَهُ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (11) لَوْلَا إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ ظَنَّ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ خَيْرًا وَقَالُوا هَذَا إِفْكٌ مُّبِينٌ (12) لَوْلَا جَاءُوا عَلَيْهِ بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ ۚ فَإِذْ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِالشُّهَدَاءِ فَأُولَئِكَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْكَاذِبُونَ (13) وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ لَمَسَّكُمْ فِي مَا أَفَضْتُمْ فِيهِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (14) إِذْ تَلَقَّوْنَهُ بِأَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَتَقُولُونَ بِأَفْوَاهِكُمْ مَا لَيْسَ لَكُم بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَتَحْسَبُونَهُ هَيِّنًا وَهُوَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمٌ (15) وَلَوْلَا إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ قُلْتُمْ مَا يَكُونُ لَنَا أَنْ نَتَكَلَّمَ بِهَذَا سُبْحَانَكَ هَذَا بُهْتَانٌ عَظِيمٌ (16) يَعْظَمُ اللَّهُ أَنْ تَعُودُوا لِمِثْلِهِ أَبَدًا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (17) وَيُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (18) إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُجِبُونَ أَنْ تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (19) وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ رَعُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ (20)

سورة النور (18)

معركة الخندق (The Battle of the Trench (Moat))

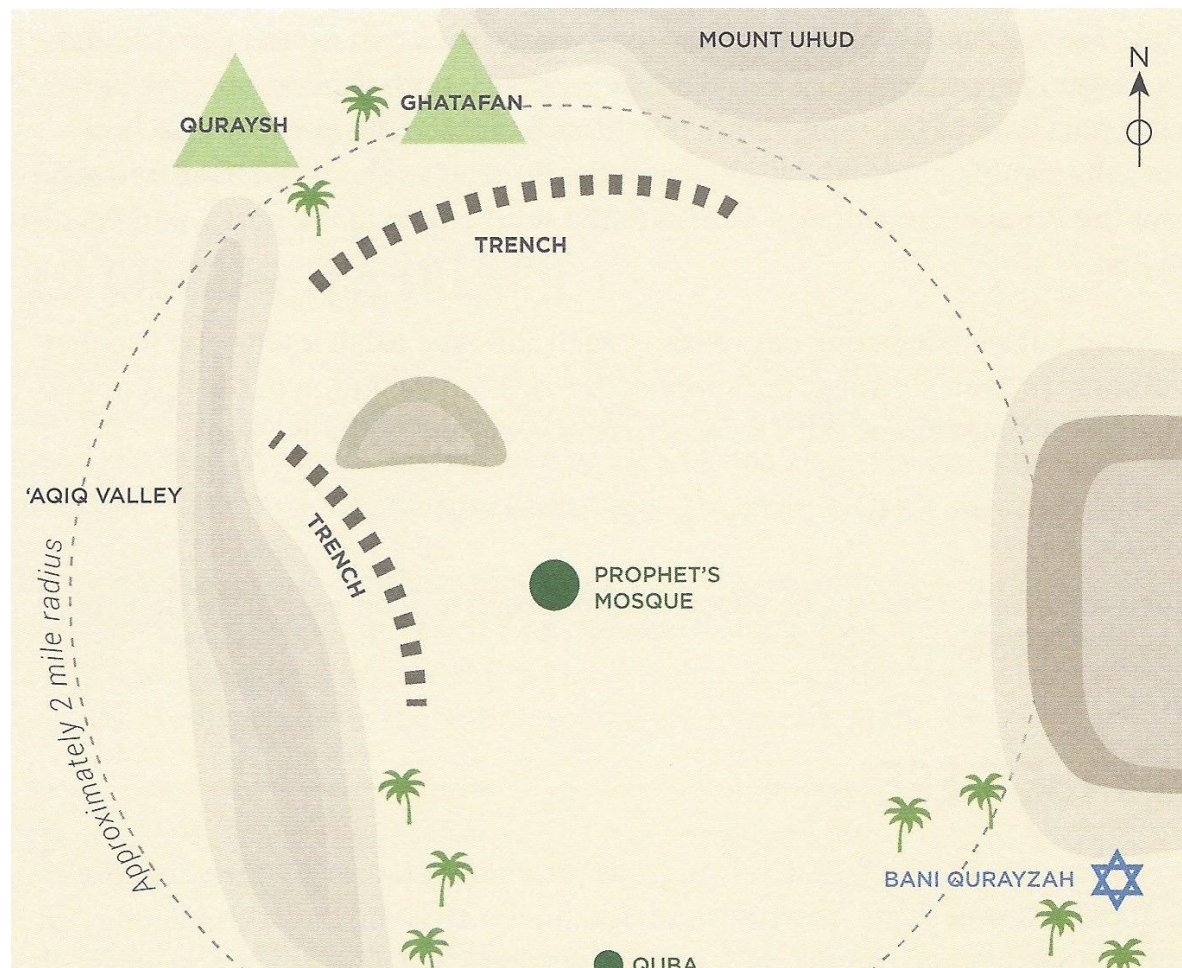
The Muslim state that Muhammad had established in Madina in 622 CE proved to be a new society built on completely opposite principles from those of the stratified Meccan society. The principles of justice and equality for all created the most progressive social and political system in Arabia. During the five years since Muhammad’s emigration from Mecca, he had been able to build a strong and prosperous state. Such success prompted Muhammad’s opponents in Arabia to

form an alliance aimed at annihilation of Muslims and putting an end to their society and its ideology.

The Jews of al-Nadir, who had been residing at Khayber since being exiled from Madina in August of 625 CE, took up the mission of forming a coalition against Madina. A delegation from Nadir contacted the Quraysh and other tribes who traditionally opposed Muslims. The delegation included **Sallam ibn Mishkam, Huyayy ibn Akhtab**, and several other leaders from Nadir and other Jewish tribes. The **Quraysh** were very receptive to their call. **Ghatafan** responded positively as well, having been promised Nadir's entire date harvest for a full year after achieving victory against Muhammad. The Jewish delegation also secured support from other tribes such as the **Sulaym, the Asad, the Ashia, and the Fazarah**. The alliance was able to raise a strong army of ten thousand men, which marched towards Madina under the command of Abu Sufyan in the month of Shawal (February 627 CE).

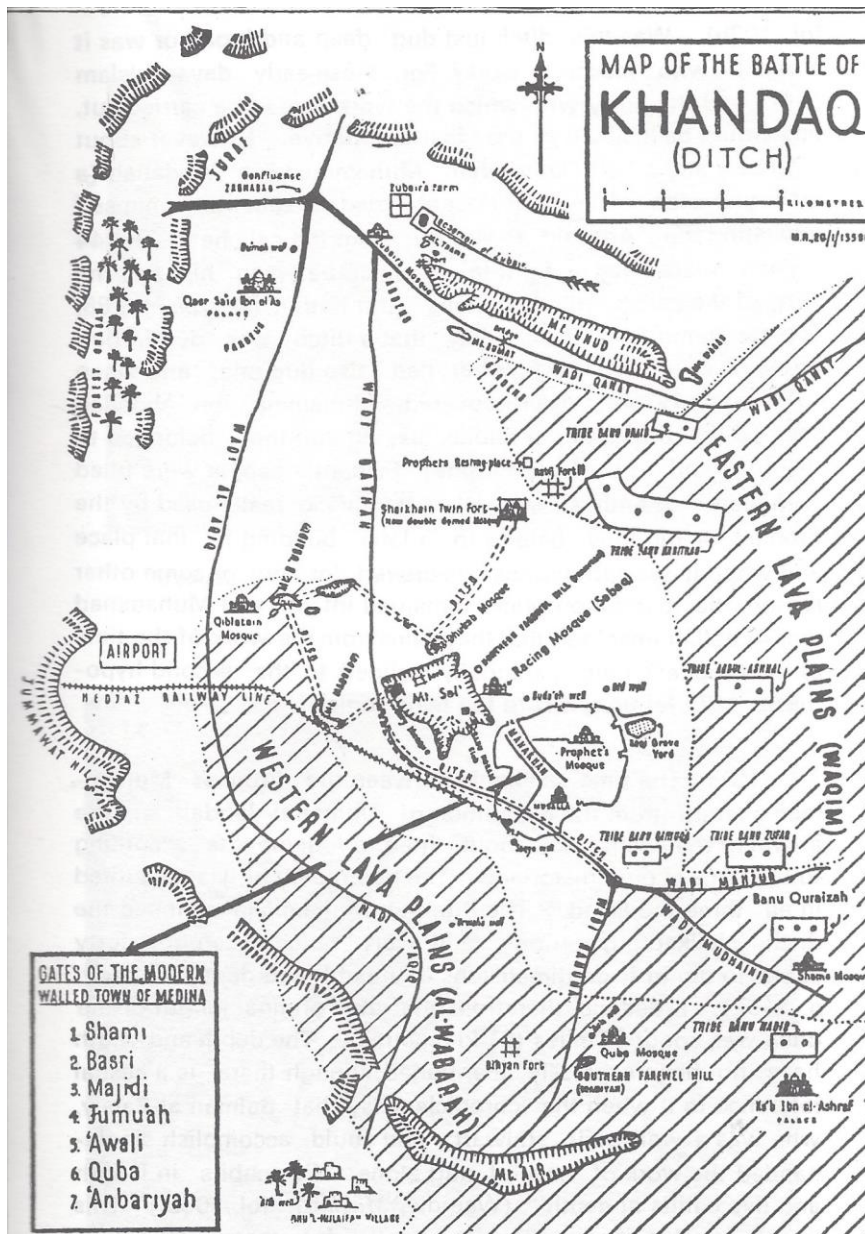
As soon as Muhammad received information about this new threat, he consulted his companions and formulated a defense plan. The geography of Madina allowed the Prophet to fortify his city and wait for the attackers to assault Madina rather than engage with them in an open fight. Only the northern side of the city was vulnerable to attack. The other sides were naturally fortified. To the east and west, volcanic rocks stretched over considerable distance, forming natural barriers. In the south, orchards with thick palm trees stretched over a large area, forming another natural barrier; behind these fields lay the fortified homes of the Qurayzah, a Jewish tribe with whom Muhammad had a peace treaty. To complete the fortification of the city, the Muslims needed to dig a trench on the north side of Madina, wide enough to form an obstacle that would prevent the cavalry from crossing. The idea of digging a moat in this location was suggested by Salman, a Persian companion of the Prophet.

The Prophet divided his three thousand companions into groups of ten, with each one assigned to a forty-meter section to dig. By the time the allied forces arrived in Madina, the moat



was fully completed. It took the Muslims a little more than two weeks to complete the job. The women and children were sent to the towers and fortresses in the south of the city.

When the allied forces arrived at their destination and saw what the Muslims had done, they were shocked. They had never experienced any defensive structure of this kind, and did not know how to build a bridgehead over a moat. They therefore camped near the moat in two locations: part of the army by Wadi al-Aqiq, and the rest beside Mount Uhud. The horsemen tried in vain to find a weak point where they could cross to the other side. At the same time, the Muslims were fully aware what the failure of their defenses would mean, so they encamped very close to the moat and showered any attacker with their arrows. They guarded their defensive lines on all sides, day and night.



On March 15, 627 CE, a small group of cavalry led by Ikrama managed to cross the ditch at the narrowest point. There were seven men in the group, including Ikrama and an enormous man who was the first to land. This was Amr ibn Abd Wud, known as the Giant, who challenged the Muslims, shouting, “Is there anyone among you who has the courage to meet me in personal combat?” The Giant was famous for his strength and skill, and had never yet lost a duel nor spared an opponent.

The events that followed were among the most remarkable duels of history. For the great importance and the valuable effect on the Battle of the Ditch, the details of this encounter are given below as described by General Akram in his book *The Sword of Islam*. These details are based on what Ibn Hisham and Ibn Sad wrote.

The challenge was received by the Muslims in silence. The Giant then laughed and shouted again: “Is there anyone among you who has the courage of a man? And what of your Islam? And your Prophet?” At this blasphemous taunt, Ali approached the Prophet and sought permission to engage the challenger. The Prophet replied: “Sit down. This is Amr!” The Giant then repeated his insults. Again Ali went up to the Prophet. Again the Prophet declined permission. More laughter and more taunts came from the Giant: “Where is your Paradise, of which you say that those who lose in battle will enter it? Can you not send a man to fight me?” When for the third time Ali moved towards the Prophet, Muhammad saw in Ali’s eyes a look which he knew well; he realized that Ali could no longer be restrained. The Prophet then took his turban and wound it around Ali’s head. He next took off his sword and girded it to Ali’s waist And he prayed: O, Lord! Help him! This sword became the most famous sword in Islam, killing more men in fair combat than any sword in history. This was **Zulfiqar**.

Ali strode towards the unbelievers accompanied by small group of Muslims. As Ali reached within dueling distance of the challenger he stopped. The Giant knew Ali well. He had been a friend of Ali’s father, Abu Talib. The Giant smiled indulgently at Ali as a man might smile at a boy.

“O, Amr!” called Ali. “It is believed that if any man of the Quraysh offers you two proposals, you always accept at least one of them.”

“True.”

“Then I have two proposals to offer you. The first is: accept Allah and His Messenger and Islam.”

“I have no need of Them.”

“Then dismount from your horse and fight me.”

“Why, O son of my brother? I have no desire to kill you!”

“But I have a great desire to kill you!” replied Ali.

With a cry of rage, the Giant dismounted and rushed at Ali. Amr struck at Ali many times, but Ali remained unharmed. He would parry the blow with his sword or shield or step aside to let the Giant’s sword whistle past him harmlessly. At last the Giant stood back, panting and baffled. He wondered how this could be. Never before had any man survived so long in personal combat against him. And now this boy was looking at him as if he were playing a game!

Then things happened so fast that no one could quite follow the sequence—neither the Muslims nor the Quraysh nor the Giant himself. Ali dropped his

sword and shield to the ground; his body shot through the air like a missile and his hands grasped the Giant's throat. With a wrestler's kick, he knocked the Giant off balance, and the Giant came crashing to the ground—all in a matter of seconds. Now the Giant lay down on his back with Ali sitting astride his chest. The bewilderment on the Giant's face changed to fury. His face went purple, the veins stood out on his neck and his huge biceps and forearms trembled as he strained to break Ali's grip. But he could not move it an inch. There was the quality of steel in the muscles of Ali.

"Know, O, Amr," said Ali gently, "that victory and defeat depend on the will of God. Accept Islam! Thus not only will your life be spared, but you will also enjoy the blessing of God in this life and the next." Ali drew a sharp dagger from his waistband and held it close to Amr's throat. The Giant did not accept the offer as he could not accept to live the rest of his life under the shadow of defeat and disgrace. He gathered the spittle in his mouth and spat into the face of Ali, then arched his back and raised his chin to offer his throat to Ali. But Ali did not plunge the dagger into the Giant's throat; he rose calmly from the Giant's chest, wiped his face, and stood a few steps away, gazing solemnly at him. "Know, O, Amr, I only kill for the way of Allah and not for any private motive. Since you spat in my face, my killing you now may be from a desire for personal vengeance. So I spare your life. Rise and return to your people!"

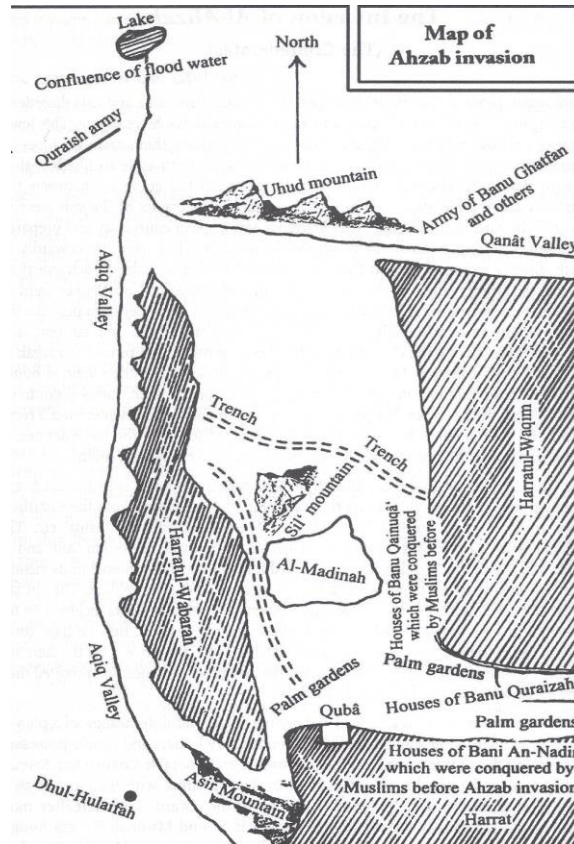
The Giant rose. But there was no question of his returning to his people a loser. He would live a victor, or not at all. Intending to make one last attempt at victory, he picked up his sword and rushed at Ali, who had just enough time to pick up his sword and shield and prepare for the fresh assault. The Giant, in furious desperation, delivered a savage blow which shattered Ali's shield, but in doing so lost its force, and could then do no more than make a shallow cut on Ali's temple. Before the Giant could raise his blade again, the sword **Zulfiqar** flashed in the sunlight, and its tip slashed open the Giant's throat. The blood of the Giant gushed forth like a fountain. For a moment he stood motionless. Then his body began to sway as if he were drunk. And then he fell on his face with a crash and lay still.

The Muslim fighters now rushed at the six remaining Quraysh, killed one of them, and forced the rest to withdraw across the ditch. After this duel, the two sides returned to a stalemate and the siege dragged on for another two weeks.

For defenders of a besieged city, it is vital for their survival to secure adequate supply lines. The defenders of Madina were definitely in a favorable situation, as their farms were located within the defense lines of the city. On the other hand, the alliance forces were in a difficult position; their supply lines were virtually nonexistent. They had to rely on what they had brought with them. Quraysh and allies realized that unless the Muslim defense lines could be breached at some point or another, the defenders would be able to survive for a long time. The most vulnerable area of their defenses was the south side where the Jewish tribe of Qurayzah resided in fortified homes. Muhammad was counting on the Qurayzah's adherence to the peace treaty that they had signed with him, as an essential part in his defense plan of the Muslim state. The Nadir leaders realized that the alliance could not maintain the siege for very long, and therefore their plan to destroy the Muslim state and annihilate all Muslims was going to fail. In a desperate

attempt to save their plan, their leader Huyayy ibn Akhtab managed to visit **Ka’b ibn Asad**, the leader of the Qurayzah, at his fort south of Madina. With tremendous effort, he persuaded Ka’b to abrogate the treaty with Muhammad and to join the alliance forces in a decisive attack from the south.

As soon as the Prophet learned about the treachery of the Qurayzah, he sent the chiefs of the Aws and Khazraj tribes to the Qurayzah to confirm what he had learned. The delegation to the



Qurayzah tried to persuade Ka’b to maintain their peaceful relations and to confirm their alliance with the Prophet. S’ad ibn Mu’adh, the chief of Aws, said to them: “Qurayzah, you know our past relations. I fear for you a destiny similar to that befell al-Nadir, or even worse.” The response was negative, in no uncertain terms.

When the Prophet received the confirmation of the treachery, he was fully aware of what it meant: the Muslims were, in effect, besieged by two enemies who were determined to exterminate them. Yet his response to his companions was, “Rejoice, for the end will be a happy one.” This statement reflected his total trust in God and his belief that, despite the great forces he was facing, the Muslims would be victorious if they were truly on God’s side. And to give them more comfort and assurance, he said:

By Him who holds my soul in His hand, God will provide you with a way out of this hardship. I indeed hope to go around the Ka’bah feeling absolutely safe, and that God will enable me to hold the keys of the Ka’bah in my hand. God will

surely destroy the Persian and Byzantine Empires, and their treasures will be spent to further the cause of God.

Huyayy ibn Akhtab went back to the Quraysh with the news that Qurayzah were joining them against the Muslims, but they needed ten days to get ready for the fight. They also requested that the allies intensify their attacks against the defenders' positions to prevent the Muslims from settling with the Qurayzah first. The Quraysh and the other allies were pleased with what Huyayy ibn Akhtab had accomplished, and they felt certain of achieving victory. They intensified their attacks against the Muslims' positions, especially where the Prophet himself stood. The fighting continued all day and extended through the night, but the attackers were repelled.

One evening, the Prophet received reports that the Qurayzah were planning to launch a night attack on Madina and its civilians. In response to these reports, two units of five hundred men were sent to guard the city. It was easy for the Jews of Qurayzah to send small groups or single individuals into the city to frighten the Muslim women and children. One of the Jews was killed by Safiyyah bint Abd al-Muttalib, the Prophet's aunt, when she saw the man moving in a suspicious way inside the Muslim quarter.

Salahi, in his book *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, summarizes the outcome of the conflict as follows:

In the Islamic view, victory in war is given only by God. When two armies meet in battle, the decisive factor which determines the outcome of that battle is God's help, which he gives only to those who serve His cause. God has committed Himself to help His servants whenever they fight His and their enemy, setting for themselves only one objective for their fight is: serving His cause. With this law, which supersedes all others, victory is always assured to the believers. As the Prophet and his companions continued their defense of Madina in this war, which became known in the history books as the Battle of the Trench (معركة الخندق) or the Encounter with the Confederates (هجوم الأحزاب), they were able to demonstrate most convincingly that their aims were absolutely free of any gain to themselves. For twenty-seven nights they remained under siege, with hostile forces threatening to attack them on two fronts, hoping to put an end to the message of Islam, Muhammad and his companions were focusing on one thing: What could they do to ensure that the message of Islam would continue to spread? Those Muslims were required to exert their best efforts, and victory was theirs.

A man called **Nuaym ibn Mas'ud** from the Ghatafan tribe arrived at the Muslim camp and said to the Prophet, "Messenger of God, I am now a Muslim, but my people are not aware of the fact. You may give me whatever orders you wish." The Prophet responded: "If you join us, you increase our number by one. But try, if you can, to dissuade the people from attacking us. War is but a successful trick." Nuaym was apparently a highly intelligent and resourceful person who had formed many friendships and acquaintances with all sorts of people.

Since Muhammad had learned about the treachery of the Qurayzah, he had been looking for a way to split the enemy ranks. The first idea that crossed his mind was to persuade the Ghatafan tribe to withdraw from their alliance with the Quraysh and the Jews by offering them one-third of the crops of Madina. However, the Ansar leaders were against such an offer, so he dropped this

plan, but continued searching for other ways to achieve this goal. Muhammad felt that Nuaym was the right person to bring about a split in the ranks of the enemies of Islam.

Nuaym had many friends among the Jews of Qurayzah, so he went to them and spoke as follows:

The Quraysh and Ghatafan are not in the same position as you. This city is your own home city, where you live with your women and children and have all your assets and property. The Quraysh and the Ghatafan have come to attack Muhammad and his companions, and you have now joined them, but their women and children and their money and property are somewhere else. If things turn sour for them, they will certainly depart and leave you alone to face Muhammad in your own hometown. If you are to face him alone, you are certainly no match for him. My advice to you is to guard against that eventuality. You must not fight alongside the Quraysh and the Ghatafan unless you take some hostages from among their leaders so that you may be absolutely sure that they will fight with you until Muhammad is defeated.

The Qurayzah accepted his advice. As soon as Nuaym left them, he went to the Quraysh camp and met with Abu Sufyan and other chiefs. He said to them,

You know that I am your friend, and no follower of Muhammad. I have learned something which I feel I must convey to you as a piece of advice, but please do not tell anyone that I am your source of information.

Having obtained Abu Sufyan's promise, Nuaym continued:

I would like you to know that the Jews have repented their breach of their treaty with Muhammad. They have sent him messengers to communicate to him their regret for what they have done. In order to show him their goodwill, they asked whether he would be satisfied if they were to give him a number of men from among the nobility of the Quraysh and the Ghatafan to kill. They also promised that they were ready to fight with him against you until you have been exterminated. He answered that their offer was satisfactory. Now, if the Jews ask you to send them some of your people to stay with them as a guarantee that you will not abandon them, do not send them a single person.

Nuaym then went to the Ghatafan and said to their leaders: "You are my own people, whom I love most dearly. I believe I am not a man you suspect of any ill will towards you." When they assured him of his good standing among them, he told them the same thing he had told the Quraysh and warned them against sending anyone to the Qurayzah.

Abu Sufyan and the chiefs of the Ghatafan sent a delegation to Qurayzah. The delegation said:

This siege has caused us so much trouble. We cannot maintain it much longer, we are getting exhausted, so we have to make a move. Get ready and let us attack Muhammad and finish him off with his Companions.

The Qurayzah answered:

We cannot fight Muhammad alongside you unless you give us some of your own people to stay with us so that we are absolutely sure that you are as determined as we are to fight Muhammad to the bitter end. We fear that if the fighting goes against you, you will depart and go home, leaving us to face the man in our hometown while we are no match for him on our own.

When the delegation went back with this message, both the Quraysh and the Ghatafan concluded: "Nuaym ibn Mas'ud's report is certainly true." They sent the Qurayzah a message that they were not prepared to send them a single person: "If you want to fight, then come and fight."

Upon receiving this message, the Qurayzah concluded that Nuaym's advice had been correct and valid. The split in the enemy ranks was the beginning of their defeat. The long siege exhausted the alliance forces, as they were not prepared for such a military campaign. The siege ended after a violent rainstorm devastated their camps.

Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman, a companion of the Prophet during the siege, was sent by Muhammad to the enemies' camp to assess the impact of the rainstorm on the enemy.

Upon the request of the Prophet, I went to the enemies' quarters. It was a night when very strong winds blew over the enemy forces. The night was extremely dark and very cold. The unbelievers could not light a fire, because of the wind and rain. They were unable to cook, because no pots or pans stood upright, their tents began to collapse, and they were worried that the Muslims might attack them that very night. In this atmosphere, thoughts of departure started to creep into their minds.

I witnessed Abu Sufyan addressing his people:

"People of the Quraysh, you realize that we cannot stay much longer. We have endured great hardship, and the Jews of the Qurayzah have not fulfilled their promises to us. Indeed, we have received highly disturbing reports about their attitude. You see what these strong winds are doing to us. We cannot stay much longer in these conditions, and my advice to you is to go back home, where I am going."

The Ghatafan decided to follow suit when they learned that the Quraysh were leaving.

In the morning, the Muslims found out that their enemies had left and the siege had ended. Their faith in the truth of His message was now stronger.

Many Muslims believed that the arrival of Nuaym ibn Mas'ud to their camp and what he was able to achieve was God's way of helping Muhammad and his companions to achieve victory. They believe that the circumstances which produced the split in the ranks of the enemies could not have occurred by chance. They believed that it was the work of God who decided to help the Muslims, whose faith was unshakable.

The failure of the expedition against the Muslims marked a new stage in the conflict between the Quraysh and Madina. This new stage was described clearly by the Prophet when he said: "Now we will no longer be on the defensive; they will not attack us again."

The whole episode is recorded in the Quran:

O, You who believe! Remember Allah's blessings upon you, when forces came against you, and We sent against them a wind, and forces you did not see. Allah is observant of what you do.

When they came upon you, from above you, and from beneath you; and the eyes became dazed, and the hearts reached the throats, and you harbored doubts about Allah.

There and then the believers were tested, and were shaken most severely.

When the Hypocrites and those in whose hearts is sickness said, "Allah and His Messenger promised us nothing but illusion.

And when a group of them said, "O people of Yathrib, you cannot make a stand, so retreat." And a faction of them asked the Prophet to excuse them, saying, "Our homes are exposed." They only wanted to flee.

Had it been invaded from its sides, and they were asked dissent, they would have done so with little hesitation.

Although they had made a pledge to Allah, in the past, that they would not turn their backs. A pledge to Allah is a responsibility. Say, "Flight will not benefit you, if you flee from death or killing, even then you will be given only brief enjoyment."

Say, "Who is it who will shield you from Allah, if He intends adversity for you, or intends mercy for you?" Besides Allah, they will find for themselves neither friend nor helper.

Allah already knows the hinderers among you, and those who say to their brethren, "Come and join us." Rarely do they mobilize for battle.

Being stingy towards you; and when fear approaches, you see them staring at you- their eyes rolling-like someone fainting at death. Then, when panic is over, they whip you with sharp tongues. They resent you any good. These have never believed, so Allah has nullified their works; a matter easy for Allah.

They assumed that the confederates had not withdrawn. But were the confederates to advance, they would wish they were in the desert with the Bedouins, inquiring about your news. And if they were among you, they would have done little fighting.

You have an excellent example in the Messenger of Allah; for anyone who seeks Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah frequently.

And when the believers saw the confederates, they said, "This what Allah and His messenger have promised; and Allah and His Messenger have told the truth." And it only increased them in faith and submission.

Of the believers are men who are true to what they pledged to Allah. Some of them have fulfilled their vows; and some are still waiting, and never wavering.

That Allah may reward the truthful for their truthfulness; and punish the hypocrites, if He wills, or pardon them. Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.

(Chapter 21, The Confederate)

إِذْ جَاءَكُمْ مِنْ فَوْقِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَسْفَلَ مِنْكُمْ وَإِذْ زَاغَتِ الْأَبْصَارُ وَبَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ وَتَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ الظُّنُونَا (10) هُنَالِكَ ابْتُلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَزُلْزِلُوا زَلْزَالًا شَدِيدًا (11) وَإِذْ يَقُولُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ مَا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ إِلَّا غُرُورًا (12) وَإِذْ قَالَتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْهُمْ يَا أَهْلَ يَثْرِبَ لَا مُقَامَ لَكُمْ فَارْجِعُوا وَيَسْتَأْذِنُ فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمُ النَّبِيَّ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّ بُيُوتَنَا عَوْرَةٌ وَمَا هِيَ بِعَوْرَةٍ إِنْ يُرِيدُونَ إِلَّا فِرَارًا (13) وَلَوْ دَخَلَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ الْأَقْطَارِهَا ثُمَّ سَبَلُوا الْفِتْنَةَ لَأَتَوْهَا وَمَا تَلْبَثُوا فِيهَا إِلَّا سِيرًا (14) وَلَقَدْ كَانُوا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ قَبْلُ لَا يُولُونَ الدُّبَارَ وَكَانَ عَهْدُ اللَّهِ مَسْنُورًا (15) قُلْ لَنْ يَنْفَعَكُمْ الْفِرَارُ إِنْ فَرَرْتُمْ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ أَوِ الْقَتْلِ وَإِذَا لَا تُمْتَعُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا (16) قُلْ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَعْصِمُكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ سُوءًا أَوْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ رَحْمَةً وَلَا يَجِدُونَ لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا (17) قَدْ يَعْلَمُ اللَّهُ الْمَعْوِفِينَ مِنْكُمْ وَالْقَائِلِينَ لِإِخْوَانِهِمْ هَلُمَّ إِلَيْنَا وَلَا يَأْتُونَ الْبَأْسَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا (18) أَشْحَهَ عَلَيْكُمْ فَأِذَا جَاءَ الْخَوْفُ رَأَيْتَهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَيْكَ تَدُورُ أَعْيُنُهُمْ كَالَّذِي يُغْتَسَبُ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ فَأِذَا ذَهَبَ الْخَوْفُ سَلَفُوكُمْ بِأَلْسِنَةٍ حِدَادٍ أَشْحَهَ عَلَى الْخَيْرِ أَوْلَيْتُمْ لَكُمْ فَأَحْبَبُ اللَّهُ

أَعْمَالَهُمْ وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا (19)

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا (21) وَلَمَّا رَأَى الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْأَحْزَابَ قَالُوا هَذَا مَا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَصَدَقَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَمَا زَادَهُمْ إِلَّا إِيمَانًا وَتَسْلِيمًا (22) مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ قَضَىٰ نَحْبَهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَنْتَظِرُ وَمَا بَدَّلُوا تَبْدِيلًا (23) لِيَجْزِيَ اللَّهُ الصَّادِقِينَ بِصِدْقِهِمْ وَيُعَذِّبَ الْمُنَافِقِينَ إِنْ شَاءَ أَوْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنْ كَانَ عَفُورًا رَحِيمًا (24)

سورة الأحزاب (21)

The Expedition Against the Qurayzah

The treachery of the Jews was the most critical event of this war. After the departure of the confederate forces, God commanded the Prophet to march to the Qurayzah's quarters. The Muslims forces then imposed a siege on the Jewish fortified positions. The siege lasted twenty-five days and ended when the Qurayzah surrendered. The Prophet ordered that their men's hands be bound after they were detained. The Aws leaders pleaded mercy with the Prophet for their former allies. He answered: "Would you accept if I refer the matter between me and your former allies to one of you"? They were pleased by Muhammad's response to their plea; and their choice was the chief of the Aws, S'ad ibn Mu'adh.

When Muhammad told S'ad that he had been chosen to pass judgment on the Qurayzah, he said: "It is God and His messenger who are entitled to pass judgment." The Prophet told him that it was God's command that he should give his verdict. S'ad then asked the Aws; "Do you give me your most solemn oath by God that my verdict is acceptable and final?" Their answer was affirmative. Then he turned his head to the other side where Muhammad and other Muslims were sitting, and asked the same question. The Prophet answered, "Yes."

S'ad then asked the Qurayzah whether they would accept his verdict, whatever it was. They said his verdict was acceptable. When S'ad had received the answers from all parties, he announced the verdict: "I hereby rule that the fighters from the Qurayzah are to be killed, their properties to be divided and their women and children be taken prisoners." The Prophet endorsed

the ruling. The judgment was then implemented. According to Umar al-Waqidi, the total number of the fighters executed was twenty-five.

The execution of the Banu Qurayzah has been the subject of intense debate among scholars and historians. Western historians, especially the Zionists among them, such as Heinrich and S.W. Baron, linked the Banu Qurayzah to the rebels of Masada in 72 CE. They also gave exaggerated reports of the number of the Jews who were executed, claiming that the total number of men who were killed was 400 to 700. Contemporary Muslim scholars such as Baraka Ahmad and W.N. Arafat present completely different accounts, both in regard to the number killed and the circumstances. The Jews of Qurayzah were not freedom fighters or rebels, they were simply traitors. Karen Armstrong states that the execution was neither illegal nor immoral according to the tribal ethics of the time. Michael Lecker has demonstrated that the people of Qurayzah were not executed for being Jews, but for their treason. Lecker demonstrated that a significant number of the Banu Kilab, Arab clients of the Qurayzah, were also executed at the same time for treason. Thousands of Jews continued to live in Madina after the Battle of the Trench.

Strategy for a Peace Offensive

Following the failure of the confederates' expedition, the position of Prophet Muhammad in Arabia was greatly enhanced following the victory over the Quraysh and its allies in the Battle of the Trench. During the months that followed, the Muslims carried out multiple raids against the tribes who allied themselves with the Quraysh. These raids gave the Muslims complete control of the area surrounding Madina and tightened the economic blockade against Mecca.

As Madina's position rose, Mecca's position was on the decline. The continuing success of the Muslims made many of the Arabs question the validity of their traditional faith. Islam was able to make inroads into many tribes and to win new followers all over Arabia, including members of several clans of the Quraysh. There were many Muslims in Mecca who adopted Islam but did not publicize their status, as they did not wish to sever their ties with their families, and they were hoping that over time the entire community would accept Islam. Some of them were not able to emigrate to Madina, and a number of them who tried to leave Mecca were intercepted and forced to return to Mecca and to stay with their families as prisoners. When the Meccan army had left Madina after the siege, the commander **Khalid ibn al-Walid** had cried, **"Every man of sense now knows that Muhammad has not lied!"** Even the most committed adherents to the old faith began to agree. Another example of this change in attitude of the hardliners of the Quraysh was Abu al-As ibn Rabi, the Prophet's son-in-law, who was captured for a second time in September 627 CE in a raid against one of the caravans he was in charge of. Muhammad released him and returned his merchandise to him. After taking the merchandise back to Mecca, Abu al-As converted to Islam, made the hijra and was reunited with Zaynab.

Many tribes who lived around Mecca or in the north along the trade routes to Syria signed a treaty of alliance with Muhammad. The Prophet did not demand that these tribes should accept Islam as their religion, nor forced them to pay alms (*zakat*). The nomadic **tribe of Ashja**, who lived within easy range of Madina, signed a treaty of alliance with Muhammad. In 627 CE, the prince of **Dumat-al-Jandal** signed a treaty of alliance with Muhammad and gave his daughter in marriage to Abd-ar-Rahman ibn Awf, though he remained a Christian.

Although the Muslims gained several allies after the Battle of the Trench, the Prophet reached the conclusion that further spread of his message could not be achieved through more raids and wars. Ever since he started to convey his message, compulsion was never the method

of conversion. The Prophet was always trying to explain the principles of Islam and spending all the time needed to get the unbelievers to listen to him and learn from him what Islam was about. The Quraysh had represented the greatest obstacle to achieving this goal. The Quraysh's opposition to Islam had prompted most of the Arabian tribes not to respond to Muhammad's call to Islam. Ending the state of war between the Muslims and the Quraysh might remove the obstacle and allow the Prophet to spread his message freely. He concluded that the Muslims had to demonstrate to all of Arabia that war was not their mission in life; rather, it was peace and justice they were aiming at. War was no more than a necessary path that they had had to take to achieve peace. The Prophet became interested in a peaceful relationship with the Quraysh, even at the expense of lifting the economic blockade.

Around the sixth year of Al-Hijra, Muhammad announced to his companions that he had a strange dream where he saw himself standing in the Ka'bah with the shaven head of a pilgrim, wearing the traditional hajj costume, holding the key to the Ka'bah. This announcement was followed by a call to all Muslims in Arabia to join him in his visit to Mecca, as he intended to make the hajj. He also made it clear that this visit was not a military expedition, and he had no intention of violating the rule of pilgrimage forbidding all fighting. His announcement startled his companions, as they could not imagine themselves going to Mecca unarmed. Muhammad was firm with regard to the purpose of his visit to Mecca: It was nothing more than making the pilgrimage.

About 1,400 Muslims from Madina accompanied Muhammad on his peaceful march to Mecca in the month of Thul-qa'dah (**February–March, 628 CE**). He mounted his camel, al-Qaswa, and brought along seventy camels that he intended to slaughter at the end of the hajj rituals to distribute their meat to the poor in the sanctuary. When he arrived at a place called Dhul-Hulayfah, about nine kilometers from Madina, he stopped to pray, then marked the camels, following Arabian tradition, to make it known that they were to be slaughtered after the completion of the divine rituals. Muhammad and his companions then went into a state of purification (*ihram*), donning white garments. As they resumed their march, Muhammad, in a loud voice, uttered the pilgrims' cry: "Here I am, O, God, at Your service." It was very clear to everybody who saw the Muslims in their *ihram* costumes that they were on a peaceful mission.

The Quraysh were extremely agitated when they learned about the peaceful march of the Prophet and his companions. They immediately prepared themselves to stop this march by any means, including force. The Prophet continued his march until they reached a place called **Ghadir al-Ashtar**, where one of the scouts he sent to spy on the Quraysh came back and told him that the Quraysh had sent a force of two hundred men to intercept the march. In response to this information, he asked whether anyone knew of an alternative route that would allow them to avoid confrontation. A man from the tribe of Aslam led them through rough terrain to the plain of **al-Hudaybiyah**, south of Mecca, about a day's walk from the sanctuary.

As soon as the Prophet entered the sacred zone, he asked the companions to set up their camp, then declared:

By Him Who holds my soul in His hand, I shall respond favorably to any proposal the Quraysh puts to me today which helps establish good relations and guarantees respect to God's sanctuaries.

When Muhammad established his camp at al-Hudaybiyah, he was in effect, in a state called "**sit-in**," waiting for permission from the Quraysh to enter the city, refraining from violence, in

line with the Arab tradition. He was simply a pilgrim. The performance of the pilgrimage would be a demonstration that Islam was not a foreign religion but essentially an Arabian one, with Mecca at its center. The Muslims' pilgrimage to Mecca was a clear message to the Meccans that Muhammad was prepared to establish peaceful relationship with the Quraysh. Arab tribes who were on their way to Mecca for the pilgrimage understood this message. A chief of the Khuza'ah, **Budayl ibn Warqa**, who was a pilgrim himself, rode out to al-Hudaybiyah to see what was going on. The Prophet assured him that he had no intention of fighting anyone; he intended to visit the Ka'bah to demonstrate that Muslims recognized its sanctity. Then Muhammad added that he was prepared to have a truce with them if they so desire. Budayl returned to the Quraysh and conveyed to them what he had heard from Muhammad. He became angry when the Quraysh leaders told him that they would never allow Muhammad and his companions to enter Mecca and have access to the Ka'bah. He told them that they had no right to prevent a man who had clearly come in peace from making the hajj; Mecca had always been inclusive, welcoming all Arabs to the Haram. He pleaded with them to accept Muhammad's offer, but the Quraysh rejected his advice.

The Quraysh's leaders sent one of their allies, **Hulays, the chief of the Harith**, to the Muslims' camp to persuade Muhammad to return to Madina. When Hulays saw the marked sacrificial camels in the camp, he returned to Mecca without bothering to talk to Muhammad. He was convinced that the Muslims in the camp were just pilgrims. He reported to the Quraysh what he had seen and told them that Muhammad and his followers must be admitted at once to the Haram. One of the Quraysh leaders responded: "How dare you give us orders, Hulays." Hulays rose and replied with great dignity:

You men of the Quraysh, it was not for this that we made an alliance with you. Is a man who comes to do honor to the house of Allah to be excluded from it? By Him who holds my life in His hand, either you let Muhammad do what he has come to do, or I shall take away my troops to the last man.

The Quraysh's next move was to send another envoy, **Urwah ibn Mas'ud**, a leader of the tribe of **Thaqif**, to persuade Muhammad to go back to Madina. Urwah told Muhammad that the Quraysh had vowed to prevent him from entering Mecca, and were well prepared for a war. Urwah was impressed by the Muslims' devotion to the Prophet, so when he returned to Mecca he addressed the Quraysh, saying:

People of the Quraysh, I have seen Khusru, the Persian emperor, and Caesar of the Byzantine Empire, and Negus of Abyssinia, in their respective kingdoms. I swear that I have never seen a king enjoying among his people a similar position to that of Muhammad among his companions. They do not fix their eyes when they look at him; they do not raise their voices when they speak to him. He does not need to give more than a signal to any one of them for that man to do what he is bid. I looked at those people and I have seen that they do not care what may happen to them if they are able to protect their master. Make up your minds: he had made a proposal to you, and I counsel you to conclude a peace agreement with him and to accept his offer. I am giving you my sincere advice and I certainly fear that you will not be able to overcome him.

Again this advice was rejected by the Quraysh. They sent a small force of forty to fifty men to go around the Muslims' camp. The Muslims managed to capture the men; however, the Prophet pardoned them and ordered his companions to release them.

The next step came from the Prophet, who sent an emissary, **Kharrash ibn Umayyah** of the tribe of Khuza'ah, to Mecca. As soon as he arrived, his camel was wounded by the Quraysh and he was threatened with death, so he returned to the camp. However, Muhammed was determined to resolve the impasse peacefully, so he finally sent **Uthman ibn Affan** to Mecca to deliver his message. Uthman argued with the Quraysh that they should be faithful to their duty as custodians of the Ka'bah, which obligated them to make it possible for all pilgrims to visit the Sacred House. The Quraysh rejected his argument, but offered Uthman permission to do the *tawaf* himself. Uthman made it clear that he would not do so until the Prophet had done his own *tawaf*. He stayed in Mecca for few days longer than he had planned in hopes that he would be able to persuade the Quraysh. He also took the opportunity to contact some of his old friends who had adopted Islam in secret. There were quite a few of them who were happy to meet with him. Uthman passed on the Prophet's message that victory would be coming soon.

A rumor began to spread in the Muslim camp that Uthman had been killed; it became more plausible with each passing day that Uthman did not return. Muhammad became very sad and was deeply hurt by this development, as it meant that the Quraysh had terminated all possible attempts for peaceful settlement, leaving no other option but war. He declared to the Muslims in the camp: "Uthman was on a mission given to him by God. I therefore make a pledge on his behalf to fight the Quraysh." Then he called on his companions to give him a pledge to fight the Quraysh to the bitter end. Each companion, then, pledged to fight and never flee from battle, even if that meant his own death. This pledge became known as "**Bay'at al Ridwan**" ببيعة الرضوان.

Allah was pleased with the believers when they pledged allegiance to you under the tree. He knew what was in their hearts, and sent down serenity upon them, and rewarded them with an imminent conquest. And abundant gains for them to capture. Allah is mighty and wise.

(Chapter 26, The Triumph)

لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ يُبَايِعُونَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ فَعَلِمَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ فَأَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَثَابَهُمْ فَتْحًا قَرِيبًا (18) وَمَغَانِمَ كَثِيرَةً يَأْخُذُونَهَا ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا (19)

سورة الفتح (26)

The companions realized that they were far inferior to the Quraysh in number; furthermore, they had started their journey carrying only what was absolutely necessary for traveling in the desert of Arabia: their swords in their sheaths; none of them wore body armor. Shortly after the pledge was made, Uthman arrived back at the camp. Muhammad was very pleased to see him alive, but was not happy to learn that the Quraysh still rejected peace.

The Truce of Al-Hudaybiyah صلح الحديبيه

When the Quraysh learned about the pledge, their chiefs realized how determined the Muslims were to achieve their goal. They also realized the consequences of fighting near the sanctuary,

especially during the sacred month. Therefore a delegation headed by **Suhayl ibn Amr** was sent to the Muslim's camp for negotiation with the Prophet.

Suhayl represented the new leadership of Mecca that had evolved after the failure of the Battle of the Trench. For many years, Mecca had witnessed rivalry among the leading merchants of the city. Abu Sufyan was the most prominent leader of the Quraysh in their wars against Muhammad, between 624 (Badr) and 627 (Trench). The other prominent leader was Abu Jahl, from the clan of Makhzum, who had been killed at Badr in 624 CE. The new rivals of Abu Sufyan were from Makhzum: **Safwan ibn Umayyah, Suhayl ibn Amr and Ikrimah, the son of Abu Jahl.**

The Prophet received the Quraysh's delegation well, as he realized that their coming to the Muslims' camp for negotiations was in itself a victory for Muhammad. The Quraysh had been determined to prevent Muhammad from visiting the Ka'bah; they had rejected the advice of all mediators and refused the offer presented by Uthman, Muhammad's emissary, but the situation was now changed, and they were at his camp ready to negotiate a peace treaty. The terms of the agreement were not an issue for him; bringing peace between the two sides was the goal, as it was through peace that the Muslims would be able to spread God's message to all Arabia. **The Prophet was prepared to accept all the conditions that Suhayl presented for the sake of peace.**

This gave the Quraysh no excuse not to conclude a peace treaty. The Prophet's companions were shocked and distressed over the conditions that the Prophet accepted. They questioned the wisdom behind accepting such terms, and argued among themselves against it. Umar ibn al-Khattab went to the Prophet with these questions: **"Are you not God's Messenger? Are we not the Muslims? Are they not the idolaters? Why then should we accept humiliation in matters of our faith?"**

The Prophet answered, **"I am God's servant and messenger. I shall not disobey Him, and He will never abandon me."**

The Prophet then called in Ali ibn Abi Talib to write down the peace agreement so that it might be signed by both sides. First, he asked Ali to write: "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate." Suhayl interrupted: I do not know this. Write down: "In your name, Our Lord." The Prophet told Ali to write the phrase Suhayl proposed, then continued with his dictation: "These are the terms of the peace agreement between Muhammad, God's Messenger, and Suhayl ibn Amr." Again, Suhayl interrupted: "Had I accepted that you are God's Messenger, I would not have fought you. You have to write down your name and your father's name." The Prophet accepted Suhayl's point and revised the dictation, telling Ali to write the following terms of the agreement between Muhammad and the Quraysh:

- Both have agreed to a complete truce for a period of ten years, during which all people will enjoy peace and security and will not attack one another.
- Moreover, if anyone from the Quraysh joins Muhammad without permission from his guardian or chief, he shall be returned to the Quraysh.
- If anyone from those in the camp of Muhammad joins the Quraysh, they are not required to return him.
- Both sides agree that they harbor good intentions toward each other.
- No theft or treachery shall be condoned.
- Whoever wishes to enter into an alliance with Muhammad may do so, and whoever wants to enter into an alliance with the Quraysh may do so.

- It is further agreed that Muhammad shall return home this year without entering Mecca. At the end of one year, the Quraysh shall evacuate Mecca for Muhammad so that Muslims may enter it to stay for three days only. Muslims shall carry only the armaments necessary for travelers—namely, swords in their sheaths, and no other arms.

When the terms of the agreement were written down, and as witnesses from both sides were asked to sign the document, a man from Mecca who had been imprisoned by his family because he was a Muslim arrived to the camp after he managed to escape. This man was none other than Suhayl's own son, **Abu Jandal**. Suhayl then said to Muhammad, "This is the first person whose case I take up." The Prophet responded that Abu Jandal had arrived before the agreement was completed. Suhayl replied, "Then I have not agreed on any terms with you whatsoever." This meant that the negotiations concluded no agreement. Trying to save the agreement, the Prophet pleaded: "Then allow me him." Suhayl refused. Members of the Quraysh delegation intervened and tried to persuade Suhayl to accept the Prophet's request, but failed. The Prophet then addressed Abu Jandal:

Abu Jandal, be patient and endure your situation for God's sake. He will certainly provide for you and those who are suffering with you a way out of your hardship. We have made a peace agreement with those people, giving them a pledge by God that we will be faithful to the terms of our agreement. We shall not violate our pledge.

Although the Prophet acquiesced to the terms of the agreement, it was extremely difficult for Muhammad's companions to accept it without unease and bitterness. Now they had to go back home without being able to make the hajj. They were still in the sacred state of *ihram*, the state of consecration, as they had been since leaving Dhul-Hulayfah. Traditionally, this state ends when the pilgrim has offered his sacrifice and shaved his head after completing the *tawaf*. The fact that they were prevented from visiting the Sacred House put them in effect in the position of *muhsar*, a state of being unable to make the hajj owing to reasons beyond their control. In such a situation, God allows for release from *ihram* by slaughtering animals (sacrifice), and shaving one's head. The Prophet went out from his tent, slaughtered an animal, and called someone to shave his head. As soon as he had done that, the rest of his companions did the same. Umar then asked the Prophet: "Have you not told us that we would go to the Ka'bah and do our *tawaf* there?" The Prophet replied, "Have I told you that you will go there this year?"

On their way back to Madina, the Prophet received a new revelation, entitled in the Quran *surah* al-Fath, the Conquest:

It is He who withheld their hands from you, and your hands from them, in the valley of Mecca, after giving you advantage over them. Allah is observer of what you do.

It is they who disbelieved, and barred you from the Sacred Mosque and prevented the offering from reaching its destination. Where it not for faithful men and faithful women, whom you did not know, you were about to hurt them, and became guilty of an unintentional crime. Thus Allah admits into His mercy whomever He wills. Had they dispersed, we would have punished those who disbelieved among them with a grievous punishment.

Those who disbelieved filled their hearts with rage-the rage of the days of ignorance. But Allah sent His serenity down upon His Messenger, and upon the believers, and imposed on them the words of righteousness, of which they were most worthy and deserving. Allah is aware of everything.

Allah has fulfilled His Messenger's vision in truth: "You will enter the Sacred Mosque, Allah willing, in security, heads shaven, hair cut short, not fearing. He knew what you did not know, and has granted besides that an imminent victory."

It is He who sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, to make it prevail over all religions. Allah suffices as witness.

Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; and those with him are stern against the unbelievers, yet compassionate amongst themselves. You see them kneeling, prostrating, seeking blessings from Allah and approval. Their marks are on their faces from the effects of prostration.

(Chapter 26, The Triumph)

وَهُوَ الَّذِي كَفَّ أَيْدِيَهُمْ عَنْكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ عَنْهُمْ بِبَطْنِ مَكَّةَ مِنْ بَعْدِ أَنْ أَظْفَرَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرًا (24) هُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوكُمْ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْهَدْيِ مَعْكُوفًا أَنْ يَبْلُغَ مَجْلَهُ ۚ وَلَوْلَا رِجَالٌ مُؤْمِنُونَ وَنِسَاءٌ مُؤْمِنَاتٌ لَمْ تَعْلَمُوهُمْ أَنْ تَطَّوُّوهُمْ فَتُصِيبَكُمْ مِنْهُمْ مَعَرَّةٌ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ لِيَدْخُلَ اللَّهُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ مِنَ بَيْتَاءٍ لَوْ تَرَىٰ أُولَآءِ لَعَدَّبْنَا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (25) إِذْ جَعَلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْحَمِيَّةَ الْحَمِيَّةَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةَ فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَىٰ رَسُولِهِ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَأَلْزَمَهُمْ كَلِمَةَ التَّقْوَىٰ وَكَانُوا أَحَقَّ بِهَا وَأَهْلَهَا ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا (26) لَقَدْ صَدَقَ اللَّهُ رَسُولَهُ الرُّؤْيَا بِالْحَقِّ لَتَدْخُلَنَّ الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ آمِنِينَ مُحَلِّقِينَ رُءُوسَكُمْ وَمُقَصِّرِينَ لَا تَخَافُونَ ۚ فَعَلِمَ مَا لَمْ تَعْلَمُوا فَجَعَلَ مِنْ دُونِ ذَلِكَ فَتْحًا قَرِيبًا (27) هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ ۚ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا (28) مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ تَرَاهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا سِيمَاهُمْ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ مِنْ أَثَرِ السُّجُودِ ۚ ذَلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ ۚ وَمَثَلُهُمْ فِي الْإِنْجِيلِ كَزَرْعٍ أَخْرَجَ شَطْأَهُ فَآزَرَهُ فَاسْتَغْلَظَ فَاسْتَوَىٰ عَلَىٰ سُوقِهِ يُعْجِبُ الزُّرَّاعَ لِيُغَيِّظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ ۗ وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا (29)

سورة الفتح (26)

The Prophet recited the new revelation to Umar, saying, "This *surah* is much dearer to me than everything that the sun shines on put together." Umar then asked, "Is it a conquest, Messenger of God?" Muhammad replied, "Yes, indeed. By Him who holds my soul in His hand, it is a grand victory."

The peace agreement between Mecca and the Islamic state of Madina opened new avenues for the message of Islam. For all practical purposes, it put an end to the economic blockade that had been imposed on Mecca. Muhammad was not interested in harming the Meccans; rather, he wanted to bring them into the fold of Islam and have them become an important component of the Islamic state. Furthermore, since receiving his revelation in 610 CE, Muhammad had faced strong opposition from the Quraysh. Most of the Arabian tribes sided with the Quraysh and adopted a hostile position toward the Prophet. Now, having concluded an agreement that ended the Quraysh's hostility, the Prophet had a greater chance of enhancing the position of the Islamic state through alliances with many tribes, which would allow him to spread the message of Islam throughout Arabia. And, in fact, several tribes accepted his call and adopted Islam. However, his mission was not limited to Arabia; he believed that he was the messenger of God to all mankind.

Therefore, after the peace agreement, he sent messengers to the kings and rulers of all the states surrounding Arabia, informing them of his message and calling on them to adopt Islam.

Muhammad's companions were extremely disturbed by the terms that required Muhammad to send back to Mecca the young Muslims who escaped from captivity and arrived in Madina. The first test of this was Suhayl's son, **Abu Jandal**, who was given back to his father at al-Hudaybiyah. Shortly after they returned to Madina, a young Muslim man called **Abu Busayr** escaped from Mecca and arrived in Madina. The Prophet had to send him back. Abu Busayr managed to kill the man who was escorting him back to captivity and sought a hideout on the coastal route of Mecca's caravans. Other young men who had escaped from captivity joined Abu Busayr and started to attack Mecca's caravans. In no time, the group expanded to more than seventy strong fighting men. Later on, the number swelled to five hundred when young men from other tribes joined this force. The Quraysh, who suffered greatly from this new war, requested that the term be dropped from the agreement and pleaded with Muhammad to take these men under his protection in Madina.

The War against Khaybar

In August of 628, a few weeks after returning to Madina, the Prophet called on Muslims to get ready for an expedition. This time the target was Khaybar, where Nadir tribe had taken refuge. It was from Khaybar that the Jewish leaders Sallam ibn Abi al-Huqayq and Huyayy ibn Akhtab had started their conspiracies against Islam. Huyayy was the architect of the campaign against Madina that became known as the Expedition of the Trench. He had been killed with Qurayzah while Sallam took refuge in Khayber. After the punishment of Qurayzah, a group of al-Khazraj received permission from the Prophet to plot the assassination of Sallam, which they carried out successfully. The new leader of Khaybar's Jews was **Usayr ibn Rizam** who followed the same policies and tactics of the previous leadership. He renewed his alliance with the Arab tribe of Ghatafan, whose quarters were not far from Khaybar. When the Prophet learned about Usayr's activities aiming at building new alliances, he formulated a plan consisting of two components: the first was to persuade the Jewish tribes to adopt a policy of peaceful coexistence with the Muslims based on equal respect for the interests of both sides; the second was to prepare for a military confrontation if the first one failed.

A force of thirty men, headed by Abdullah ibn Rawahah, was sent to Khaybar with the aim of persuading Usayr to sign a pact of peace with the Muslims that would guarantee the security and safety of the Jewish population of Arabia. Abdullah ibn Rawahah and his men met Usayr and reached an agreement with him whereby he would go to Madina and negotiate with the Prophet the terms of such a pact. In fact, Usayr accompanied the Muslim forces on their return to Madina. However, as they were en route, Usayr tried to assassinate Abdullah; he failed and was killed in the process.

Sallam ibn Mishkam, who succeeded Usayr as the new leader of the Jews in Khaybar, followed the same course, continuing to contact old allies to confirm their pact against Muslims. Therefore, Muhammad called on his companions to prepare to fight Khaybar. He allowed only those who had made the pledge under the tree to accompany him. A force of fourteen hundred men was mobilized.

Khaybar was about 160 kilometers to the north of Madina. It was a large, fertile oasis that stretched over a very large area. The inhabitants were not concentrated in a single residential area, but scattered over the neighboring hills and valleys. Their homes were fortified in the

middle of their farms and orchards. From the military point of view, Khaybar was divided into three sections: **al-Natah**, **al-Shaqq** and **al-Katibah**. Each section included several forts built on high land, some of them were on top of hills. The Jewish population in Khaybar were the strongest, richest and best armed.

The Prophet realized that to achieve total victory, he had to crush their power completely. He formulated a strategic plan to confront the enemy at each of their forts simultaneously by assigning a small detachment to attack a specific fort while the larger part of the army followed, capturing one fort at a time. After several weeks of sieges and attacks, most of the forts were captured; the remainder were forced to surrender in return for their safety. The surrender agreement stipulated that none of their fighters would be put to death; they would be allowed to leave Khaybar and its vicinity, taking with them their women and children. They would abandon all their claims to their land, money, horses, and arms. Shortly after the agreement was signed, while they were getting ready for departure, the Prophet received a request from their leaders to allow the Jews of Khaybar to stay and work in the orchards in return for giving the Muslim owners half the yield of all the land. The Prophet accepted the offer and amended the agreement. To seal the agreement, the Prophet took Safiyyah, the beautiful daughter of the chief of Nadir, as his wife. The other Jewish population centers—Fadak, Wadi al-Qura, and Tayma—signed similar agreements with Muhammad.

When the Prophet returned to Madina from Khaybar, he celebrated the return of his cousin Ja'far ibn Abi Talib from Abyssinia, whom he had not seen for fourteen years. He also celebrated the arrival of his new wife Umm Habibah, the daughter of Abu Sufyan, who was among the returnees. Earlier that year, her husband Ubaydallah ibn Jahsh had died in Abyssinia, so the Prophet proposed to her. The wedding ceremony was performed by proxy before the Negus (the king of Abyssinia).

The Second Trip to Mecca: The *Umrah* (Lesser Pilgrimage)

During the year that followed al-Hudaybiyah, the Muslims enjoyed many successes. Several tribes responded positively to Muhammad's message, and more Arabs adopted Islam as their religion. The Muslim expedition against Khaybar was a great success. The Muslims in Madina enjoyed calm and security. They feared no enemy to the north after the surrender of the Jews; nor did they fear any enemy to the south after signing the peace agreement with the Quraysh.

In **March 629 CE (the month of Dhul-Qa'adah, the seventh year AH)**, it was time to prepare for the promised pilgrimage to Mecca. The Prophet called his companions to join him in his journey to Mecca, and 2,600 Muslims answered his call. The pilgrims went into the state of consecration (*ihram*) at the doorstep of the mosque in Madina.

The terms of the peace agreement stipulated that the Muslims were allowed to carry only their swords in their sheaths, which they did. However, for protection and to guard the pilgrims against any possible threat, the Prophet sent ahead of the group a hundred horses carrying more armaments, including shields, spears, and protective headgear, led by Muhammad ibn Maslamah. The pilgrims followed, with the Prophet on al-Qaswa, his camel, surrounded by companions who were watching all directions. Abdullah ibn Rawahah, a companion of the Prophet from the Ansar, held the reins of the Prophet's camel.

When Muhammad ibn Maslamah arrived at a place called **Marr al-Zahran**, which was only about one day's travel from Mecca, with the horses, a few men from the Quraysh questioned him about his mission and why he had so many horses. Those men informed the leaders of Quraysh. This information prompted them to send a delegation to the Prophet asking him about the

purpose of bringing horses and arms. He assured them that he was not going to carry the arms to the city. The head of the delegation then replied: “This is more like what we have known of your faithfulness.”

When the Prophet was very close to the Haram, he told Abdullah ibn Rawahah to chant the following phrases:

There is no deity but God alone. He has fulfilled His promise, given victory to his servant, and dignity to his soldiers and He alone defeated the confederates.

لا اله الا الله وحده, صدق وعده, وأعز جنده, وهزم الأحزاب وحده.

Abdullah ibn Rawahah repeated these phrases, and all the Muslims repeated them after him, providing an atmosphere of great strength and enthusiasm.

It had been agreed at al-Hudaybiyah that this year the Muslims could only make the lesser pilgrimage, the *umrah*, which did not include a visit to Mount Arafat and the Valley of Mina. The Quraysh elders watched the arrival of Muhammad from top of a nearby mountain. The sound of the Muslims loudly chanting the above-mentioned phrases echoed through the valleys and empty streets of the city. The Meccans were impressed by the discipline of the Muslims. The huge crowd of pilgrims entered into the city slowly and solemnly, led by Muhammad on al-Qaswa. The Quraysh people were eager to see the Prophet and his companions coming into Mecca, especially as they had heard a rumor that they had been weakened physically by an epidemic. The Prophet was aware of this rumor, so when he reached the Ka’bah he dismounted, kissed the Black Stone, and then proceeded to make the circumambulation (*tawaf* الطواف) jogging. His companions did the same for the first three rounds. When he completed the seven rounds of *tawaf* and *sa’i*, he stopped and began slaughtering the sixty camels he had brought as a sacrifice (التضحية). His companions did the same. Afterward, the Prophet and his companions shaved their heads and released themselves from the state of consecration (*ihram* إحرام).

The Prophet had left two hundred of his companions at a place close to Mecca called Ya’jaj, to guard the horses and the arms. When he and those companions who joined him in his *umrah* had completed their rituals, he sent a group of them to Ya’jaj to replace those who stayed behind. He himself remained in the Ka’bah until it was time for midday prayer (Zuhr الظهر). He ordered Bilal to go to the top of the Ka’bah and call for the prayer (Adhan الأذان):

God is most supreme. I bear witness that there is no deity but God. I declare that Muhammad is God’s Messenger. Come To prayer. Come to a certain success. God is most supreme.

الله أكبر. أشهد أن لا اله إلا الله. وأشهد أن محمد رسول الله. حيا على الصلاة. حيا على الفلاح. الله أكبر.

Bilal climbed onto the roof of the Ka’bah three times a day. “His loud huge voice reverberated through the valley, urging Muslims to come to *salat* with the cry ‘Allah Akbar,’ reminding people that Allah was ‘greater’ than all the idols in the Haram, who could do nothing to prevent this ritual humiliation. It was an immense triumph for Muhammad, and many of the younger Quraysh became even more convinced that the old religion was doomed.”

The Prophet and his companions stayed three days in Mecca, walking through the streets of the city without fear. The Meccans were able to see how close-knit the Muslim community was. Their dedication to the cause of Islam was clearly visible in the way they talked to one another, and in their deference to the Prophet. The Meccans admired the great degree of unity among the Muslim community despite the fact that Muhammad’s followers belonged to many tribes. The Muslim community that the Prophet Muhammad established was based on justice, equity, and good conscience, prompting many people to join. This community, known as the *umma* at the time of emigration to Madina, later on was referred to as the Muslim community of Madina. The Quran speaks of it thus:

**You are the best community that ever emerged for humanity: you advocate what is moral, and forbid what is immoral, and believe in Allah.
(Chapter 3-4, Al Imran)**

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ ﷻ
سورة آل عمران (4)

The chiefs of the Quraysh became worried that their own people would begin to have second thoughts about Islam after they witnessed what Muhammad had achieved. Therefore, when the three days were over, Suhayl ibn Amr and Huwaytib ibn Abd al-Uzza went down to Mecca to tell Muhammad, who was sitting with S’ad ibn Ubaddah and other Helpers: “Your time is up and you have to leave.” S’ad was angry at their lack of courtesy, but the Prophet silenced him, saying: “O, S’ad, no ill words to those who have come to visit us in our camp!” To the astonishment of the Quraysh, Muhammad and his companions left Mecca at night in an orderly fashion. Their peaceful withdrawal from the city showed their confidence that they expected a speedy return.

The news of the Muslims’ pilgrimage spread rapidly throughout the entire peninsula. More and more Bedouins came to Madina to meet Muhammad and to declare their adoption of the religion of Islam. Many tribes became Muhammad’s confederates. A steady stream of the younger generation of the Quraysh who had converted to Islam arrived in Madina. Prominent young Quraysh warriors, including Amr ibn al-As and Khalid ibn al-Walid, converted to Islam and made the *hijra* to Madina. According to Al-Waqidi, Khalid’s brother al-Walid ibn al-Walid was in the Prophet’s company when he came to Mecca, and tried to see Khalid after he had completed the duties of the *umrah* (lesser pilgrimage), but Khalid had left Mecca before the arrival of the Muslims. Khalid’s brother then sent him a letter, saying: “I am amazed at the fact that you continue to turn away from Islam when you are as intelligent as I know you to be. God’s Messenger asked me about you and said, ‘A man of his caliber cannot remain ignorant of Islam.’ It is high time, brother, for you to make amends for the great benefits you have missed.” When Khalid read the letter, he felt as if a veil had fallen from his eyes, and he decided to emigrate to Medina. On his journey to Medina, he met two other men from the Quraysh who had made the same decision: Amr ibn al-As and Uthman Ibn Talhah.

Upon his arrival to Medina, Khalid went to meet the Prophet and declared his faith, and then said: “Messenger of God, I am thinking of those battles at which I was fighting against the side of the truth. I request you to pray God for me to forgive me.” The Prophet said: “When you embrace Islam, all your past sins are forgiven.” Khalid went on to become a key figure in the

Prophet's efforts to spread Islam. The Prophet assigned him the command of one army after another and gave him the title "the Sword of Islam."

Expedition to Syria (the Battle of Mu'tah)

Jumada Al-Awal 8 AH (September 629 CE)

The Prophet understood from the moment he received the revelation that he was the messenger of God to all mankind. His night journey to Jerusalem affirmed his universal message. It was not possible for Muhammad to expand his call beyond Arabia when his Muslim state in Madina was not yet secure. In the early months of his seventh year in Madina, it was clear to him that the Arabian scene had changed radically, especially after the triumph in Khaybar that had followed the al-Hudaybiyah peace treaty with the Quraysh. As the Muslim state in Madina became more secure, he felt that he will be able to devote time and effort to expand his call to other communities. He picked a number of his companions who combined charming personalities with intelligence and ability to handle difficult situations, and sent them as envoys to the rulers of neighboring countries. His envoys were received with varying degrees of hospitality. The rulers of Byzantium, Abyssinia, Egypt, and Yemen replied cordially, while the Persian emperor sent back a rude reply. A negative attitude was shown by al-Harith ibn Abi Shammar of the Ghassan Arab, the ruler of Damascus who was appointed by the Byzantine emperor.

In September of 629, about three months after the *umrah* (lesser pilgrimage), the Prophet sent al-Harith ibn Umayr as an envoy to Shurahbil ibn Amr, the Ghassanid ruler of Bostra in southern Syria, to convey to him the message of Islam. Shurahbil beheaded al-Harith. When the news of this hostile act reached the Prophet, he mobilized an army of three thousand men toward Syria under the command of his adopted son, Zayd ibn Harithah. Muhammad gave instructions that if Zayd should be killed, Ja'far ibn Abi Talib, who was the Prophet's cousin, should take his place. Abdullah ibn Rawahah was named as third commander should Ja'far be killed. If all three were incapacitated, the men were to choose their commander.

Although the Muslim army tried to conceal its target, the news of the march reached Shurahbil, who was able to mobilize all the Arab tribes under his control, raising a larger force composed of tens of thousands of soldiers. When Zayd learned of this massive army, he held a council of war to decide what to do. Most of the men were in favor of informing the Prophet of this grave turn of events, requesting additional forces or an order to return home. Ibn Rawahah pushed for a decision to go to war, and his proposal prevailed. The Muslims advanced northward until they reached a point not far from the southern end of the Dead Sea.

As the two armies faced each other, Zayd realized that the Muslim army was vastly outnumbered on a scale that they had never experienced before. Furthermore, the slope of the land was against his army. He decided to withdraw southward to Mu'tah where they would have the advantage. The Byzantine forces, who were the protectors of Ghassan, marched toward the Muslim army in great numbers. The Muslims adopted the tactics of concentrated pressure at the center while preventing the outside flanks of the enemy from encircling them. The commanders of the Muslim flanks fought hard to protect their central units from being overwhelmed. The Byzantine forces concentrated their efforts on killing the Muslim commander. After a fierce fight, Zayd was killed and the banner was taken by Ja'far, who became the target of a focused attack by the enemy. Ja'far was a great fighter, but the pressure against him was very strong. He felt that he could fight better if he were to dismount, which he did, but at the end he was killed. Abdullah ibn Rawahah, the third commander, met the same fate.

Khalid ibn al-Walid was the men's choice as the new commander. It was his first battle for the Muslims. This gifted military commander realized that total victory by the Muslims could not be achieved in such an ill-balanced confrontation. For the rest of the day, he commanded the army cleverly to avoid heavy casualties. When darkness fell and the two armies were separated, he had his chance to figure out the best way to minimize his losses, maximize the enemy losses, and prevent an outright defeat.

Khalid ibn al-Walid redeployed his forces completely by moving the right flank to the left and the left flank to the right. He also switched the positions of the front and rear forces. He completed this redeployment during the night. He then ordered a detachment to raise as much dust as possible behind the army and to cause a great deal of noise. At daybreak, fighting resumed. The Byzantines thought that the Muslims must have received reinforcements, as they saw new faces all around. The Muslims took the initiative and fought hard, inflicting heavy casualties. Meanwhile, he was gradually and skillfully drawing his forces back. The enemy thought that they were being slowly dragged into the desert. They were concerned about the increased risk. With these maneuvers, Khalid was able to withdraw his forces and at the same time inflict heavy losses on his enemy. The Muslims lost only twelve martyrs, including the three commanders. In those days, killing the commander ensured that the battle would be won; this is why the Byzantines concentrated their attacks on the commanders. The discipline of the Muslim fighters, however, brought new factors into the equation. It is true that they lost three commanders, but they did not lose their morale.

The retreat of the Muslim army from Syria was a great success, which was greatly admired by the Prophet. Muhammad considered Khalid's military achievement a great victory, and commended him when the army arrived back in Madina: "Then one of God's swords took the standard, and God opened up the day for them." This is how Khalid came to be called "**The Sword of Allah**" سيف الله المسلول.

The Great Value of the Peace Offensive

Before the Hudaibiyah peace agreement, many tribes were reluctant to join Islam or even to receive Muhammad's envoys, worried about possible reprisals from the Quraysh. The Hudaibiyah peace agreement stipulated that all Arab tribes were free to join or to be in alliance with either side. Thus, the agreement allowed Muhammad to spread his message to many of the tribes who feared the Quraysh, and encouraged them to join Islam.

The pilgrimage that took place a year after signing the peace agreement was a great opportunity for many Arabs to see, with their own eyes, what a better society the new religion had built in Madina. For three days the Prophet and his companions stayed in Mecca, talking freely to its inhabitants, many of whom were the relatives of Muslims. The Meccans then realized that the ties of brotherhood, love, and mutual compassion that Islam had created among its followers were very real. The Muslim society in Madina was a shining example of what a human society can and should be, if it is built on a proper foundation.

The Violation of the Truce

The heart of the Hudaibiyah agreement, established after the Battle of the Trench, was the establishment of a peaceful relationship between the Muslims and the Quraysh. The agreement stipulated that Arabian tribes were free to make alliances with either side. The end of hostilities applied to those allies in the same way as they applied to the main parties of the agreement.

Now, the Bakr tribe had signed an alliance with the Quraysh, while the Khuza'ah had entered an alliance with the Muslims. In **Sha'ban, 8 AH (November 629 CE)**, the Bakr clan of Dayl attacked a group of men of the Muslim-aligned Khuza'ah who were gathering at a water spring called al-Watir near Mecca. The Khuza'ah were forced to retreat, taking refuge at the consecrated area of the Ka'bah, where fighting was prohibited; all Arabs recognized the sanctity of that area. The Bakr, however, violated this precept and killed a large number of the Khuza'ah. Moreover, the Quraysh aided Bakr in this attack by providing them with arms and men. Hence the peace agreement was violated not only by the Bakr tribe but also by the Quraysh.

When the fight was over, the Khuza'ah sent a delegation to Madina. They presented to the Prophet the full details of the attack and the role of the Quraysh in the violation of the treaty. There was no doubt in Muhammad's mind, then, that the Quraysh had committed a blatant violation of the peace agreement. The Quraysh, realizing that this put them in a grave situation, sent Abu Sufyan to Madina in an attempt to rectify matters and renew the peace agreement with the Prophet.

Abu Sufyan met the Prophet at the mosque. He said to him: "Muhammad, I have come to ask you to confirm our peace agreement and to validate it for a longer period." The Prophet asked him, "Is this what you have come for? Have you caused any trouble?" Abu Sufyan said: "We are abiding by the peace agreement of al-Hudaybiyah. We strictly observe its terms." The Prophet did not say anything further. Abu Sufyan attempted to enter into a dialogue with the Prophet, but Muhammad kept silent. Abu Sufyan went to Abu Bakr and made the same request, but Abu Bakr told him that the matter was in the Prophet's hands. Abu Sufyan then went to Umar and tried to persuade him to speak to Muhammad on behalf of the Quraysh, but he received a stronger response from Umar. Abu Sufyan was persistent in his efforts and spoke to several of the leading companions, but all of them were firm in their reply: "We only abide by the Prophet's instructions. Whatever promise or pledge he gives, we will honor." Ali ibn Abi Talib, who was the last one to be contacted, told him: "God's Messenger has made up his mind to do something, and none of us can speak to him about it." When Abu Sufyan returned to Mecca, he reported his failure to the Quraysh.

The Conquest of Mecca فتح مكة **Ramadan 8 AH (January 630 CE)**

Shortly after Abu Sufyan returned to Mecca, the Prophet asked his wife A'isha to prepare his fighting equipment. When her father, Abu Bakr, came in and saw what she was doing, he asked her whether the Prophet wanted to mount a fresh expedition, but she did not reply. Abu Bakr then asked whether the Prophet's aim was the Byzantines, or the people of Najd, or the Quraysh. A'isha did not answer any of these questions. When the Prophet came in, Abu Bakr asked him the same questions. The Prophet confirmed that the target was the Quraysh. When Abu Bakr mentioned the peace agreement, the Prophet responded: "The Quraysh breached the agreement. Their action was a flagrant violation of the peace treaty; there is no reason to give them another chance. They have to pay a heavy price." Since meeting with the Khuza'ah delegation, the Prophet had made up his mind to march onto Mecca to put an end to the conflict with the Quraysh. In fact, he already had formulated his plans for the expedition.

The most important elements of the plan were to take the Quraysh by surprise and give them no time to prepare their defenses or build alliances. He asked Abu Bakr to keep this decision a secret. He told his closest companions to start the preparation immediately, but quietly. He put

Umar ibn al-Khattab in charge of security. Umar appointed patrols on all routes leading out of Madina or into it, and gave them instructions not to allow any suspect to pass through. These security measures succeeded in intercepting a letter that was on the way to Mecca saying: “Great preparations are being made here; Mecca may be the target.”

The surprise factor was not the only element in Muhammad’s military strategies. The Prophet was always concerned about bloodshed. Muhammad believed that his objective could be reached in a bloodless manner by striking at the moment when the enemy would not dare offer any resistance. Victory could be obtained by overwhelming the enemy rather than annihilating them. An essential part of his plan was to preserve the resources and energies of the Quraysh, and to redirect those resources in a constructive way toward enhancing the power of the Islamic state after victory.

The Prophet sent messages to the Muslims in other regions of Arabia to get ready for an expedition, but kept the target a secret. Most Muslims assumed that they would be marching to Syria in compensation for the setback in Mu’tah. The preparations for war could not be concealed, but the most important job was to keep the destination unknown and to divert attention away from the intended target. For this reason, the Prophet sent Abu Qatadah ibn Rab’i with a detachment towards **Idam, north of Madina**. It was also important to conceal the real strength of the forces. For this reason, the Prophet ordered the various contingents not to assemble in Madina, but to join the main army along the route to Mecca.

When the Muslims had completed their preparations and were ready to leave Madina, the Prophet’s uncle al-Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib and his family arrived in Madina to join the Muslims. There are many indications that al-Abbas had embraced Islam early, but stayed behind in Mecca to send intelligence to the Prophet. He also had the honor of providing water to the pilgrims at the Ka’bah.

On the tenth day of Ramadan in the eighth year of the Islamic calendar (**January 630 CE**), The Prophet marched at the head of a large army. As they made their way in the direction of Mecca, Muslims from various tribes joined the army in great numbers. All the Muhajirun and Ansar participated in this expedition; none of them was left behind. Raising such an army in those days was unprecedented; indeed, it was overwhelming. When the army reached a place called **Asfan, not far from Madina**, the Prophet asked for a jug of water. Raising it high to be seen by his army, he drank during the day and indicated that the soldiers were to follow his example; that is, they were allowed not to fast while traveling. He himself did not fast during the twelve-day march until he reached Mecca.

The Muslims continued marching until they reached **Marr al-Zahran, not far from Mecca**, where they camped. Remarkably, the Quraysh had not received any intelligence about the march until then. The Quraysh were terribly concerned about the Prophet’s plans, and they were sending people to gather information, but failed to receive any news about the Muslims’ activities. To increase the impact of his presence, the Prophet ordered every single soldier to light a fire. His strategy was to win the psychological war in hopes of averting a full-scale war. The fires created a magnificent scene that attracted the attention of Abu Sufyan, who went out that night to gather intelligence. Al-Abbas, the Prophet’s uncle, had mounted a mule and headed toward the city; arriving at a place called the **valley of Arak**, he heard people talking, and recognized the voice of Abu Sufyan. He called to him, identified himself, and walked toward him. When Abu Sufyan learned about the massive force that Muhammad had assembled, he agreed to go to the Muslim camp to meet the Prophet.

When al-Abbas arrived at the camp with Abu Sufyan, they went to the Prophet's tent. There was a heated discussion between al-Abbas and Umar ibn al-Khattab, who wanted to execute Abu Sufyan right on the spot. Al-Abbas told the Prophet that Abu Sufyan was under his protection. The Prophet then ordered his uncle to take Abu Sufyan to his tent, where he was to stay for the night, and to bring him back to him in the morning.

At dawn the Muslim soldiers started making their ablutions in preparation for prayer. As they prayed, led by the Prophet, Abu Sufyan watched in amazement as all the Muslims bowed when the Prophet bowed, and prostrated when he prostrated. Then he asked al-Abbas if they always did the Prophet's bidding, and understood what he had witnessed since arriving at the Muslims' camp. He realized that the Muslims were in no mood to compromise, and that none of them had any doubts about the justice of their cause. The Prophet was dearer to any one of them than their own parents or children. He realized that the Quraysh were no match for the Muslims in spirit or in material force. Furthermore, he feared that his head would be demanded as an initial payment for the Quraysh's treachery. All these thoughts were on Abu Sufyan's mind when he met the Prophet in the morning.

According to al-Abbas's account, the first question the Prophet put to Abu Sufyan was, "Is it not time for you to realize that there is no deity other than God?"

Abu Sufyan replied, "How forbearing, generous and kind you are! By God, had there been any deity alongside God, he would have been of some use to me by now."

The Prophet's second question was, "Is it not time for you to realize that I am God's Messenger?"

Abu Sufyan replied, "How forbearing, generous and kind you are! On this point, I still have some doubts."

At that moment, al-Abbas interfered and reminded Abu Sufyan of his difficult position, saying: "Come and declare your acceptance of Islam. Make it clear that you believe that there is no deity but God and that Muhammad is God's Messenger, before you are beheaded." Abu Sufyan was grateful for that reminder and made the declaration and became a Muslim. The Prophet made it clear that he viewed the Quraysh's treachery seriously, but he would rather see a peaceful end to the conflict. The Prophet then vouched for the safety of anyone who entered Abu Sufyan's house, and anyone who entered the Ka'bah or stayed in his home with his door locked. Abu Sufyan was now ready to go back to his people to inform them of the results of his negotiations with the Prophet. The Prophet asked al-Abbas to stand with Abu Sufyan at the bottom of the valley to watch the Muslim army marching toward Mecca.

Seeing the army marching, Abu Sufyan was impressed by their strength, especially when he saw the green battalion composed of the Muhajirin and the Ansar, all wearing their armor. Only their eyes were visible through their helmets. Abu Sufyan asked: "Who are those?" Abu al-Abbas answered: "That is God's Messenger at the head of the Muhajirin and the Ansar." Abu Sufyan said, "None can stand up to the force of this battalion. Your nephew has certainly acquired a great kingdom!" Al-Abbas corrected him: "He is a Prophet, not a king." Abu Sufyan replied, "Oh, yes, indeed." Al-Abbas then advised Abu Sufyan to go immediately to his people to deliver the Prophet's message.

The next morning, when Abu Sufyan returned to Mecca, he found the Meccans very restless, confused, and not knowing what to do. They were gathered in groups all over the city. Having no time to waste, Abu Sufyan shouted: "People of Quraysh, Muhammad is approaching at the head of an army for which you are no match. He who goes into Abu Sufyan's house is safe. He who

enters the mosque is safe, and he who stays in his home with his door locked will be safe.” The Meccans then dispersed and did what Abu Sufyan had asked them what to do.

The Muslims laid siege to Mecca from all sides. Mecca was situated in a valley, surrounded on all sides by high mountains. There was only one highway, which passed through the city from north to south. Two roads joined the main highway: the **Hajun Road** and **Kada Road**. As his army reached the outskirts of Mecca, the Prophet divided his men into four divisions, each entering Mecca from one side so that the whole city would be captured at the same time. **Al-Zubayr ibn al-Awwam** led the Muhajirin and the Ansar from the **north**. **Khalid ibn al-Walid** commanded the forces entering Mecca from the **south**. **S’ad ibn Ubadah** and his son **Qays bin S’ad** were at the head of the division entering from the **east**. **Abu Ubaydah Amir ibn al-Jarrah** was leading the division entering from the **west, with the Prophet himself in that division**. All commanders were under strict orders not to start fighting unless they were attacked. Muhammad, the supreme commander, was kept informed of the activities in the different detachments. When the Prophet came to know that one of his commanders had made remarks implying he would take revenge on the Quraysh, the commander was replaced. The Prophet declared: **“The honor of Mecca shall increase today, and its sanctity will in no way be violated, as it is there that the Qiblah of Islam is situated.”**

One of the divisions of the army commanded by Khalid ibn al-Walid was attacked by a group of Quraysh people led by Ikrimah ibn Abu Jahl. Khalid responded to their attack and his detachment killed twenty Meccans, while the Muslims lost two soldiers. When the Prophet learned about this fight, he was angry, and said: “Have I not given clear orders to all units not to fight?” He was then told that Khalid had been attacked by the Meccans and was forced to fight back. The Prophet said: “Whatever God brings is good.”

The Prophet was overwhelmed by the great victory God granted him. Only eight years had passed since he had been forced to flee from Mecca, and now he was returning to his city and facing no resistance. He bowed his head very low as he entered. His entry to Mecca was unparalleled in history. No conqueror would enter the capital of his enemy with excessive modesty and gratitude, as the Prophet did. Muhammad entered Mecca prostrating himself repeatedly on the back of his camel, reciting the *surah* entitled “al-Fath” (Victory) continuously. The Prophet was thankful for God’s graciousness; he felt that it was all achieved by the will of God.

When the authority of the Muslim army was established in Mecca, a tent was set up for Muhammad in al-Hujun. Then he went straight to the Ka’bah, riding his camel. When he arrived there, he touched the Black Stone with a short stick he was carrying and raised his voice: “God is the most supreme.” The Muslims echoed his cry. Then he started his *tawaf* on his camel, and upon the completion of the seven rounds, he dismounted and prayed at Maqam Ibrahim. The Prophet then called in Uthman ibn Talhah, who kept the keys of the Ka’bah, and asked him to open the door. There were 360 idols on and around the Ka’bah; they all were removed.

The Prophet prayed inside the Ka’bah, and then addressed the Quraysh:

There is no deity other than God, who has fulfilled His promise, supported His servant, and defeated the confederate tribes on His own. No practice of pride or privilege nor any revenge or claim to any property is valid except that of the care of Ka’bah and the provision of drinking water to pilgrims. People of Quraysh, God has taken away from you the passionate pride of ignorance which made you

attach great value and honor to your ancestors and value them highly. All people are the descendants of Adam, and Adam was created from clay.

He then recited:

O people, We created you all from a male and female, and made you races and tribes, that you may know one another. The best among you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous. Allah is all-knowing, well-experienced.

(Chapter 26, The Private Room)

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ
أَتْقَاكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ (13)

سورة الحجرات (26)

Then he asked the Quraysh, “What sort of judgment do you think I am going to pass against you?”

They replied: “You are a benevolent one. You are an honorable brother and the son of an honorable brother of ours.”

He said: “You may go free. You are all pardoned.”

Ali ibn Abi Talib, the Prophet’s cousin, came to him with the keys to the Ka’bah in his hand and requested, “Messenger of God, give us the privilege of looking after the Ka’bah in addition to our present one of providing drinking water for pilgrims.”

The Prophet refused, and called Uthman ibn Talhah. He handed him the keys back and said, “This is a day of honesty, when promises are honored.”

The Meccans, who had been unceasingly hostile to Muhammad and his followers for twenty years, did not expect to receive such treatment from the Prophet. To be pardoned was beyond their wildest dreams. He spared their lives, guaranteed their safety, and protected their properties. This treatment achieved an instant change of attitude in every Meccan. They were amazed by the changes Islam made in their fellow Arabs’ behavior. They admired the Muslims’ discipline and dedication, and the bonds Islam had created within the Muslim community. The Meccans now had the chance to learn more about Islam, which prompted many of them to come to Muhammad to declare their adoption of the faith; the majority wanted to become Muslims. The Prophet, therefore, sat at the hill of al-Safa and received their pledges of embracing Islam. No one was forced to come. The Prophet not only captured Mecca; he also captured the hearts of all Meccans.

Only a few people were under penalty of death for serious crimes committed against Muslims. One of them was Ikrimah ibn Abu Jahl, who had attacked Khalid’s forces. When the Muslim army had entered Mecca, Ikrimah had fled to Yemen. His wife, Umm Hakim bunt al-Harith, became a Muslim. She went to the Prophet and asked him to pardon Ikrimah and grant him safety. He granted her request. She then went to Yemen and brought Ikrimah back to the Prophet, and he adopted Islam.

The Prophet stayed nearly twenty days in Mecca, making all the decisions and arrangements needed for the Muslim community of Mecca. He took all measures to remove the idols from the homes of the new Muslims. He also sent several expeditions to the surrounding area to remove

all idols. Khalid ibn al-Walid went to Nakhlah to destroy al-Uzza, Amr ibn al-As went to Hudhayl to destroy its idol Suwa, and S'ad ibn Zayd was sent to destroy Manat.

The Battle of Hunayn

Shawal 8 AH January 630 CE

Muhammad's conquest of Mecca was shocking to many tribes in Arabia, especially when the news spread that the Quraysh had embraced Islam. Two powerful tribes of Hijaz—the Hawazin, who lived in a mountainous area close to Ta'if, and the tribe of Thaqif, whose home was the fertile oasis of Ta'if—decided to go to war against the Prophet and his new Meccan followers. Other tribes of Hijaz joined this coalition, including the Nasr, the Jusham, S'ad ibn Bakr, and groups of the Hilal. The allied forces of these tribes agreed to give the overall command to Malik ibn Awf of the Hawazin tribe. Malik was a young man of immense courage who was well respected by all the clans; he managed to gather about twenty thousand soldiers. He asked each fighting man to bring to the battlefield his family and all their wealth, including camels, cattle, and silver, believing that his men would have no choice but to fight hard to protect their women, children, and property.

As soon as Muhammad heard about the enemy marching toward Mecca, he organized a large force consisting of the ten thousand Muslims who had marched on Mecca and two thousand Meccans. Muhammad left Mecca on January 27, 630 CE, and camped close to the enemy at a place called Hunayn on the evening of January 30. The next morning, the Muslims started their march to meet the enemy forces. As they approached the entrance of the valley, they encountered a heavy shower of arrows aimed at them from all directions, which disrupted their march and caused chaos in their lines. It took Muhammad and a hundred men from the Muhajirun and the Ansar to rally behind the Prophet and to counteract the enemy's assault, forcing the Hawazin to retreat and to flee. The Muslims chased them and confronted them again at a valley called **Awtas**. Many of the Hawazin were killed; the rest fled and took refuge at the fortified city of Ta'if. The events of this encounter are mentioned in the Quran:

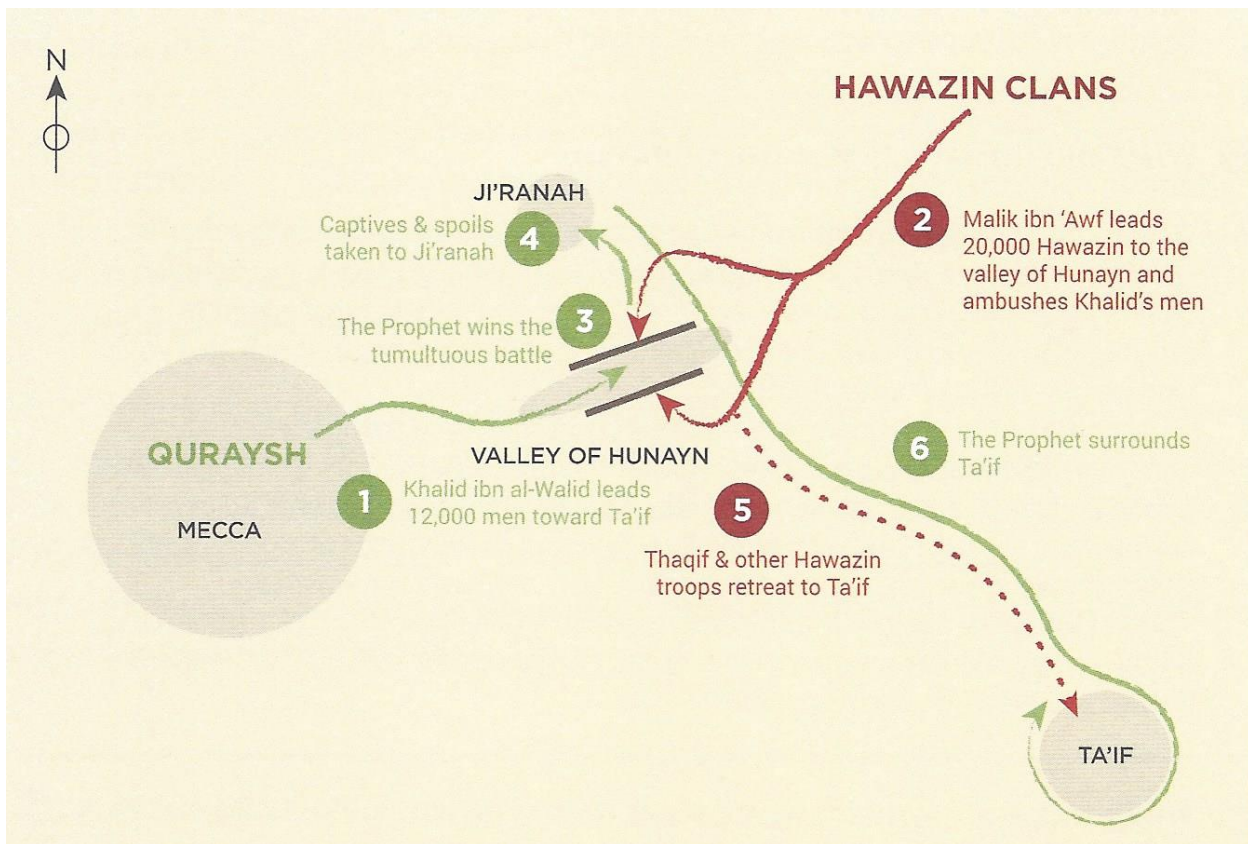
Allah has given you victory in numerous regions; but on the day of Hunayn, your great number impressed you, but availed you nothing; and the land, as spacious as it was, narrowed for you; and you turned your backs in retreat.

Then Allah sent down his serenity upon His Messenger, and upon the believers; and He sent down troops you did not see; and He punished those who disbelieved. Such is the recompense of the disbelievers.

(Chapter 10, Surah 9:25–26, Repentance)

لَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ فِي مَوَاطِنَ كَثِيرَةٍ ۖ وَيَوْمَ حُنَيْنٍ إِذْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ كَثْرَتُكُمْ فَلَمْ تُغْنِ عَنْكُمْ شَيْئًا وَضَاقَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْأَرْضُ بِمَا رَحُبَتْ ثُمَّ وَلَّيْتُم مُّدْبِرِينَ (25) ثُمَّ أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ جُنُودًا لَمْ تَرَوْهَا وَعَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۗ وَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ (26)

سورة التوبة (10)



Ta'if, the home of the Thaqif tribe, was a fortified city, and its inhabitants were well prepared. A siege was imposed on the city; however, after twenty days, the Prophet realized that a prolonged siege would be of little use. It was also clear to him that the Thaqif were not in a position to plan an offensive war against the Muslim state. Therefore Muhammad decided to leave them alone for the time being, especially since the consecrated months were about to begin.

The Muslims had gained great wealth from the Hawazin. All their women and children became captives. The spoils consisted of **twenty-four thousand camels, forty thousand sheep, and four thousand ounces of silver**. When the battle ended, all the prisoners and the spoils were gathered at **al-Ji'ranah** valley, a short distance from Mecca. When the Prophet arrived at al-Ji'ranah, he received a delegation from the Hawazin headed by Malik ibn Awf himself, declaring their acceptance of Islam and appealing for mercy. The Prophet responded to their request and freed the women and children. He acted mercifully, demonstrating forgiveness from a point of strength in his response to their appeal. The remainder of the spoils were divided among the Muslim fighters, with the Quraysh leaders receiving a significant portion.

The Prophet went out of his way to please the new Muslims who adopted Islam after the conquest of Mecca and participated in the Battle of Hunayn. He felt that it was important to gain such people for Islam if Islam was to be established firmly in the rest of Arabia. Such people needed encouragement and feeling that they would not lose materially if they were to join the camp of Islam. How else would a man like Abu Sufyan, who until the day before had been a sworn enemy of Islam, be genuinely reconciled to its message and be expected to defend it, if he was not reassured that what he had lost in position he would recover in wealth? Abu Sufyan, his

sons Yazid and Mu'awiyah, and the other Quraysh leaders each received each a hundred camels and forty ounces of silver. Safwan ibn Umayyah, one of the prominent Quraysh members, had asked to be given two months to think about becoming a Muslim, but he was given the same share in addition to a large piece of land. Safwan participated in the Battle of Hunan as a non-Muslim Meccan. He also provided the army with a hundred shields and accompanying arms as a loan. In response to Muhammad's generosity, Abu Sufyan said: "You are indeed very generous; may my parents be sacrificed for your sake." Safwan, when he received the gift, said: "Kings do not make such gifts willingly; no one can give so generously but a Prophet. I declare that there is no deity other than God, and that you are God's Messenger." **According to the Quran, God has made "those whose hearts are to be won over" one of the eight groups to whom *zakat* can be given.**

One of Muhammad's greatest achievements after the conquest of Mecca was the genuine reconciliation with the leaders of Mecca, the men who few months before had been his implacable enemies. It is not surprising to find that Abu Sufyan helped with the destruction of the idol of al-Lat at Ta'if. Later he is said to have been present at the Battle of Yarmouk in 636. It is more surprising to learn that after Muhammad's death, when there was disaffection in some of the tribes, Suhayl ibn Amr was credited with being chiefly responsible for keeping the Meccans loyal. Most interesting of all is the case of Ikrimah, the son of Abu Jahl who was at first proscribed by Muhammad, then pardoned. He later became a keen Muslim and was given several important military and administrative posts. His zeal for Islam was such that remarks like the following are attributed to him: "Whatever money I spent fighting against you, I shall spend as much in the way of God"; "I risked my life for al-Lat and al-Uzza; shall I hold back from risking it for God?" Ikrimah died as a martyr in one of the battles in Syria.

The remainder of the spoils were divided among the Muslim fighters, with the Quraysh leaders receiving a significant portion. A horseman received three times as much, as was customary. None of the Ansar, be he a chief or an ordinary member of his clan, was given any special gift. Several Ansar leaders expressed their concerns and dissatisfaction with this. The chief of the Ansar, S'ad ibn Ubadah, went to the Prophet and said to him: "Messenger of God, you have distributed the spoils of war among your own people and the other Arabian tribes, but no such gifts were made to any person among the Ansar; the clans of the Ansar have taken your action to heart." The Prophet appeared to be surprised that the Ansar felt this way, so he asked S'ad to assemble these clans in a nearby place and to let him know when they had assembled; the Prophet then addressed them, saying: "People of the Ansar, are you aggravated at a trifle of this world which I have given out to certain people in order to win their hearts over to Islam and left you to rely on your faith? Are you not satisfied, people of the Ansar, that other people should go to their quarters with sheep and camels while you go back to your own quarters with God's Messenger?" As they heard the Prophet's words, tears sprang to their eyes. They were so touched that their beards were wet with tears. They said: "We are satisfied with God's Messenger as our share." The Prophet then finished sharing out the spoils among the different tribes who had participated in the war.

From al-Ji'ranah, the Prophet Muhammad went to make the lesser pilgrimage (*umrah*) at Mecca, then started his journey back to Madina after being away for three months, between the month of Ramadan and the month of Dhul-Hijjah. The period of time that followed the Prophet's return to Madina was a peaceful one, during which only few small expeditions were sent to certain tribes to convey the message of Islam, or to destroy certain famous idols. Ali ibn Abi Talib commanded an expedition of 150 men to destroy an idol called al-Fuls which was

worshipped by the tribe of Tayy. The expedition destroyed the idol and captured a number of people, among them a woman called Sufanah bint Hatim. Her father had the reputation of being the most generous man in Arabia. Her brother, Addis, was the leader of his people; he had managed to flee before the arrival of the Muslims. Sufanah was kept in a confined place at the doorstep of the mosque. One day, as the Prophet passed by her, she addressed him: "Messenger of God, my parents are dead and my guardian had disappeared. Be generous to me, may God be generous to you." The Prophet asked her who her guardian was, and she said, "Adiy ibn Hatim." The Prophet said, "The one who has fled from God and His Messenger?"

The following day when the Prophet passed by Sufanah, he stopped and told her, "I set you free. Do not, however, leave hastily until some trustworthy people from your own folk come along and you are sure that they will take you home. When such people come along, let me know." When Sufanah was ready to leave, she went to the Prophet and said, "Messenger of God, a group of my people whom I believe to be trustworthy have arrived." The Prophet provided her good clothes and a camel as well as some money.

Susannah joined her brother Adiy in Syria. One day, Adiy asked his sister about the Prophet. She said: "I think you would be well advised to join him as soon as you can. If the man is truly a Prophet, the earlier you join him, the better for you. If he is only a king, you will not suffer any harm if you join him, considering your position and personality." Soon afterward, Adiy traveled to Madina to meet the Prophet.

Adiy described his meeting with the Prophet:

When I greeted him, he asked me my name, and I said, "Adiy ibn Haiti." He then stood up and took me to his home. As we walked to his place, an elderly woman stopped him. He stood with her for a long while as she explained what she wanted. I thought to myself, "He is certainly not a king." He then took me into his rooms and gave me a cushion, saying, "Sit on this." I said, "No, you sit on it." He said, "It is yours." I sat down on the cushion and he sat on the floor. Again I thought to myself, "He is certainly not a king." He then said to me, "Tell me, Adiy ibn Hatim, have you not been a Rekusi [a follower of a creed which was in between Christianity and the religion of the followers of Zachariah]?" I answered in the affirmative. He then asked me, "But you nevertheless took for yourself one-quarter of the spoils of war gained by your people?" I again answered in the affirmative. He said, "But that was forbidden according to your religion." I said: "It was, indeed." I knew then that he was a Prophet sent by God, for he knew what nobody else did.

The Prophet then said to me: "Adiy, you may be reluctant to embrace this religion because you see that its followers are poor. By God, it will be only a little while before they will have money in such abundance that there will be nobody to take it. You may stop short because their enemies are numerous, while they were few. By God, in a little while you will hear of a woman traveling by herself on her camel from **Qadisiyyah** [in Iraq] to visit the mosque in Mecca, fearing nothing. Again, you may be reluctant to accept Islam because you see that the power and kingdoms belong to other people. By God, little time will lapse before you hear that the white palaces in the land of Babylon have surrendered to them." When I heard his words, I declared my acceptance of Islam.

Arabia after Hunayn

The most important change that happened after the conquest of Mecca and the victory of Hunayn was the change in the attitude of Arabia toward Islam. Upon the return of the Prophet to Madina, in the early part of the year 9 AH, he received delegations from various parts of Arabia. This year, 9 AH, became known as **The Year of Deputations (A'am al-Wufud)** عام الوفود. All the delegations had different missions; some of them merely wanted to gather information about Islam and the nature of the society it had established; others came to pledge their loyalty without committing themselves to being Muslims; but a significant number came to declare that they had accepted the faith of Islam and to tell the Prophet that he could rely on their support. The Prophet received all those delegations warmly, and dealt with them tactfully. He learned from his close companions, especially Abu Bakr, the internal politics of the various groups and the relations between the subdivisions of any group. There was no question of coercing or pressuring any group of people, or any individual, to accept Islam. It was sufficient, from the Islamic point of view, for any tribe or community to declare its willingness to live in peace with Islam, not impeding its progress or conspiring against it, to maintain the friendliest of relations with the Muslim community. Delegations who accepted Islam were assured that they were part of the Muslim community, enjoying all the rights of Muslims. With each such delegation, the Prophet sent one or more of his companions to teach them the essentials of their new faith and to help them lead an Islamic life.

Those delegations continued to arrive, one after another, throughout the tenth year of the Prophet's settlement in Madina. The net result of that year was indeed that the whole of Arabia was now more or less loyal to Islam.

Tribal Relationships with Islam

The biographies of the Prophet present us with long lists of the tribes that sent deputations to Madina. It is not clear from these biographies what obligations these tribes had toward the Muslim state of Madina. The Muslim historians assumed that the arrival of the deputation to Madina signified the tribes' adoption of Islam and the acceptance of the obligation to **perform the prayer, *salat* صلاة, and to pay the tax, *zakat***. However, this was not the same between the Arab tribes with Madina in the different regions of Arabia. For a better understanding of this relationship, we need to study and evaluate the historical facts of the different regions: Hijaz, Najd, and the coastal eastern and southern Arabia.

The Hijaz

After the surrender of Mecca, the prominent leaders of Quraysah were treated with great respect by Muhammad. Having succeeded in bringing the Meccans to the fold of Islam, the leaders of Quraysh were given generous gifts by the Prophet from the spoils won in the Battle of Hunayn against the Hawazin. The Fath فتح (conquest of Mecca) enhanced the Muslims' position in Arabia, and proved to be just as beneficial to the Meccans. By joining the Muslim camp, the skillful Quraysh men dominated the affairs of the Muslim community in a short time. Muhammad knew how to employ the Meccan skill and talent in the service of the Muslim state. The successful Battle of Hunayn against the powerful Hawazin was the first cooperative achievement of Muhammad and his new allies. With the main towns in the Hijaz lined up behind Muhammad, the nomadic tribes in Hijaz followed suit. **As a leader of all Hijaz, the Prophet**

wielded more power than anyone else in Arabia. The winning of the Meccans to his side and, consequently, the surrender of the Hijaz were Muhammad's greatest political achievements.

Najd

In the area to the east of Madina there were several groups of tribes, the most important of which was **Banu Hanifah**. To the northeast there were groups of **Ghatafan**, **Tayyi**, and **Asad**; further away were the **Tamim**.

The **Banu Hanifah** was by far the strongest and most important tribe in Yamama. **Hawdhah ibn Ali**, who carried the title **Malik** ملك, was its chief and the local agent of the Persians in Yamama. Hawdhah was known as **Dhu al-Taj**, the crowned, and was in charge of the yearly royal caravan from Persia to Yemen. He was among the six "kings" to whom Muhammad wrote letters urging them to adopt Islam. Hawdhah's response to Muhammad's letter was unsatisfactory. According to one version, Hawdhah stipulated that Muhammad had to share rule over Arabia with him, while according to another version he asked Muhammad to appoint him as his successor. Muhammad rejected Hawdhah's request. Upon Hawdhah's death, **Musaylamah**, who succeeded him, declared his opposition to Muhammad. He was supported by the majority of Banu Hanifah. A small section of Banu Hanifah, probably nomadic, led by **Thumamamah ibn Uthal**, supported Muhammad and played a useful role on the side of Muslims during the Riddah.

The area immediately to the northeast of Madina was inhabited by several nomadic tribes, including the **Asad**, **the Tayy**, and **the Ghatafan**. Each of these tribes was divided into several smaller clans, who established different alliances and were always engaged in bloody wars among themselves. These clans were outside the influence of either Persia or Byzantium. The clan of **Fazarah**, a sect of the Ghatafan, was one of the largest and strongest of the clans. **Uyaynah ibn Hisn**, the leader of the Fazarah, adopted Islam after the conquest of Mecca. He was known to be an independent chief whose main interest was looking after his own. He had participated in al-Khandaq (the Battle of the Trench) on the side of Mecca, but in Khaybar and Hunayn, he was on Muhammad's side. The deputation to Madina from Fazarah came without Uyaynah. It appears that the Prophet Muhammad had established relationship with other chiefs of Fazarah, and managed to neutralize Uyaynah. The leaders of the tribe of Tayy were strong supporters of the Prophet. **Talhah**, the leader of the Asad, was reluctant to ally himself with Islam. **Dirar ibn al-Azwar**, one of the chiefs of Asad, was an early convert to Islam.

The tribe of Tamim had settled in a large area between Yamama and Hira. The tribe was divided into many small groups led by rival chiefs. One section after another sent a deputation to Madina in the year 9 AH. Malik ibn Nuweira, the chief of the Banu Yarbu, a large sect of the Tamim, embraced Islam. The Prophet appointed him as an officer over his clan, responsible for the collection of taxes.

It is accurate to conclude that the Prophet did not gain complete control over the area to the east and northeast of Madina. A **number of tribes sought alliances with the Muslim state.** **Other** chiefs of a number of the tribes in this region allied themselves with Muhammad, but remained in complete authority over their own affairs. Muhammad's rising power in the Hijaz left these tribes with little choice but to join him. The majority of the tribe of Banu Hannah, the largest tribe in this region, under the leadership of Museilima, opposed Islam.

The Coastal Area (Eastern and Southern Arabia)

The coastal parts of Arabia—**Bahrain**, **Uman** and **Yemen**—were under Persian rule. In Bahrain and Uman, local chiefs ruled the Arab tribes in the name of the Persian king. In Yemen, the

Persian Abna', sons of Persian fathers and Arab mothers, made up the ruling class. When the Persian Empire was strong, Persia was able to support its agents in these areas. At the beginning of the seventh century CE, Persia defeated Byzantium and between 611 CE and 620 CE was able to achieve major victories against Byzantium, seizing most of Anatolia, all of Syria-Palestine, and Egypt. But in 622 CE, Heraclius, the Byzantine emperor, began his military campaign against the Persians, and was able to regain all those territories in 628 CE. As Persia rapidly weakened after 628 CE, their agents were looking for outside help and support to keep their position. It appeared that since Persia could not offer the badly needed support, those kings ملوك embraced Islam, and agreed to pay *zakat*, but maintained their independence.

In **Bahrain** there were three Arab tribes: **Abd al-Qays**, **Bakr ibn Wa'il**, and part of the **Tamim**. The ruler of Bahrain was **al-Mundhir ibn Sawa** of the Tamim. He was one of the six kings who received letters from Muhammad after al-Hudaybiyah. In **Uman**, the tribe of **Azd** was the dominant tribe; it was ruled by the two sons of **al-Julanda**, **Jaifer** and **Abbad** from **Banu al-Mustakhir**, and they also received letters from Muhammad. Both Jaifer and Abbad embraced Islam. Amr ibn al-'As was sent to Uman to attend to the affairs of Muslims and their education. **Badhan**, who was the Persian governor of Yemen, received a similar letter from Muhammad. When he embraced Islam, he was retained by the Prophet as governor; upon his death, his son was recognized as his successor.

As early as 611 CE or as late as 624 CE, a battle had taken place at **Dhu-Qar** where regular Persian troops had been defeated by a force of Arabs led by the chief of the Shayban, a large division of the tribe of Bakr. This victory inspired the Arabs and gave them confidence in their ability to face the Persians. After the defeat of the Persians by Heraclius, these Arab tribes in the interior regions of East Arabia began to think about carrying out raids in Mesopotamia again. About the same time, the expansion of the Muslim state of Madina brought these tribes to the attention of the Prophet. Some of these tribes formed alliances with Madina without being asked to become Muslims. In 630 CE, Muhammad sensed the growing weakness of the Persian Empire, and decided to build strong relations with Arab tribes along the borders of Persia in preparation for future expansion toward Iraq.

W. Montgomery Watt sums up the status of the Islamic state in 632 CE as a conglomeration of tribes in alliance with Muhammad on varying terms. The tribes in the Hijaz were all firmly united with Muhammad and all professed Islam. In Najd, northeast of Madina, sections of the tribes embraced Islam and allied themselves with the Prophet and paid taxes. The majority of the Banu Hanifah, east of Madina, opposed Islam. In Yemen and the rest of the southwest, many groups professed Islam, but they generally constituted only a part of each tribe, and in all were probably less than half the population. The position in the southeast and along the Gulf was similar. At that time, on the Syrian border beyond the Gulf of Akaba, there had been little success in detaching tribes from the Byzantine emperor. Although the Prophet Muhammad had not made himself the ruler of all Arabia, he had to a great extent unified the Arabs. Through the religious and political system he had created, the Arabs became aware of themselves as an ethnological and cultural unit. Islam provided an economic, social, and political system. Religion was an integral part of it, since it gave the ideas on which the whole was based. This system attracted men of the nomadic tribes in various ways. All Muslims were equal, and Muhammad treated his followers with the courtesy and respect shown by a nomadic chief to his fellow-tribesmen. The Arabs of that day certainly thought of the system as a whole, and were incapable of distinguishing its economic, political, and religious aspects. They could not have the economic

and political benefits of membership without the religious profession of belief in God and His messenger.

The Byzantine Threat and the Invasion of Tabuk

(Rajab, 9 AH/October 630 CE)

Greater Syria was an important part of the Byzantine Empire. Southern Syria, including the areas known today as Palestine and Jordan, was governed by Arab rulers from the tribe of Ghassan who exercised limited authority as agents of the Byzantine emperor. Before Islam, in the late sixth century and the beginning of the seventh century CE, Byzantium viewed Arabia as a vast desert which could present no danger to its empire. They assigned their agents, the Ghassanids, the duty of protecting their southern borders from potential raids. After defeating the Seleucids, in the first century BC, the Roman emperor **Augustus** dispatched the commander **Aelius Gallus** to South Arabia, intending to control trade coming from India to the Middle East through South Arabia. Gallus's military mission failed; he was forced to retreat after only one week of his siege of the city of Ma'rib, due to sickness and exhaustion of his soldiers. This failure prompted the Romans to establish a maritime route linking the Mediterranean world with Arabia and India. They also utilized the services of their allies, the Abyssinians, for the protection of their interest in the region.

The radical changes in Arabia as a result of the establishment of the Muslim state in Madina alarmed Byzantium. The battle of Mu'tah was a clear indication of what this state represented. Although that battle technically ended in a military defeat, the Byzantines witnessed how a small Muslim force was able to confront a much larger Byzantine army, and how they were able to withdraw in an orderly fashion after they inflicted heavy losses on their enemy. Byzantium also watched the events in Arabia over the following eighteen months as Muhammad was able to defeat his opponents and expand the Muslim state to include almost all of Arabia.

The Prophet received information from Syria that the Byzantines were raising a large force to attack the Muslim state. He also learned that the Ghassan, the Byzantines' agents in Syria, were in contact with some of the Hypocrites in Madina in an effort to bolster opposition to the Prophet. More intelligence reached Muhammad, indicating that forces from the Arab tribes of Lakhm, Judham, Amilah, and Ghassan were mobilized and gathered at the plains of Balqa, in Palestine, in preparation for a march toward Madina.

The Arab tribes along the road to Syria were less open to converting to Islam than the tribes in other parts of Arabia that had accepted Islam and allied themselves with Muhammad. The northern tribes were largely Christians, and they had also a long history of association with the Byzantines. The prestige of the Byzantine Empire stood high after the decisive victory over the Persians and the restoration of the **Holy Rood** (a relic of the True Cross) to Jerusalem in March of 630. The Prophet realized that to win over the tribes in the north, along the road to Syria, he had to demonstrate greater power by launching an attack against Byzantium in Palestine. The mounting of a huge expedition would be a counterblast to what Heraclius had done in 630. So the Prophet announced his decision in the month of Rajab, and called the nation to start preparations for the march to face the enemy in Palestine, a journey of up to a thousand kilometers on camelback. The call to arms was spread all over Arabia, so that all new Muslims could join up.

The Prophet faced two choices: He could allow the Byzantines to penetrate into the desert of Arabia, and meet them at a place of his choice. Or he could launch an attack against them in Palestine. The Prophet chose to march to Palestine. That choice was not an easy one. This new

state, which had been established less than ten years prior, and which had united Arabia only four months prior, had decided to attack one of two superpowers that controlled the world. The Prophet announced his decision in the month of Rajab, which was the hottest time of the summer. He called the nation to start preparations for the march to face the enemy in Palestine—a journey of up to a thousand kilometers on camelback. The call was spread all over Arabia, so that all new Muslims could join up.

This was the first time that the Prophet had announced the destination of an expedition. In the past he had always planned his expeditions in a way that allowed him to take his enemy by surprise. The difficult nature of this expedition required him to inform his followers how serious and challenging this mission would be so they could prepare themselves for the urgency of the critical situation. The Prophet called upon the *umma* (community) to respond to the call of jihad to defend the cause of Islam against the aggression of Byzantium. He encouraged the rich to be generous in providing resources for the war. The Muslims responded well and donated thousands of camels, horses, and silver. The women donated their jewelry to help equip the fighters with arms and transport. The Prophet was very pleased by the generosity of his companions, saying, “The one who has equipped the ‘hardship army’ has been forgiven his past sins.” (The “**hardship army**” was the title given by the Muslims and historians to that expedition.)

As soon as the Muslims heard the Messenger’s call, they rushed to comply with his orders. Tribes and clans from all regions of Arabia began pouring into Madina. Almost all Muslims responded positively. The needy and poor who could not afford a ride came to Muhammad asking for one so that they would be able to share in the fight against the Byzantines. Only the Hypocrites abstained from spending and stayed behind.

Once the army was equipped, the Prophet started the march northward to **Tabuk**. The army was composed of **thirty thousand fighters**; the Muslims had never marched in such great numbers before. It was a long and difficult journey in the middle of a hot summer; however, they were patient and persistent.

An interesting measure of the Muslims’ growing wealth and strength, relative to their strength at the battle of Mu’tah, is the number of men and the number of horses on their previous expeditions. At **Uhud** in 624, they had more than three hundred men and only **two horses**. In 626, in their march to **Badr** to meet Abu Sufyan, a year after Uhud, they had 1,500 men and only **ten** horses. Two years later, in 628, at **Khaybar**, there was about the same number of men, but **two hundred** horses. In March 629 CE, at **Mu’tah**, the Muslim army comprised three thousand men. At **Hunayn** in 630, seven hundred Emigrants had **three hundred** horses, while four thousand Ansar had another **five hundred** horses. In the expedition of Tabuk they had thirty thousand men and **ten thousand** horses.

When the Muslim army arrived at Tabuk it encamped, ready to confront the Byzantine forces and their allies. However, they found no trace of any Byzantine forces. Either the Byzantines had withdrawn their forces when they heard of the strength of the Muslim army—a force ten times greater than the one they had faced at Mu’tah—or the information received by the Prophet was not correct. As the information about the mobilization of Byzantine forces had come from Coptic traders from Egypt doing business in Arabia, it was most likely that the Byzantines had decamped. Their forfeit gave the Muslim army a great victory; they gained a tremendous political and military reputation in Syria as well as at home in Arabia, far better than if their victory had come in a direct military confrontation.

The head of the Aylah, Yuhannah ibn Ru'bah, visited the Muslims' camp, made peace with the Prophet, and paid him the tribute (*al-jizyah*). The Prophet wrote him a document stating the following:

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Beneficent, this is a pledge of security given by God and Muhammad the Prophet, God's Messenger, to Yuhannah ibn Ru'bah and the people of Aylah, and to their boats and their caravans traveling in land and on sea. They are given this covenant with God and with Muhammad the Prophet which includes all those who are with them, be they of people of Syria or the people of Yemen or sailors. If any of them commits an offense, his money does not prevent his punishment in person. It is good for whoever takes it. They are not allowed to prevent people from making use of any spring of water that they have on land or sea.

A delegation from **the people of Jabra and the people of Adhruh** came to the Prophet and agreed to pay the Muslims a protection tax. The Prophet wrote them a document outlining the terms of their agreement.

Tabuk was not very far from **Dumat al-Jandal**, which at the time was ruled by a man from the Kindah tribe, **Ukaydir ibn Abd al-Malik**. The Prophet sent a detachment under the command of Khalid ibn al-Walid to bring Ukaydir to him. Khalid captured Ukaydir and brought him to Tabuk. The Prophet spared his life and entered into a peace agreement with him in exchange for a payment of two thousand camels, eight hundred heads of cattle, four hundred coats of armor, and four hundred lances. The agreement guaranteed Ukaydir's people their safety and the freedom to go about their life in the way they pleased. These agreements ensured that the Muslim state in Madina became more shielded from any trouble from the northern parts of Arabia.

The Prophet spent twenty days in Tabuk, then he consulted with his companions on whether to move on to Syria or return to Madina. He made it clear to his companions that he had not received any command from God in this matter. Umar advised him to return to Madina this year and wait for future events as they would be determined by God.

The Muslim army returned from Tabuk victoriously. The Prophet's march from Madina to Tabuk was in Rajab, and his return was in Ramadan. This expedition took fifty days, twenty of which were spent in Tabuk, and thirty traveling to Tabuk and back to Madina. On his return from Tabuk, on a mountain road, twelve Hypocrites tried to assassinate him while he was passing along that road with only two companions while the rest of the Muslims had already gone down into the bottom of the valley. When they heard the sound of people coming toward the Prophet from behind, one of the companions, **Hudhaifah ibn al-Yaman**, who was sent by the Prophet to see what was going on, saw them and stroked their mounts' faces with a crook in his hand. They fled. The Prophet and his two companions caught up with the army. As they approached Madina, the Prophet sent two of the companions to destroy the mosque built by the Hypocrites outside the city in order to be a center of conspiracy against Islam.

The army was received in Madina by all the Muslims as a great and victorious force. Women and children were singing, expressing great happiness and pride. When the Prophet had settled back in his city, he began to receive delegations from all regions of Arabia declaring their acceptance of Islam. Thaqif representatives came to Madina for negotiations with the Prophet. He gave them no concessions on any of the issues they presented. They had no alternative but

complete surrender and acceptance of Islam. The Thaqif delegation accepted the Prophet's terms. A delegation from Madina under the leadership of Khalid ibn al-Walid arrived at Ta'if shortly after the Thaqif returned to their city. **Khalid and al-Mughirah ibn Shu'bah** destroyed the idol al-Lat, breaking her into pieces while all the Thaqif watched. They then dug up the foundation and removed all the jewelry that had decorated the idol and took it to Madina.

The Tabuk expedition marks a new phase in the history of Islam. It is true that this expedition was a response to a threat, but the expansion of the Muslim state beyond Arabia to include the Fertile Crescent had always been on Muhammad's mind. Islam was a call to Arabs and non-Arabs, aimed at a spiritual union that embraced all of humanity in all the countries of earth. The expedition to Tabuk, then, was a reconnaissance of the route to Syria, and an assertion that the Muslim sphere of influence extended beyond the borders of Arabia. It was clearly a strong and serious challenge to the Byzantine Empire. The treaties with the Christian communities on and near the Gulf of Aqaba, guaranteeing them protection in return for payments of tribute, imply that this assertion of a sphere of influence was intended to be permanent. These Christian communities were not asked to become Muslims, but only to submit to the Islamic state on certain conditions—mainly that the payment of an annual tribute, in money or in kind, would allow them to manage their own affairs as they had done before, and in their relations with outsiders they would be under the protection of the Islamic state.

Upon returning from Tabuk, the Prophet was firm in dealing with the opposition in Madina. Three incidents connected with the Tabuk expedition shed light on the nature and extent of such opposition: the assassination plot against him on his return to Madina; the "Mosque of Dissension," which the Hypocrites built outside the city to be a center of conspiracy against Islam; and the Hypocrites who had stayed away from the expedition, and who were behind the first two issues.

The Declaration of No Place for Unbelievers in Arabia (Dhul-Hijjah, 9 AH/December 630 CE)

The Prophet and the Muslim army returned to Madina from Tabuk in the month of Ramadan. Two months later, the Prophet sent Abu Bakr to carry out the pilgrimage as the emir of Muslim pilgrims. Three hundred Muslims from Madina accompanied Abu Bakr; the Prophet also sent camels to be slaughtered in Mecca on his behalf. The purpose of this particular pilgrimage was to emphasize the difference between the Islamic way of pilgrimage and that of the unbelievers. The unbelievers used to do their *tawaf* naked. Islam prohibited this tradition and required the Muslims to cover their bodies.

After Abu Bakr left Madina, a new *surah* entitled "Repentance" was revealed:

A declaration of immunity from Allah and His Messenger to the polytheists with whom you had made treaty.

So travel the land for four months, and know that you cannot escape Allah, and that Allah will disgrace the disbelievers.

And a proclamation from Allah and His Messenger to the people on the day of the Greater Pilgrimage, that Allah has disowned the polytheists, and so did His Messenger. If you repent, it will be better for you. But if you turn away, know that you cannot escape Allah. And announce to those who disbelieve a painful punishment.

Except for those among the polytheists with whom you had made a treaty, and did not violate any of its terms, not aided anyone against you. So fulfill the treaty with them to the end of its term. Allah loves the righteous.

When the Sacred Months have passed, kill the polytheists wherever you find them. And capture them, and besiege them, and lie in wait for them at every ambush. But if they repent, and perform the prayers, and pay the alms, then let them go on their way. Allah is Most Forgiving, Most merciful.

(Chapter 10, Repentance)

بَرَاءَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ إِلَى الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (1) فَسِيحُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِي اللَّهِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مُخْزِي الْكَافِرِينَ (2) وَأَذَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ إِلَى النَّاسِ يَوْمَ الْحَجِّ الْأَكْبَرِ أَنَّ اللَّهَ بَرِيءٌ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ وَرَسُولُهُ فَإِنْ تُبْتُمْ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَإِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجِزِي اللَّهِ وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (3) إِلَّا الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَنْقُصُوكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَمْ يُظَاهَرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَوْ فَاتَمَّوُا إِلَيْهِمْ عَهْدُهُمْ إِلَىٰ مَدَّتِهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ (4) فَإِذَا انْسَلَخَ الْأَشْهُرُ الْحُرْمُ فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ وَخُذُوهُمْ وَأَحْصُرُوهُمْ وَأَقْعُدُوا لَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْصِدٍ إِنَّا تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَخَلُّوا سَبِيلَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (5)

سورة التوبة (10)

The *surah* starts with a declaration terminating all past treaties made between the Prophet and the Arabian tribes, with the exception of those tribes which had been absolutely faithful to the terms of their treaties. A grace period of four months was given. It was necessary to convey the message to all Arabian tribes, but most importantly to those who were parties to such treaties. The approaching pilgrimage season was the proper occasion for the termination of treaties to be announced.

The Prophet consulted with his companions, and they suggested that he should send someone to inform Abu Bakr of the new declaration so that he could announce it there. The Prophet said: "Only a man from my own household should convey this on my behalf." This was in keeping with social traditions of the time. So he summoned his cousin, Ali ibn Abi Talib, and gave him the following instructions:

Take out this new revelation of the beginning of the *surah* and declare to all people on the day of sacrifice, when they have assembled in Mina, that no unbeliever will go into Heaven, and no unbeliever may offer the pilgrimage after this year. No one is allowed to do the *tawaf* naked, and whoever has a covenant or a treaty with the Prophet, that treaty will be honored for the full length of its term.

On the appointed day, on the tenth day of Dhul-Hijjah, when all the Muslims were in Mina, Ali made his declaration:

This is an address to all people. Let them all know that no unbeliever may be admitted to Heaven. No unbeliever is allowed to offer the pilgrimage after this season, and no one is allowed to do the *tawaf* round the Ka'bah in the nude. Whoever has a treaty with the Prophet, that treaty will be honored for its full term. Those who do not have a treaty with the Prophet are hereby given four months' notice.

This declaration was simply claiming Arabia as a land of Islam. The announcement sent a clear message to the unbelievers that there was no place for them in Arabia. Those who had treaties and were faithful to the terms of their treaties were given a new confirmation that the treaty was to be honored by the Prophet and Muslims to the last day. If any treaty lapsed before the end of four months, then those who had that treaty would enjoy the longer period of four months. These regulations applied only to the Arabian Peninsula. Outside Arabia, the unbelievers would not be affected by these regulations. Followers of other religions, such as Christians and Jews, were treated differently. They were considered equal citizens of the Muslim state, provided that they abided by the rules and laws of the state.

The Prophet had maintained security agreements with different tribes since his emigration from Mecca to Madina. As a matter of fact, the Madina Constitution was the first of these agreements. **It was a pact of alliance among all residents of Madina regardless of religion or descent (the emigrants from Mecca, the Aws, the Khazraj, and the different Jewish tribes),** who were all committed to participation in the protection of their new city-state. He extended this security agreement to include tribes and clans in the neighboring areas. The al-Hudaybiyah agreement with the Quraysh was also a security agreement which allowed him to build alliances with other tribes.

The polytheists' opposition to the message of Islam was not simply opposition to the concept of the oneness of God, but opposition to all that was behind it. It was opposition to the principles of justice, equality, and the care for the needy; and opposition to the belief in the Judgment Day. The experience of the Prophet over twenty-two years had shown clearly that there could be no real coexistence between Islam and polytheism. They were two fundamentally different ways of life. Indeed, they differed on every point of detail in matters of faith, morals, and social values, as well as in their economic, political, and social structures. It was not to be expected that such radically opposed concepts of life could exist peacefully for any length of time. Every step taken by either side must be totally and completely opposed to the attitude of the other. The clash between them was inevitable.

The expedition to Tabuk was a clear indication of the Prophet's emphasis on expansion northward. The religious aspect was almost always uppermost in his thoughts, and the motivation which drove him on was the desire to fulfill God's command to spread Islam. Utilizing the resources of all of Arabia was essential for the success of this great mission. Most likely, Muhammad had shared this vision with his close companions, Abu Bakr and Umar. He must have been able to frame the policies and strategies of the expansion into Syria and conveyed his thoughts to his two companions.

The Farewell Pilgrimage (Dhul-Hijjah, 10 AH/March 632 CE)

In the tenth year of the Islamic calendar, the Prophet announced that he intended to offer the pilgrimage, and made it known that he welcomed anyone who wished to offer the pilgrimage with him. People from all over Arabia started to come to Madina to join the Prophet in his journey to Mecca to offer the pilgrimage. The number of pilgrims who arrived at Madina was estimated at between 90,000 and 130,000. A similar number were waiting for him in Mecca. The Prophet left Madina on the twenty-fifth day of Dhul-Qa'dah. He had with him a hundred camels which he intended to slaughter as a sacrifice. He entered the state of consecration in a place called Dhul-Hulayfah, ten kilometers from Madina.

The peaceful march continued until they arrived in Mecca on the fourth day of Dhul-Hijjah. At Arafat he delivered a major speech that became known as the Farewell Sermon. The Prophet's speech was the highlight of this pilgrimage, as it outlined the nature of Islamic society.

People, listen to me as I explain to you, for I do not know whether I will ever meet you again in this place after this year.

My Lord, bear witness. He who holds something belonging to another for safekeeping must give it back to the person to whom it belongs. All usury transactions which have been made in the past days' ignorance are hereby abrogated. You may claim only your capital, neither inflicting nor suffering injustice. God has decreed that no usury is permissible.. ..

My Lord, bear witness. People, you have an obligation toward your womenfolk, and they have an obligation toward you. Your womenfolk are in your custody; they are helpless. You have taken them on the basis of a pledge to God, and they are lawful to you with God's word. Fear God, then, in your treatment of women, and be kind to them.

My Lord, bear witness. People, the believers are brothers. It is illegal for anyone to take the property of his brother unless it is given without any coercion. People, your Lord is one and your father is one. All of you are the children of Adam, and Adam was created from dust. The most noble among you is the most God-fearing. No Arab enjoys any privilege over a non-Arab except through the fear of God.

My Lord, bear witness. People, Satan has given up any hope of being worshipped in this land of yours. He is satisfied, however, to be obeyed in matters which you consider trivial. Guard yourselves against him, lest he corrupt your faith. I have left with you what should keep you safe from going astray should you hold fast to it. It is something clear and simple: God's Book and the *sunnah* [way] of his Prophet.

أيها الناس اسمعوا قولي ، فإني لا أدري لعلي لا ألقاكم بعد عامي هذا بهذا الموقف أبدا ، أيها الناس إن دماكم وأموالكم عليكم حرام إلى أن تلقوا ربكم كحرمة يومكم هذا ، وكحرمة شهركم هذا ، وإنكم ستلقون ربكم فيسألكم عن أعمالكم وقد بلغت ، فمن كان عنده أمانة فليؤدها إلى من ائتمنه عليها ، وإن كل ربا ، موضوع ولكن لكم رءوس أموالكم لا تظلمون ولا تظلمون . قضى الله أنه لا ربا ،
أما بعد أيها الناس فإن الشيطان قد ينس من أن يعبد بأرضكم هذه أبدا ، ولكنه إن يطع فيما سوى ذلك فقد رضي به بما تحقرون من أعمالكم فاحذروه على دينكم . أما بعد أيها الناس ، فإن لكم على نساءكم حقا ، ولهن عليكم حقا ، لكم عليهن أن لا يوطئن فرشكم أحدا تكرهونه وعليهن أن لا يأتين بفاحشة مبينة فإن فعلن فإن الله قد أذن لكم أن تهجروهن في المضاجع وتضربوهن ضربا غير مبرح فإن انتهين فلهن رزقهن وكسوتهن بالمعروف واستوصوا بالنساء خيرا ، فإنهن عندكم عوان لا يملكن لأنفسهن شيئا ، وإنكم إنما أخذتموهن بأمانة الله واستحللتم فروجهن بكلمات الله فاعقلوا أيها الناس قولي ، فإني قد بلغت ، وقد تركت فيكم ما إن اعتصمتم به فلن تضلوا أبدا ، أمرا بينا ، كتاب الله وسنة نبيه . أيها الناس اسمعوا قولي واعقلوه تعلمن أن كل مسلم أخ للمسلم وأن المسلمين إخوة فلا يحل لامرئٍ من أخيه إلا ما أعطاه عن طيب نفس منه فلا تظلمن أنفسكم اللهم هل بلغت ؟ فذكر لي أن الناس قالوا : اللهم نعم فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم اللهم اشهد .

During his pilgrimage, the Prophet recited the following verse to his companions:

Today I have perfected your religion for you, and have completed My favor upon you, and have approved Islam as religion for you.

(Chapter 6, al-Ma'idah)

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

سورة المائدة (6)

When the Prophet recited the verse, Umar ibn al-Khattab was in tears. When the other companions asked him why he was crying, he answered: “Nothing comes after perfection but imperfection.” He sensed that the Prophet’s life was drawing to a close.

The *surah* entitled ‘Victory’ was revealed to the Prophet on the second day of his stay at Mina:

When God’s help and victory come, and you see people embracing God’s faith in groups, glorify your Lord and praise Him and ask His forgiveness, for He is much-forgiving.

(Chapter 30, Victory)

إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ (1) وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا (2) فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَّابًا (3)

سورة النصر (30)

A New Expedition to Syria

A few weeks after the Prophet’s return to Madina, he received news that prompted him to start preparations for an expedition against Byzantium. Muhammad, as messenger of God, was commanded to deliver the message not just to the people of Arabia, but all mankind. This is why he had sent emissaries to all rulers in neighboring regions. One of the rulers who received a message from the Prophet was **Farwah ibn Umar al-Juthami**, the governor of Ma’an, in the south of present-day Jordan. This territory was part of the Byzantine Empire, and the governor was appointed by the Byzantine emperor. When Farwah received the message, he responded positively and sent a message to the Prophet informing him of his acceptance of Islam. When the Byzantine emperor learned about his appointed governor’s response, however, he gave an order to arrest him. Farwah was sentenced to death; and shortly afterwards was executed near a spring known as **Afra** in Palestine. He was crucified and left on the cross for a long time in order to dissuade others from following his example.

The Prophet viewed the execution of Farwah as an act of provocation that required a firm response from the Muslims. Therefore Muhammad ordered that an army be raised under the command of **Usama ibn Zayd ibn Harithah**, a talented young man in his twenties. It was expected that Usama's army would include a large number of capable soldiers much older than Usama, who were highly qualified to be commanders themselves. By this appointment, the Prophet meant to emphasize that seniority of age or position counted for nothing. Usama's father, Zayd ibn Harithah, had been a slave owned by Khadijah, Muhammad's first wife. Muhammad had set him free and adopted him as his own son. Zayd had been appointed as the first commander of the first army in the first war between the Muslim state and the Byzantine Empire. The choice of Usama as the commander of the army of this expedition was a clear demonstration that under Islam, a son of a former slave was worthy of being the commander of an army in which many people of noble birth were ordinary soldiers. A great number of the Prophet's companions volunteered to take part in that expedition, including Abu Bakr and Umar ibn al-Khattab.

The Prophet gave Usama very clear instructions that outlined the purpose of the expedition. He was to take his army into the heartland of Palestine as a demonstration of strength and a warning. The mission was to make the Byzantine rulers think twice before embarking on any provocative adventure against the Muslim state. Another purpose was to assure the Arab tribes that the Muslim state had the power to protect them against any threat or danger from the Byzantine Empire.

Usama's army encamped at a place called **al-Jurf**, a few kilometers from Madina, waiting for the volunteers to get ready. The Prophet's illness delayed their departure, however.

The Prophet's Illness

In the tenth year AH (the beginning of 632 CE), the Prophet was visibly failing, increasingly conscious that he was approaching the end of his life. He made his final pilgrimage and delivered the Farewell Sermon, as recounted above. Just as he sensed that he would never see Mecca again, he also sensed that he didn't have much longer to live. Muhammad was sixty-three years old, after all—a long life for his time. He had been wounded several times in battle and had survived a few assassination attempts. When he returned to Madina, he began to experience incapacitating headaches and fainting attacks, but he never retired permanently to bed. He would often wrap a cloth around his aching temples and go to the mosque to lead the prayers or to address the people. One morning, he seemed to pray for long time in honor of the Muslims who had died at Uhud. At length, he said, "God has given one of his servants the choice between this world and that which is with God, and he has chosen the latter." Abu Bakr, who understood that the Prophet was referring to his own imminent death, began to weep bitterly. "Gently, gently, Abu Bakr," Muhammad said tenderly.

On Monday, the twenty-ninth day of Safar in the eleventh year of Al-Hijra, the Prophet complained to his wife A'isha that he had a headache. He used to visit all his wives every day in the morning. That day, when he was in Maymuna's home, his pain became worse, and he felt too weak to carry on with his rounds. He therefore asked his wives if they would let him be nursed in A'isha's home. As they all agreed, he went there, supported by two of his cousins.

His illness continued to get worse that morning, and he became feverish. He asked to be given a cold bath. His family, at his request, poured on him seven containers of water gathered from several wells. When his temperature had gone down and he felt better, he asked his cousin,

al-Fadl ibn Abbas, to take his hand and walk him to the mosque. He sat on the pulpit with a band round his head, then he asked al-Fadl to call the people. When they gathered to listen to the Prophet, he addressed them:

I praise God, the One other than whom there is no deity. If I have ever beaten any one of you on his back, let him come and avenge himself by beating me on my back. To dispute is not part of my nature, nor does it appeal to me. The one of you who is dearest to me is the one who has a right against me and claims it. By so doing, he releases me, and I will be able to meet God with nothing held against me by any person.

Between the final days of the month of Safar and the early days of Rabi al-Awwal, the Prophet showed no signs of any improvement in his health. His illness was getting worse, and it was obvious to those people who were around him that he was suffering, which made them very sad. Despite his discomfort and suffering, he continued to lead the believers in prayers. As his condition worsened, he ordered Abu Bakr to lead the prayers. Abu Bakr led the prayers seventeen times—that is, for three and a half days.

On Monday, the **twelfth day of Rabi al-Awwal 11 AH (June 8, 632 CE)** the Prophet emerged from A'isha's room and came to the mosque as they stood in their rows fully engaged in their worship, with Abu Bakr reciting the Quran. The Muslims were overjoyed when they saw him, and started to move to give him chance to pass. He signaled them to stay in their positions. The Prophet was so happy to see his companions at prayer led by Abu Bakr; he was assured that the nation was strong and unified. His companions thought that he was on his way to a full recovery.

A'isha described what happened when he returned from the mosque:

He came back and laid down, putting his head in my lap. A man from Abu Bakr brought a green *miswak* to the Prophet. He took it and cleaned his teeth with it very strongly, then put it down. I felt his head getting heavier in my lap. I looked at his face and noticed that his eyes were staring hard. Then he said in a faint voice: "The Highest Company in Heaven."

As soon as Abu Bakr learned about the tragic news, he went to A'isha's room. He uncovered the Prophet's face and knelt down and kissed him, saying: "My father and mother may be sacrificed for your sake. The one death that God has decreed that you shall experience, you have now had. You shall not die again." Abu Bakr covered his face and went to the mosque where the people of Madina had gathered. They were stunned and did not know what to do. Despite the repeated hints by the Prophet of his impending death, they could not imagine or comprehend the event. Umar ibn al-Khattab was shocked and could not think logically; he was speaking to the people around him in a state of denial. Abu Bakr stopped him and then addressed the crowd, saying, after he praised God, "People, if any of you has been worshipping Muhammad, let him know that Muhammad is dead. He who worships God knows that God is always alive; He never dies." He then recited a verse from the Quran:

Muhammad is no more than a messenger. Messengers have passed on before him. If he dies or gets killed, will you turn on your heels? He who turns on

his heels will not harm Allah in any way. And Allah will reward the appreciative.”

(Chapter 3, Al Imran)

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ ۚ أَفَإِنْ مَاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِكُمْ ۚ وَمَنْ يَنْقَلِبْ عَلَىٰ عَقْبَيْهِ فَلَنْ يَصُرَ اللَّهُ شَيْئًا ۗ وَسَيَجْزِي اللَّهُ الشَّاكِرِينَ (144)

سورة آل عمران (3)

When people heard Abu Bakr reciting that verse of the Quran, it was as if they had never heard it before. Umar said: “When I heard Abu Bakr reciting that verse, I was stunned and perplexed. I fell down to the ground, feeling that my legs could not support me. I realized, however, that God’s Messenger was dead.”

The next thing to be done was to prepare the Prophet’s body for burial. Ali ibn Abi Talib and al-Abbas’ two sons, al-Fadl and Qutham, as well as Usamah ibn Zayd, were assigned this task. When they finished washing him, they discussed where to bury him. Abu Bakr told them that the Prophet had once said that **every Prophet was buried in the place where he died**. So Muhammad was buried in A’isha’s room.

After the Death of Muhammad

Muhammad was the “**Seal of Prophets**”; none could exercise the religious role of the Prophet after his death. The mission of the apostle of God was not something that could be passed on. When the Prophet departed from the world, he had delivered the entire set of principles of the new religion in a manner calculated to prevent any confusion or ambiguity.

The Prophet died without appointing a successor or advising his companions how to manage their affairs upon his death. He did not address the problem of succession or what form of political system to adopt. If the establishment of a state with a specific political system had been on his mind, he would have addressed the matter. The Quran emphasized the role of the Prophet as a warner; he was not a custodian of men, possessing dominion over them, nor was he a tyrant who forced them into the faith. The Quran repeatedly emphasized that Muhammad was no more than a messenger, and his mission was confined to relaying the divine message to humanity; he was called upon to convey it, not to compel people to abide by it. As the messenger of God, his mission was to spread the word of God through persuasion and not through coercion. Religious preaching takes effect only through the Word, and not by sword. The Quran was clear about this:

Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good advice, and debate with them in the most dignified manner. Your Lord is aware of those who stray from His path, and He is aware of those who are guided.

(Chapter 14, al-Nahel)

ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ ۗ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بَالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۗ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ (125)

سورة النحل (14)

**Whoever obeys the Messenger is obeying Allah. And Whoever turns away,
We did not send you a watcher over them.**

(Chapter 5, The Women)

مَنْ يُطِيعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ وَمَنْ تَوَلَّىٰ فَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا (80)

سورة النساء (5)

Say, O mankind, the truth has come to you from your Lord. Whoever accepts guidance is guided for his own soul; and whoever strays only strays to its detriment. I am your guardian over you.

(Chapter 11, Jonah)

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِوَكِيلٍ (108)

سورة يونس (11)

We sent down upon you the Book for mankind, in truth. He who follows guidance does so for the good of his soul. And he who strays in error does so to its detriment, You are not their overseer.

(Chapter 24, al-Zumar)

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ لِلنَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ فَمَنْ اهْتَدَىٰ فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا وَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيلٍ (41)

سورة الزمر (24)

So remind. You are only a reminder. You have no control over them. But whoever turns away and disbelieves, Allah will punish him with the greatest punishment.

(Chapter 30, The Overwhelming Event)

**فَذَكِّرْ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُذَكِّرٌ (21) لَسْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمُصَيِّرٍ (22)
إِلَّا مَنْ تَوَلَّىٰ وَكَفَرَ (23) فَيُعَذِّبُهُ اللَّهُ الْعَذَابَ الْأَكْبَرَ (24)**

سورة الغاشية (30)

Say, “I am only a human being like you, being inspired that your god is One God. Whoever hopes to meet his Lord, let him work righteousness, and never associate anyone with the service of his Lord.”

(Chapter 16, The Cave)

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ اللَّهُ وَاحِدٌ فَمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا (110)

سورة الكهف (16)

Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and be cautious. If you turn away—know that the duty of our Messenger is clear communication. The Messenger’s sole duty is to convey. Allah knows what you reveal and what you conceal.

(Chapter 7, al-Ma’idah)

وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَاحْذَرُوا فَإِن تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا عَلَىٰ رَسُولِنَا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ (92)
مَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا تَكْتُمُونَ (99)

سورة المائدة (7)

The religion of Islam aims at the reformation of human life and redirecting humans to the righteous path, the path leading to God. Islam aims at preparing humans for Judgment Day, and for the entrance into their eternal state. It is a holy and pure preaching which calls out to all humanity, regardless of the color of their skin, to the mercy of the Lord in heaven and earth and to his good in both worlds. Muhammad left the matter of success in the hands of his followers. All they need to do is to continue to be bound to the principles of their faith.

Islam is a call to Arabs and non-Arabs aiming at spiritual union that embraces all of humanity in all the countries of this earth. The Quran’s revelation in clear Arabic does not imply that Arabs are superior to others, and it was not meant to form an Arab entity or to become an Arab religion. As it was revealed in Arabic and through an Arabic apostle, however, it was natural that Islam spread first among the Arab people.

The Arab lands were home to a number of different tribes who spoke different dialects and were spread over a wide geographic region. They also lived under different political systems. Therefore, there were huge variations in their systems of government, customs, and economic life. Despite their differences, the Arab tribes came together under the banner of Islam, and joined by religious ties, formed a single community, the *umma*, under the authority of the Prophet Muhammad. This unification of the Arabs was not a political union but a religious one; it was a union of faith.

Allah has promised those of you who believe and do righteous deeds, that He will make them successors on earth, as He made those before them successors, and He will establish for them their religion—which He has approved for them—and He will substitute security in place of their fear. They worship Me, never associating anything with Me. But whoever disbelieves after that—these are the sinners.

(Chapter 18, al-Nour)

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا وَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ (55)

سورة النور (18)

The Prophet's long-term strategy was to spread the word of Islam outside Arabia. He believed strongly that the message of Islam would prevail and spread throughout Arabia and beyond. This belief existed in his heart and mind even before he emigrated to Madina. He was aware of the situation in Iraq and Syria and of the constant wars between Persia and Byzantium which had exhausted the two powers. He was confident that the Muslim Arabs would be able to conquer both empires.

The death of Muhammad marked the end of **the first phase in the history of Islam**—the phase of the Message, the religion—and the beginning of a new phase: that of the state, **the Arab Empire**. History was to witness this empire under Abu Bakr and Omar ibn al-Khattab, who, as leaders of the new Islamic state, would succeed in achieving the Prophet's vision and beyond.

The Revelation that the Prophet Muhammad Conveyed to Mankind: A Summary

The Prophet Muhammad received the revelation in 610 CE. For the next three years, he only shared it with his closest relatives and friends, but then he was commanded to go public with his message. The outward conflict between the Quraysh establishment and Muhammad began at this point, in 613. The roots of the conflict, however, went back many years before the revelation. As Meccan society started to change from the nomadic desert lifestyle (*badawah*) to that of a sedentary urban community, traditional tribal ethics were neglected. Tribal society was built on the basic principle that every member had an essential function in maintaining the unity and stability of the tribe, and regardless of position, every member could share in the social and economic rights and privileges of the tribe. The profitable trade business of the Quraysh's elites resulted in the stratification of society, and created a wide gap between the rich and the poor. Even before the revelation, Muhammad realized the social ills of Meccan society under the Quraysh, and was certain that reforms were overdue.

Muhammad's message was a clear warning to the ruling elites who lacked any concern for the poor and marginalized. The revelation emphasized the rights of the underprivileged and the oppressed, and commanded the rich and powerful to take care of them. The command for social and economic justice was reinforced by a warning: The Day of Judgment, when humans will return to God for punishment or reward, would come for all.

The conflict between the chiefs of the Quraysh and Muhammad was essentially an ideological one. The elites of Quraysh were trying to protect their privileges by endorsing the traditional pagan beliefs and the status of the Ka'bah as the house of the idols of Arabia. This status was what brought the pilgrims from all over Arabia to Mecca, and was what kept the caravan trade routes moving. The Quraysh were protecting their own economic interests when they fought the message of Islam. They opposed the concepts of the oneness of God and the Judgment Day because those notions threatened their interests and privileges. Believing otherwise would compel them to stop being oppressive, arrogant and greedy.

The Quraysh had been the aggressor ever since the Prophet declared his message and called on people to believe in the oneness of God and submit to Him. The Quraysh persecuted Muhammad and his followers, and for ten years they succeeded in containing the message of Islam within their area. The Prophet and his followers were ultimately forced to leave their homes and make the *hijra* to Madina to obtain security and protection from other tribes.

Over a period of five years after the *hijra*, Muhammad succeeded in establishing a secure Muslim state in which political, social and economic reforms, guided by the principles of Islam, were implemented. He was also able to spread the message of God to many regions of Arabia.

Muhammad's emigration to Madina in 622 CE marked the beginning of a new phase of the history of Islam that was completely different from the first era in Mecca. It was in Madina that the first Muslim community was born, and Madina was where Muhammad's social reform movement started. The ten years of Muhammad's life in Madina became the reference point in Islam for all historians, scholars, politicians and reformers for the next 1,400 years. The small city-state of Madina expanded at an average rate of over 830 kilometers daily, and after ten years covered some three million square kilometers with millions of inhabitants.

This short period in the history of Islam has been interpreted in various ways by different thinkers and movements. This is due to the fact that Muhammad's biographers were living at a time in which the Muslim community had become an enormously powerful empire. The first Muslim historians began to write about the life of the Prophet Muhammad in the eighth and ninth centuries. His main biographers were Muhammad ibn Ishaq (d. 767); Muhammad ibn Umar al-Waqidi (d. 820); Muhammad ibn Sa'd (d. 845); and Abu Jarir al-Tabari (d. 923).

Attributes of the Islamic State

The Islamic state that the Prophet Muhammad established was based on principles of social justice guided and inspired by the revelation from God. The genius of the Prophet was manifested in several legislative acts and decisions that altered the path of world history.

In several editions of his book *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons In History*, Michael H. Hart ranks the Prophet Muhammad as the number one personality in history, stating, "He was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels." As Hart points out, the Islamic state that the Prophet Muhammad established his lifetime gave rise to an empire that over few centuries extended from Spain to China with over two billion followers.

Under the leadership of the Prophet, the Islamic state was the first welfare state in the history of mankind. This was achieved by instituting the *zakat* tax system. The Prophet had to address the ethical norms of justice and equality while preserving the dignity of all the members of the community. The establishment of this tax took care of the needy, the orphans, the near relatives, the beggars, and the homeless, and was a catalyst for the freeing of slaves. It was an act of social reform that enhanced security and leveled differences in the social distribution of wealth.

Securing the realm of the new state in Medina required the legislation of the world's first written constitution, which was agreed upon at a convention representing all the tribes. Its purpose was to govern the foundation and security of the new state and guide its social reforms. The constitution emphasized the solidarity of all inhabitants of Medina and the equality of their rights, regardless of religion or descent. It was the factor that united warring tribes into an *umma*, a nation, a confederation that granted autonomy and freedom of religion to all members, including the Jewish tribes living among them.

The ethics of Islam preserved the rights of women and minorities, set humanitarian standards for the rules of engagement in wars, and required respect for all religions in spreading the word of Islam. Near the top of the Prophet's social reforms were the rights of women. The Quran elevated women to a highly respectable social status, preserved their right of inheritance as well as their legal right to keep their earnings and dowry, and addressed marriage, divorce, and other issues. Polyandry, the practice of women having multiple husbands in pre-Islamic Arabia, was banned under Islam. Pre-Islamic tradition did not allow for children to inherit, since their parentage was unclear. With polyandry forbidden, the Quran instituted laws giving descendants the right to inherit, as their parentage was now known.

Islam did allow for polygamy, or the taking of multiple wives. This benefited widows and orphans left unprotected in the aftermath of wars, who would otherwise end up being enslaved. In the case of raising an orphaned child, a man was allowed to marry one or more wives—up to four at a time—but it was limited, and almost negated, by the conditions put on men stipulating fair treatment among all wives.

The rules of engagement in wars that Islam instituted under the doctrine of jihad allowed war in cases of self-defense, but not aggression. It stressed the distinction between combatants and noncombatants, and emphasized mercy and forgiveness. It prohibited the torture of prisoners, rape, molestation, and any kind of sexual offenses, as well as mutilation of the dead. The lives of diplomats were protected. Demolition of residential buildings, religious structures, and medical institutions was also prohibited under Islam.

All of these attributes and more were included in the message that the Prophet Muhammad brought to mankind, inspired by the revelation.

This is faith of Islam that two billion Muslims in the world share, united by its ethics and humanity.

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