



Seerah

The life of 
the Prophet

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INTRODUCTION

This booklet presents to the reader a concise outline of the Prophet Muhammad's life and the major events that took place during his lifetime - events that have gone to shape the course of Islām's early history.

The biography has been condensed substantially with the aim of fulfilling the basic need of ordinary individuals, who, due to their busy schedules, may not be able to consult voluminous books. Effort has also been made to keep it as simple as possible, and so, for easy learning, it has been presented in "bite-sized" chapters.

LIFE OF PROPHET MUḤAMMAD ﷺ

Birth

The final Prophet of Allāh, Muḥammad ﷺ, was born in Makkah on Monday the 12th of Rabi' al-Awwal; corresponding with 20th April 571 of the Common Era (CE). His birth took place in the year famously remembered by the Arabs as “the Year of the Elephant”.

The Year of the Elephant - 571 CE

The ruler of Abyssinia appointed a governor over Yemen by the name of Abrahah. The governor planned to build a great cathedral in Yemen which he hoped would replace the Ka`bah as the centre of pilgrimage in Arabia. This naturally offended the Arabs, one of whom, finding the right time, sneaked into the cathedral and defiled it. Outraged, Abrahah pledged to destroy the Ka`bah in Makkah.

In the year 571 CE, he marched on to Makkah, accompanied by a formidable army and a large troop of elephants, the biggest of which was his own. Unable to face the challenge, the residents of Makkah retreated to the hills, leaving Abrahah and his army to the will of Allah. To their astonishment, the Makkans witnessed an amazing spectacle from atop the hills. As the furious Abrahah approached the city, a large flock of birds carrying tiny pebbles in their beaks swarmed above the army and dropped these pebbles on the troops. The apparently insignificant pebbles miraculously penetrated the skulls and bodies of the invading army and destroyed it. The event, due to its significance, found place in the Qur'an (Sūrah al-Fil – 105).

The Blessed Birth

The father of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, `Abdullāh, had died a few months before the birth of his firstborn, making him an orphan at birth. Upon the birth of the Prophet ﷺ, his mother, Āminah, immediately sent someone to inform his grandfather `Abdul Muṭṭalib of the good news. Joyfully `Abdul Muṭṭalib carried the child to the Ka`bah, and thankfully prayed to Allāh. `Abdul Muṭṭalib named his grandson Muḥammad, an uncommon name at the time.

The first woman who suckled him after his mother was Thuwaybah, the freed slave of Abū Lahab.

Childhood

It was the custom of the Arabs living in towns to send their newborns away to rural environments, to enable them to grow up in the free and healthy surroundings of the country, where it was hoped they would grow strong and acquire the pure language of the Bedouins. The Prophet ﷺ was thus entrusted to Ḥalimah bint Abī Dhu`aib of the tribe of Sa`d.

Traditions relate how the family of Ḥalimah were blessed with great fortune whilst the baby Muḥammad was in their care. The donkey she rode when she came to Makkah was lean and weak, yet on the return journey it became strong and fast. The once barren land which was the only property of the family was now lush with grass, grazing on which their animals would return brimming with milk. Muḥammad ﷺ stayed with Ḥalimah for two years.

When she returned with Muḥammad ﷺ at the end of this period, an

epidemic had broken out in Makkah. She requested to take Muḥammad ﷺ back with her. The Prophet's mother Āminah agreed and Muhammad ﷺ returned to the tribe of Sa`d.

The Prophet ﷺ stayed with Ḥalimah and her family until the age of four or five. It was during this period that an amazing incident occurred, as reported by the Ṣaḥābī Anas ؓ in (the compilation of Imām) Muslim. One day, as Muḥammad ﷺ was playing with his friends, Jibril ؑ approached him and took hold of him. He then opened up his chest and took out his heart. He extracted a blood-clot out of it and said, "That was the part of Satan in you." He then washed the heart with the water of Zamzam and restored it to its place. The playmates of Muḥammad ﷺ came running to Ḥalimah screaming, "Muḥammad has been killed!" They rushed to where the Prophet ﷺ was and found him. There was no sign of any harm except that his face had gone pale.

After narrating this incident, Anas ؓ said, "I have seen the mark that was left on his chest."

After this incident, Ḥalimah became worried about the safety of Muḥammad ﷺ and returned him to his mother with whom he stayed until her death.

Death of Āminah

When Muḥammad ﷺ was six years old, Āminah decided to visit her relatives in Yathrib (Madinah). Her orphan son and a maidservant, Umm Ayman, accompanied her. She spent a month there and on her return journey back to Makkah, she fell ill and died at a place called Abwā.

In the Care of His Grandfather

Umm Ayman brought the young child back to Makkah, now without mother or father. She left him in the care of his grandfather, `Abdul Muṭṭalib. `Abdul Muṭṭalib still mourned the loss of his beloved son `Abdullāh, and so loved his orphaned grandson all the more dearly. He would show his love and affection for his grandson at all times.

When Muḥammad ﷺ was just eight years old, `Abdul Muṭṭalib also passed away. It was as if he had been made an orphan for the third time. Now the Prophet ﷺ was left in the care of his paternal uncle Abū Ṭālib.

Abū Ṭālib also showed immense love for the Prophet and brought him up as one of his own children, even giving preference to him.

Trip to Syria

When Muḥammad ﷺ was twelve years old, Abū Ṭālib took him on a business trip to Damascus, Syria; with leading tradesmen of the Quraysh. When they reached Buṣrā, a Christian monk by the name Baḥīrah saw them and came out to them. They had often passed by him on their journeys but he had never come out to meet them like this. Upon searching out the Prophet ﷺ, he took his hand and exclaimed, "This is the leader of the worlds; this is the Messenger of the Lord of the worlds! Allāh will designate him as a mercy to the worlds."

When the elders of Quraysh enquired as to how he knew this, he replied, "When you appeared from the direction of al-`Aqabah, there was no tree or stone that did not prostrate to him, and they prostrate to no one but a prophet. I also recognised the seal of prophethood below

his shoulders, akin to the shape of an apple.” He also asked Abū Ṭalib to send Muḥammad ﷺ back to Makkah, for fear of his life - lest his opponents came to know of his identity. Thus the Prophet ﷺ was sent back to Makkah with some of the travellers. (at-Tirmidhī)

Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl

When the Prophet ﷺ was twenty years old, a sacrilegious war, later named Ḥarb al-Fijār, broke out between the two tribes, Quraysh and Ḥawāzin. This war continued for a number of years and resulted in considerable loss of life. The Prophet ﷺ did not take part in the fighting. When the war came to an end the need was felt to build an alliance to suppress tribal violence and injustice and protect the rights of the weak and poor. The representatives of all the Makkan tribes met and agreed upon the terms of the alliance. The Prophet ﷺ always maintained the sanctity of the treaty and upheld it throughout his life.

Early Years

Even as a young man, the Prophet ﷺ worked hard for a living. Initially, he worked as a shepherd. Later on, he turned to trading, as the travels to Syria in the company of leading merchants gave him a wealth of experience.

His truthfulness, honesty and diligence, as well as a host of other noble qualities made him a successful trader and he soon became renowned throughout Makkah. The people of Makkah would refer to him as al-Amin (the Trustworthy) and aṣ-Ṣādiq (the Truthful).

A wealthy business woman by the name Khadijah ﷺ came to hear of

the Prophet's ﷺ distinguished characteristics. She sent for him and offered him to take part in her business undertakings, to which he agreed. He was to travel to Syria for the purpose. She sent her servant Maysarah along with him.

Marriage to Khadijah ﷺ

When he returned from Syria, Khadijah ﷺ noticed that her profits were greater than ever before. Maysarah also informed her of Muḥammad's character and proficiency in business. Impressed by this and with what she too had witnessed earlier, Khadijah ﷺ proposed to Muḥammad ﷺ. The proposal was sent through a friend.

Khadijah ﷺ held a distinguished position in Makkah and had herself received many proposals, but had refused. The Prophet ﷺ accepted the proposal and asked his uncles to discuss the affair with Khadijah's appointed representative. Consequently they were married. The Prophet gave her twenty camels as dowry. Khadijah ﷺ was forty and 15 years his senior. The Prophet ﷺ proved to be a devoted husband, and until she died, contrary to Arab custom, did not marry any other woman.

The Prophet's Children

Khadijah ﷺ bore Muḥammad ﷺ all his children besides one (Ibrāhīm, who was born to his slave-girl Māria). They were: al-Qāsim, Zaynab, Ruqayyah, Umm Kulthūm, Fāṭimah and `Abdullāh ﷺ. All his sons died in childhood and all his daughters except Fāṭimah ﷺ died during his life. Fāṭimah ﷺ died six months after his death.

Rebuilding the Ka`bah

The Ka`bah was a small building existing from the time of the Prophet Ibrāhīm ﷺ. The treasures within the building were vulnerable, for it had no roof to protect them from the top. Being an ancient structure, it had begun to exhibit signs of natural decline too. Adding to all this, a flood had wrought extensive damage to the exterior. Considering all this, the Quraysh took the decision to rebuild it.

It was decided that only Ḥalāl money would be used in its reconstruction. The Ka`bah was brought down to the foundations of Ibrāhīm ﷺ. Not to deprive anyone of the honour of reconstruction, various projects were assigned to various tribes. The work was carried out in peace until the time came for the restoration of the sacred black stone. This was a privilege no tribe wished to be deprived of.

Soon, a serious argument broke out and it seemed that the issue would not be resolved without bloodshed. Fortunately, a proposition was made and agreed upon by all. It was suggested that the first to enter the Ḥaram the following morning would arbitrate and decide, and his decision would be accepted by all.

The first to enter the Ḥaram in the morning was the young Muḥammad ﷺ. All were overjoyed and cried out in his praise, expressing their willingness to go by his decision. Upon being informed of the situation, the Prophet ﷺ called for a sheet and placed the stone upon it. He then told each tribe to take hold of a corner of the sheet and carry it to where the stone was to be placed. He then lifted the stone himself and lodged it in its proper place. Thus he managed to resolve what seemed to be an insoluble issue and averted the prospect of bloodshed.

In the Cave of Ḥirā'

By the time Muḥammad ﷺ had reached his late thirties, he felt an aching dissatisfaction with many aspects of society. The rich and powerful were oppressively dominant, trampling on the rights of the poor and the underprivileged; there was a glaring difference between the have's and have-not's; labourers were considered subhuman and treated with contempt; and vice and immorality were rampant. Above all, what he found most revolting was the superstitious religion practised by his tribesmen associated with self-made idols.

The Prophet ﷺ began to spend long hours in meditation. He would take with him provisions for many days and retreat to the cave Ḥirā', situated on the outskirts of Makkah. He would go there to reflect over creation in general and the evil that had beset the society, yet feeling sympathy for the people caught up in it. His heart cried out to the Great Power that he knew very well existed and oversaw all things. Not yet knowing how to worship Him, Muḥammad ﷺ would try to reach out to Him and humble himself before Him with his heart and soul.

The Prophet's wife `Ā'ishah ؓ states that it was the true dreams that marked the beginning of his prophethood. After that, seclusion became dear to him; he would go to the cave of Ḥirā' and sit in meditation for long hours, and would return home only to take along provisions to last him for another lengthy period.

First Revelation

It was during this period that one evening, whilst he was in the cave of Ḥirā', Muḥammad ﷺ received his first revelation from God.

The Archangel Jibril ﷺ appeared before him. Jibril ﷺ commanded him to “Read.” Stunned at the spectacle, the Prophet ﷺ replied, “I cannot read.” He later described the rest of the ordeal: “He took me and embraced me with such might that it left me exhausted. He then released me and repeated, “Read.” I again replied “I cannot read”. Once again he embraced me with the same force, causing much exhaustion. He then released me again and repeated “Read”. I again said, “I cannot read.” He embraced me for a third time and then released me saying:

**“Read in the name of your Lord, Who created –
created man from a clot.
Read and your Lord is the most Gracious,
He Who taught the use of the pen;
taught man which he knew not.” (96:1-5)**

Muḥammad ﷺ returned from the cave shivering with fear. He entered his house and cried out to his wife Khadijah ؓ, “Cover me! Cover me.” She covered him with a cloak. He then recounted what he had seen and heard in the cave of Ḥirā’. “I feared for my life,” he explained. His faithful companion consoled him, saying, “Allāh will never disgrace you. You join family ties; you bear the burden of the weak; you assist the poor and needy, you entertain guests and help others enduring hardships in the path of truth.”

She then took the Prophet ﷺ to her cousin, Waraqah ibn Nawfal, an old and learned Christian. The Prophet ﷺ related to him what he had experienced, upon which Waraqah exclaimed, “This is the very Angel that came to Mūsā ؑ! O! If that I were younger – if only I would remain alive when your people will drive you away from your home.” Muḥammad ﷺ astonishingly asked, “What! will they drive me out?” Waraqah answered, “Yes, none has ever come with the like of what

you have come with but was treated with hostility. And if I should live to see that day, I shall support you strongly.”

First Believers

The next passages of revelation received by the Prophet ﷺ instructed him to increase in his night vigils of worship and to begin the call towards Allāh, and warned people of the wrongness of prevalent injustices and their consequences. The Prophet ﷺ started to invite people to Islām.

The first person to answer his call was, of course, his beloved wife Khadijah ؓ. The Prophet’s freed slave Zayd ibn Ḥārithah ؓ and his cousin `Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib ؓ, who had been living with him since his early childhood, followed her. Soon after, his dear and loyal friend Abū Bakr ibn Abī Quḥāfah ؓ embraced the faith. All of these had accepted Islām the very first day.

Through the efforts of Abū Bakr ؓ, a few others joined the religion. Among these were `Uthmān ibn `Affān ؓ, Zubayr ibn `Awwām ؓ, `Abdur Raḥmān ibn Awf ؓ, Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqās ؓ, and Ṭalha ibn `Ubaydillāh ؓ.

Other early Muslims include Bilāl ibn Abī Rabāḥ ؓ (an Abyssinian slave), Abū `Ubaidah ibn al-Jarrāḥ ؓ, and `Uthman ibn Maz`ūn ؓ.

At this early stage, the Prophet ﷺ would teach these companions in private because the call to Islām was taking place on an individual and secret basis.

Open Preaching

Soon after, the Prophet ﷺ received the following command from Allāh:

“And warn your tribe of near kindred” (26:214).

In obedience to this, the Prophet ﷺ invited members of his extended family to a meeting. There he presented the revealed faith. Before anyone could stop him Abū Lahab, one of the Prophet’s uncles, interrupted, ridiculed the message by saying, “I swear by Allāh this is evil. You must stop him before the others do.”

However, the loving uncle of the Prophet ﷺ, Abū Ṭālib, swore to protect his nephew for as long as his life permitted.

Sermon on Mount Ṣafā

Shortly after this meeting, the Prophet ﷺ climbed Mount Ṣafā, a hillock situated near the Ka`bah, and called together all the tribes of Makkah.

Imām al-Bukhārī has reported the incident: “The Prophet ﷺ climbed Mount Ṣafā and began to call, ‘O Banī Fihri! O Banī `Adiyy!’ Scores of people gathered (upon hearing the call), and those who could not, sent others on their behalf to see what it was. Abū Lahab and other leaders of Quraysh came too.

The Prophet ﷺ posed a question (to them), ‘If I were to inform you that behind this mountain there were horsemen ready to attack you, would you believe me?’

‘Yes,’ the people replied in unison, ‘We have never received anything but truth from you.’

The Prophet ﷺ continued, ‘Then (listen, as) I am a warner to you before the approach of a severe punishment.’

Abū Lahab promptly replied ‘May you perish! Is it for this that you have gathered us?’”

To the Prophet’s ﷺ defence, Allāh replied with Sūrah al-Masad, wherein Abū Lahab is disgraced and promised Punishment.

Persecution of Early Muslims

Originating from the Almighty, the Prophet’s call had the expected appeal and beauty. It was met by fascination from the people. However, since the message hit at the very roots of superstition and unfounded irrational beliefs, it naturally posed a threat to the positions of the chieftains of Makkah. Not surprisingly, they not only rejected the call themselves but dissuaded and even prohibited others too.

When this did not achieve their goals, they turned to violent means to suppress the message which was now gaining momentum and winning new converts to the faith. Gradually, this built up to an organised campaign of persecution, where every opponent tried to outdo the other. The Muslims were beaten savagely for the crime of renouncing idolatry and believing in One God.

Poorer and defenceless Muslims were especially targeted. Bilāl ؓ, the Abyssinian slave of Umayyah ibn Khalaf, was shown no mercy by his master once he came to know of his conversion. At times, a rope would be put around his neck and he would be dragged through the streets of Makkah. On other occasions he was starved for days. On some hot days he was made to lie on scorching sand with a heavy rock placed on his chest. Umayyah would demand, “Renounce Islām or die.” Even under such excruciating pain, the only words to escape the lips of Bilāl were: “the One, the One,” – a defiant declaration of his faith in the One God.

`Ammār ibn Yāsir ؓ, along with his parents, was from the early converts to Islām. They too were made to lie on burning sand and brutally beaten. His mother, Sumayyah ؓ, was to become the first to be martyred in Islām when she was struck with a spear in her most private part.

There were many others, the likes of Khabbāb ibn al-Aratt ؓ and az-Zubayr ibn al-`Awwām ؓ, who endured inhumane persecution upon their conversion.

The Quraysh did not even spare the Prophet ﷺ. One evening as he was praying in the Ḥaram, a rope was put around his neck and he was throttled. On another occasion, as he prostrated during prayers, someone placed the intestines of a camel on his back. Apart from the filth and impurity, the weight of it caused him immense pain and immobilised him, until his daughter, Zaynab ؓ, had to come and remove it from him before he could get up.

Muslims Migrate to Abyssinia

As time went by, the persecution only got worse, and by the middle of the fifth year of prophethood, tolerance from the Muslims had reached its peak. It was at this point that the Prophet ﷺ gave permission to his companions to migrate.

A small group of Muslims migrated to Abyssinia. The country was chosen because of its Christian king, Negus, who was known to be a fair and compassionate ruler. The group consisted of twelve men and four women. Prominent among these were, `Uthmān ibn `Affān ؓ and his wife Ruqayyah ؓ, the daughter of the Prophet ﷺ.

Having stayed only a few months there, they heard news of the Quraysh accepting Islām. They returned only to discover they had been misinformed. If, anything, the situation at home had only got worse.

When there was no letting up in the brutality of the Quraysh, the Prophet ﷺ gave permission to migrate to Abyssinia for a second time. Another group, consisting of eighty-three men and eighteen women, was formed and left for Abyssinia.

Upon discovering this, the Quraysh sent a delegation to Abyssinia, requesting the king to return the ‘rebels’. Negus summoned the Muslims and a dialogue ensued. It was at this point that Ja`far ibn Abī Tālib ؑ, the Prophet’s ﷺ cousin, addressed the court of Negus. He made a moving case on behalf of Muslims as he recounted what godless state they had been in and what goodness Muḥammad ﷺ had called them towards. He explained how, for merely worshipping one God, their people had taken to persecuting them.

The king then asked Ja`far ؑ to recite something of the revelation received by Muḥammad ﷺ from God. When Ja`far ؑ recited verses from Sūrah Maryam (S. 19), relating to Maryam (Mary) and `Īsā (Jesus) ﷺ, the entire court was moved to tears.

Negus ؑ was so moved that he declared, “Truly this and what was brought by Jesus are rays from the same lamp”. He not only refused to surrender the Muslims to the Quraysh, but he and his subjects also in time became Muslims.

Two Warriors Embrace Islām

A turning point in the state of affairs came when two men of repute and

distinction, and widely known for their boldness and courage embraced Islām. These were Ḥamzah ibn `Abdil Muṭṭalib ﷺ, one of the Prophet's uncles, and `Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ.

Ḥamzah ﷺ, who was not a Muslim then, had heard of Abū Jahl insulting the Prophet. Due to the affection he had for his nephew, he was infuriated. He rushed to the compound of the Ka`bah, where Abū Jahl was seated along with other leading figures of Makkah and struck Abū Jahl hard with his bow. He then declared his acceptance of Islām and challenged all present to resist him. He further proclaimed that if anybody insulted or assaulted the Prophet ﷺ again, they would have to deal with his retaliation.

Shortly afterwards, `Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ, an ardent opponent of the Prophet ﷺ and his mission, also embraced Islām. His was a fascinating account.

Eminent figures of Makkah sat one day in consultation over strategies to curb the progress of Islām. `Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, young and zealous and known for his valour and daring, stood up with fury and pledged to bring the head of Muḥammad ﷺ within moments. He headed straight for the house of Arqam, where the Prophet ﷺ usually held his court. En route, he happened to encounter a friend who, discovering his intentions, informed him to put his own house in order first, as both his sister and brother-in-law had, as he explained, accepted Islām. This worked like fuel over fire for `Umar, and now, more enraged than ever, he marched to his sister's house.

Sounds of recitation were heard outside the house, and Umar's expectant ears were quick to pick them up. He immediately burst into the house and enquired of the source of the recitation. Upon learning the truth, he lashed out on the sister with such fierceness and hardness

that would have toppled any adversary. He was relentless in his beatings; but she too did not give in. She remained defiant of his demands and declared, “Do as you wish `Umar, but there is no way we will renounce the truth that had escaped us all this time.”

Seeing their defiance in the face of all his strength, `Umar finally relented. He then expressed his desire to see the verses which they held so sacred. His sister insisted that he wash himself first, as the words were indeed sacred and had to be handled with purity. He complied and was given the portion of the Qur’an. The verses were of Sūrah Ṭā Hā (S. 20). Being an Arab, and one proficient in literary and linguistic arts, he noted with each verse the excellence of the Qur’an and its Divine originality and perfection. This had an instant and profound effect on him.

By the time he had got to the 14th verse, `Umar ﷺ had become a changed man. He had become entranced by the beauty and power of the Qur’ān, which had won over many others before him. His simple desire after reading these verses was to meet the man himself. He immediately headed for the house of Arqam. As he entered, he was taken in and asked the reason for coming. He replied that he had set out to take the head of the Prophet, but now he wished to give his own heart to him.

Negotiations

Upon the conversion of such powerful men as Ḥamzah ﷺ and `Umar ﷺ, it became apparent to the Makkans that persecution and violence was not bearing any fruit. Being practical, they now tried a hand at diplomacy. They decided to initiate negotiations with the Prophet ﷺ.

ʿUtbah ibn Rabīʿah was designated with the task of luring away the Prophet ﷺ from his call with tempting bribes. Yet for all his experience and skill, ʿUtbah failed miserably. He came and delivered a lengthy speech. The Prophet ﷺ listened intently and then recited a few verses of Sūrah Fuṣṣilat (S. 41 - below are the first 8 verses).

**Ha-Mim. A revelation from the Gracious, the Merciful;
A Book, whereof the verses are explained in detail;
a Qurʾān in Arabic, for people who understand;
Giving Good News and Admonition:**

yet most of them turn away, and so they hear not.

**They say: “Our hearts are under veils,
from that to which you invite us, and in our ears is a deafness,
and between us and you is a screen:**

so do (what you want); as for us, we shall do (what we want!)”

Say: “I am but a man like you:

**it is revealed to me by inspiration, that your God is One God:
so stand true to Him, and ask for His Forgiveness.”**

And woe to those who join gods with Allāh,

**Those who practise not regular Charity,
and who even deny the Hereafter.**

**For those who believe and work deeds of righteousness
is a reward that will never fail.**

No sooner did ʿUtbah hear the verses that he retreated hastily from there. To those awaiting him, he described the Qurʾān in the following words: “It was not poetry, magic, or the words of any soothsayer. Obey me, O Quraysh! and let me bear the consequences of what I tell you. Leave this man and his mission alone.” This was not what they had expected from such an accomplished diplomat. “By God, he has enchanted you with his words!” was their response to his counsel.

Boycott

It was now evident that all tactics had failed, and despite the best of efforts against it, Islām was flourishing enviably. In a final attempt to halt the progress of Islām, and perhaps more to avenge their failed efforts, the Makkans launched a boycott campaign against the tribes of Banū Hāshim and Banū Muṭṭalib. The other tribes of Makkah pledged not to engage with them in any way, including conducting of business, inter-marrying, and keeping social relations. Even verbal contact was severed. To bring an official touch and add significance, they hung this declaration in writing on the Ka`bah. All members of Banū Hāshim and Banū Muṭṭalib became legitimate targets of the campaign, irrespective of their faith. Abū Lahab, however, due to his open disavowal and outspokenness (and elite friends), was spared of the torture.

The two tribes were confined to a narrow valley, later to be named “Shi`ab Abī Ṭālib”. The boycott took place in the seventh year of Prophethood and lasted three years. In the later part of this period, sympathy and philanthropy began to surface, and a chain of events forced the pact to be dissolved.

Year of Grief

Six months after the end of the boycott, Abū Ṭālib, the Prophet’s dear uncle, who had always stood as a fort against the ruthless advances of the Quraysh, passed away. In spite of his intimacy with and support for the Prophet ﷺ, he had not embraced Islām. He acknowledged that although he had every conviction of the faith, he feared the Quraysh would taunt him of renouncing the religion of his forefathers at old age. A few months after Abū Ṭālib’s death, the Prophet’s beloved wife

Khadijah ﷺ too passed away. She, like his uncle, had been very supportive to him at all times, and shared with him his pain and suffering. He drew strength from her and she was always there when he needed her. She was sixty-five at the time of her death and the Prophet ﷺ was fifty.

Following the death of Abū Ṭālib, the Makkans stepped up their maltreatment of the Prophet ﷺ and his companions. Becoming even more heartless in their dishing out torture and oppression.

Journey to Ṭā'if

It was in such adverse circumstances that the Prophet ﷺ decided to take his message outside Makkah. For this purpose he chose Ṭā'if, a town 60 kilometres away from Makkah. He had set off with great hope, but returned more distraught and depressed than before. This was because the people of Ṭā'if not only rejected the call, but humiliated the Prophet too. They sent the youngsters of the town after him who threw stones as he walked away with pain and rejection. He bled profusely. Blood poured down his body and congealed in the clogs he was wearing, which he prevented from touching the ground, fearing that Allāh's punishment may reach Ṭā'if if he let this happen.

His condition could have even melted the hearts of his most ardent enemies. As he took temporary shelter in a garden, an avowed enemy, moved by the appearance of the Prophet, sent grapes for him to quench his thirst. Allāh ﷻ sent down an angel who promised to destroy those who rejected the Divine call on his command. The Prophet ﷺ said he had forgiven the people of Ṭā'if despite the barbaric treatment they subjected him to. Regarding their rejection, the Prophet ﷺ prayed that some day they or their offspring would enter the fold of Islām.

Inviting the Arab Tribes

The Prophet returned to Makkah during the month of Ḥajj. He took this opportunity to invite the different Arab tribes gathered for the sacred pilgrimage.

It was during this season, in the eleventh year of Prophethood, that the call of Islām was answered by a group of people from Yathrib (Madinah).

This group consisted of six individuals from the tribe of Khazraj. They had always heard the Jews of Madinah speak of a final prophet, and the Prophet ﷺ fitted in perfectly with their given description. They were overwhelmed to find themselves in his noble presence. They listened to the message with much enthusiasm and wasted no time in accepting it. They also pledged to convey the message to others.

Mi`rāj (The Ascension)

After Ṭā'if were some of the most distressing and trying times for the Prophet ﷺ who was still affected by the loss of two of his great assets and supports. It is difficult to even imagine the extent of the grief and sorrow which he experienced at the time. It was at this juncture that Allāh ﷻ, in His Mercy, called him up to the heavens. This event raised the spirits of the Prophet and prepared him mentally and spiritually for adversities ahead.

The journey is referred to as Mi`rāj, but in reality there were two parts to the journey. The first was from Makkah to Bayt al-Maqdis in Jerusalem, which is known as the Isrā or the night journey. Mi`raj, meaning ascension, refers to the second part of the journey, where the Prophet ﷺ travelled from there to the heavens and Allāh's court.

The Journey to the Almighty

The Mi`rāj was in reality a journey to Allāh. Muḥammad ﷺ was the only prophet to have ever been honoured with Divine intimacy. En route he witnessed many spectacles, details of which are contained in the traditions that relate the event. In brief he was taken by angels from Makkah first to Bayt al-Maqdis. Here a large congregation comprising all the past Prophets ﷺ awaited him. He was to lead them in prayer, which he did. He was then taken to the heavens. On different heavens he met with various distinguished Prophets. His conversations with these prophets are also noted in the narratives. He was also made to see many spectacles of both Paradise and Hell, which he conveyed to the Ummah to take lesson from.

The final part of this journey was the meeting with the Almighty. This was a place where even the closest of angels and Prophets had not set foot. Even Jibril ﷺ, the Archangel, who was accompanying the Prophet ﷺ throughout the journey, stopped at a station below and expressed his inability to go any further.

The journeys of Isrā and Mi`rāj took place within a single moment. Being miraculous and Divinely ordained, the journey was not bound by the restrictions of time, space or physics.

The next morning he told the Quraysh about his extraordinary journey. They refused to believe him. They laughed at the story and sneered at the Muslims, “Look what he has come out with now!”

People approached Abū Bakr ؓ and asked him what he had to say of it, he unhesitatingly replied, “If Muḥammad ﷺ has said this then it has to be true. I have believed in things more remote than this.”

The Kuffār then tried to prove the Prophet ﷺ as being a liar, by asking him, of the positions of their caravans that were en route to Syria who, if he had travelled to Jerusalem, he would have met. The Prophet ﷺ answered their questions and even told them when they would arrive.

The Kuffār then tried to test him on how Jerusalem and specifically Masjid al-Aqsā were in appearance, to little impossible details as how many windows did it have on any specific face. This too the Prophet ﷺ answered.

As to how he did this, the Prophet ﷺ said that while being interrogated Allāh ﷻ had folded up the expanse between his eyes and each object asked about, so that he could see and describe each object. Furthermore, the caravans returned at the exact times specified and, according to some sources, there were some (non-Muslims) in the caravan who swore that they had seen the Prophet ﷺ overtake them.

First Pledge of `Aqabah

The following year, which was the twelfth year of Prophethood, a group of twelve came from Yathrib (Madinah). They made a pledge to stay on Islām and they swore not to go against its principles, teachings, morality or mission.

`Aqabah means a small hill in Arabic, and because the pledge was taken near a hillock, it was thus named the Pledge of `Aqabah.

After this covenant, the Prophet ﷺ sent Muş`ab ibn `Umair ؓ to Madīnah as Islām's first teacher there. Muş`ab ؓ fulfilled his duties and prepared the ground for the arrival of the Prophet ﷺ. Almost every house in Madīnah now resounded with the call of Islām.

Second Pledge of `Aqabah

The following year, again during the season of pilgrimage, Muṣ`ab ibn `Umair ﷺ returned to Makkah with seventy new recruits to the faith. They arranged a secret meeting with the Prophet ﷺ near the same hillock. In this meeting they swore to protect the Prophet ﷺ in that manner which they would protect their own families.

Hijrah (Migration)

Following this second pledge, the Prophet ﷺ announced that the Muslims of Makkah were to migrate to Madinah. Leaving everything behind, Muslims made their way to a city that promised them protection. They travelled individually and in groups. The Prophet ﷺ himself, however, had not yet left.

Emigration was a matter which Makkah would not tolerate. They knew very well what that meant. Apart from guaranteeing the Muslims deliverance from oppression at their hands, emigration carried the spectre of expansion of the Muslims' religion, and they could not tolerate this. They decided to end Islām and its propagating in the only way they knew how, and that was to assassinate the Prophet ﷺ.

The Arabs were a tribal community, so any damage done to an individual meant facing the vengeance of an entire tribe and their allies. This was one reason why assassination of the Prophet ﷺ had never been easy. Here too, although the moment was right, it was not an easy task. Conscious of the volatile nature of the matter, the leaders of the Quraysh hatched a plot with great ingenuity.

It was decided that a group, comprising of individuals from each tribe, would collectively carry out the assassination. This way there would be

no possibility of the Banū Hāshim retaliating, as they would be up against all the tribes of Makkah.

The Prophet ﷺ was instructed by Allāh ﷻ to leave for Madinah the very night the Quraysh had plotted to assassinate him. The prospective assassins surrounded the house of the Prophet ﷺ and waited for dawn, the allotted killing time.

The Prophet ﷺ instructed `Alī ؑ to sleep on his bed; he was also instructed to return all entrusted items to their rightful owners, who had left them by the Prophet ﷺ for safe-keeping.

At the time instructed by Allāh ﷻ, the Prophet ﷺ left his house, which was under extensive surveillance. In a miraculous way, reciting the Qurʾān all the while, he passed in front of them and they were unable to see him.

When they raided the house in the morning, they were amazed to see that the Prophet ﷺ had disappeared and instead `Alī ؑ lay on his bed. Immediately the Quraysh went in pursuit of the Prophet.

After leaving the house, the Prophet ﷺ went to Abū Bakr ؓ who was waiting with two ready camels. They travelled to the outskirts of Makkah and took refuge in the cave of Thawr for three days. Asmāʾ ؓ, the daughter of Abū Bakr, would bring them food there.

Some of the pursuers hit upon the cave where the Prophet ﷺ and Abū Bakr ؓ had taken refuge. Seeing the enemies at such a close distance, Abū Bakr ؓ remarked that if the enemies were to lower their gazes they would undoubtedly spot them. Very calmly and reassuringly, the Prophet ﷺ responded: "What do you say, Abū Bakr ؓ, of the pair whose third companion is Allāh?"

Through the Will of Allāh intervening, despite being in such close proximity, the pursuers were not able to see them. Through Allāh's will, a spider had, upon their entry, immediately spun a web across the cave mouth and a pigeon had built a nest at its entrance. This too contributed in the deliverance of the Prophet from the Makkans, as they were convinced no fresh entry could have been made with spider webs and pigeon nests in and around it.

The Makkans had put a price on the heads of these two noble fugitives. Many tried their luck but failed. Some got very close to them too. Surāqah ibn Mālik ibn Ju`sham was one of them. As he recognised the two, he tried to advance towards them but the legs of his horse began to sink in the ground.

Realising that this was due to supernatural reasons, he begged the Prophet ﷺ to pray for his safety and promised not to pursue them. Once freed, he failed to keep his promise and being overtaken by greed for the reward once again became overtaken by the same predicament. He was freed for a second time. This time he not only kept his word, but promised support too. He even offered them provisions but the Prophet ﷺ refused.

He requested him only not to disclose their whereabouts. Surāqah promised not to divulge this secret and he returned to Makkah.

Qubā

News of the Prophet's ﷺ departure from Makkah had spread throughout Madinah. The Madīnites eagerly awaited the arrival of the Prophet ﷺ. Each day they gathered outside the city, anxiously awaiting the arrival of the great personality of whom most had only heard of.

On Monday, 8th Rabi` al-Awwal, the fourteenth year of Prophethood, i.e. 23rd September 622 CE, the Prophet ﷺ arrived in Qubā, which was not too far from Madīnah (today it is within the city).

Allāh's Messenger ﷺ stayed in Qubā for four days; i.e. from Monday, to Thursday. During this time he built the first Masjid (Mosque) built in the history of Islām. On the fifth day he left for Madinah.

Arrival in Madīnah

People rushed to the site to catch a glimpse of their hero and Messenger. The scene was breathtaking, as the Muslims looked on with reverence at the person of the Prophet ﷺ. The joy that overtook Madinah on that day is indescribable. Sentiments of adoration, passion and veneration filled the atmosphere. Men and women stood in awe and children broke out in verse. Madinah was a changed city.

Everyone wanted to have the honour of receiving the Prophet ﷺ at his house, but the Prophet ﷺ said he would leave the matter to his she-camel. 'She has been instructed', he said. 'Where she stops will determine my place of stay.' The camel stopped near the homes of the Banī al-Najjār - the tribe to which the Prophet's mother belonged - at the house of Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī ؓ, the Prophet's ﷺ maternal cousin.

Masjid of Madīnah

The very first task which the Prophet ﷺ undertook after coming to Madinah was the building of a Masjid. It was imperative for the new Islamic community to have a place where, in addition to worship and devotion, they could settle social and legal affairs, as well as address arising problems and situations. This was also to be a place of learning

and education for them. With all this in mind, the Prophet ﷺ decided to purchase a plot of land. One suitable plot belonged to two orphan boys, Sahl and Suhayl. Hearing of the Prophet's ﷺ interest, they offered the land for free but the Prophet ﷺ declined and purchased it.

As work towards the construction began, the Prophet ﷺ himself took part in the common labour. The walls of the masjid were formed of mud and stone and palm tree-trunks were used as pillars. This humble building may have been a very simple and meagre structure, but spiritually, it was the most spectacular and beautiful of all buildings.

Islāmic Brotherhood

The Prophet ﷺ now turned his attention to the affairs of the Muslim community. The new community was composed of two main groups; one being the Muhājirūn (Migrants) and the other being the Anṣār (Helpers). The Muhājirūn had left all their possessions behind and needed the urgent help and support of the local people; hence the term Anṣār for the host community. The Prophet ﷺ gathered the Muhājirūn and Anṣār and proposed that each Anṣārī take a Muhājir in his care and treat him like a brother. The Anṣār complied with much zeal and passion. Some even went to the extent of offering to divorce one of their two wives for the sake of their single Muhājir brother.

Treaty with the Jews

Madīnah had three Jewish tribes: Banū Naḍir, Banū Qaynuqā` and Banū Qurayzah. The Prophet's main concern was peaceful coexistence between the Muslim and Jewish communities. For this to materialize, an agreement had to be formed. This was done with great

efficiency. The clauses included freedom of practising religion, mutual support in the event of foreign aggression and protection of basic rights. Being the head of the community, the Prophet was designated as the arbitrator should any dispute arise. All three tribes were party to the treaty.

The Hypocrites

Before the arrival of the Prophet ﷺ in Madīnah, the warring tribes of Awṣ and Khazraj had decided to appoint a leader between them. The man chosen was `Abdullāh ibn `Ubayy. However, since now the Prophet ﷺ headed all matters, `Abdullāh ibn `Ubayy was left in a vacuum for which he felt extremely bitter. Being a shrewd individual, he thought it best not to challenge the status quo head on, as he realised there was nothing for him to gain in doing so. He and his followers decided destroy Islām from the foundations by masquerading as Muslims. They came to be known as the Munāfiqūn (hypocrites); people who professed to be Muslims but were the enemies of the religion at heart.

During the entire life of the Prophet ﷺ, the Munāfiqūn endeavoured unabatedly to bring damage and disrepute to Islām. Some prominent among the hypocrites were known to the Muslims whilst the majority remained unknown. The Prophet ﷺ however was given the identity of every one of them by Allāh. He never disclosed the identities to anyone but one of his companions; nor did he try to eliminate these subversive elements from the developing Muslim community. This was a diplomatic move which had far-reaching effects.

The Battles

The formation of an Islamic state was difficult for the Quraysh to stomach. Their migration to safety had been hard enough to swallow. Anger had to be vented somehow and somewhere; and the Muslims left behind in Makkah bore the brunt of it. They were singled out for continual persecution.

The Prophet ﷺ, on the other hand, desired to demonstrate that Islām was now a force to be reckoned with and that Muslims did not fear the Makkans any more. Until now, the taking up of arms, even in self-defence, had not been permitted by Allāh ﷻ. Now with the aim of the defence and security of the newly-established state, Allāh ﷻ granted them permission to launch military expeditions against the Makkans and other enemies of Islām, both defensively and offensively. The guidelines of conduct given by Allāh and His Messenger were as applicable then as they are now, and in almost all cases even more strict than today's human rights and Geneva conventions.

On seeing the power of the Muslims grow, the Quraysh decided to attack the Muslims and be done with them once and for all. With this aim, the Quraysh levied tax on all Makkans. Accrued revenue was to be invested in trade, the profits of which were intended for funding a decisive battle against the Muslims.

Battle of Badr - Ramaḍān 2 A.H.

A caravan led by Abū Sufyān, a notable chieftain of Makkah, was returning from Syria with goods. Considering this to be a strategic target, the Prophet ﷺ decided to attack the caravan to deal a devastating blow to the Makkans.

He encouraged the Muslims to intercept the caravan. People were free to participate in the expedition, and those who wished not to were under no obligation.

Upon being notified of the Muslim advance, Abū Sufyān immediately dispatched a rider to Makkah seeking reinforcements and changed routes and managed to escape. An army of 1000 people left Makkah under the command of Abū Jahal to aid Abū Sufyān, but on the way were informed that he had managed to escape. Abū Jahal refused to turn back but insisted on meeting the Muslims in battle.

The Muslims were 313 in number and were very ill-equipped. Due to Abū Sufyān's manoeuvre, the Prophet ﷺ missed the caravan. He, upon hearing of the coming army, set out to face them at a place called Badr.

The Prophet ﷺ spent the entire eve of the battle praying to Allāh ﷻ. He cried, "O Allāh, if this small group of men perished tomorrow, none will worship you till the Last Day."

The battle commenced on 17th of Ramaḍān. As per the custom of Arabia, the battle began with hand-to-hand combat of celebrated warriors from both sides. This was followed by a full scale battle.

The Qur'ān mentions of Divine assistance at Badr. Reinforcements had come in the form of angels. The Muslims felt tremendous boost in their courage and confidence. They fought bravely until the enemy could withstand no more and were forced to accept defeat. It was an amazing victory, considering, in particular, the difference in men and weapons. 70 Makkans were killed, including many leaders of Quraysh such as Abū Jahl, Shaybah, Umayyah ibn Khalaf and others. 70 others were taken as prisoners. On the Muslim side there were 13 fatalities.

The prisoners were taken back to Madinah and given the best possible treatment. Many were released in lieu of ransom. Those who could not afford ransom and were literate were asked to teach reading and writing to a group of Muslim children to secure their freedom.

The Makkan army returned disheartened but vowed to avenge the deaths of their leaders. They elected Abū Sufyān as the new leader and overall commander, and immediately they began preparing for battle.

Battle of Uḥud - Shawwāl 3 A.H.

Once preparations were complete, Abū Sufyān led an army of 3,000 and marched towards Madinah with a bloodthirsty desire for revenge.

When the Prophet ﷺ heard of this, he gathered his companions and consulted with them on the matter.

Many opinions were presented. `Abdullāh ibn Ubayy (the leader of the hypocrites) was of the opinion that no battle should be fought outside of Madinah; rather Madinah should be defended from within. (This would serve his purpose as treachery would be so much easier.)

The Prophet ﷺ was inclined to this view, among the reasons was the advantage of accessibility of necessities. Numerous companions who had been absent in the Battle of Badr were eager to fight and defend the honour of Islām. Eventually the Prophet ﷺ decided to meet the Makkan army head-on and left Madinah with a thousand men.

As the Makkan army came into view, `Abdullāh ibn Ubayy along with 300 men (of the hypocrites) withdrew from the army and returned to Madinah on the pretence of being mistrusted; that the Prophet ﷺ had not acted on his advice.

The Prophet ﷺ positioned the Muslim army in front of Mount Uhud. He also placed a group of 50 archers under the command of `Abdullāh ibn Jubayr ؓ on the pass and instructed that under no circumstances should they leave their positions. This was done to prevent any flanking and rear attacks from the pass.

The battle was fierce and eventually the ranks of Quraysh broke and they fled the battlefield. Seeing the Makkan army retreat, the Muslims began to gather the booty. The archers, who were strictly prohibited to leave their positions, joined them in collecting the booty.

Seeing the archers move from their positions, Khālid ibn Walid ؓ, a skilled warrior of the Quraysh, led his men from the pass and launched a sudden rear attack on the unwary Muslims. The Muslims were caught unwary, they buckled under the onslaught and lost bearings. Upon this, the retreating army of Quraysh changed directions and advanced forward now. This disorientated the Muslims further, and many were killed as a result. The Prophet ﷺ was left unprotected in this confusion and the Quraysh exploited this opportunity and pushed ahead towards him. Consequently, the Prophet ﷺ was injured and lost a few teeth in the commotion.

The last thing needed in these tragic moments were rumours of the Prophet ﷺ dying. These rumours became the final nail in the coffin for many Muslims. Many stopped fighting and threw their weapons to the ground, questioning the very reason for fighting. A companion by the name of Anas ibn Naḍr ؓ passed by a group of people who were standing bemused. He asked them, "What are you waiting for?" They replied, "Allāh's Messenger ﷺ has been killed." Anas ؓ replied, "Then what do you live for after him? Come on and die for what Allāh's Messenger ﷺ has died for!" He then fought bravely till he was killed. When his body was found, it was mutilated beyond recognition. It was his sister who was able to identify him through his finger tips.

Amidst the disarray, Ka`b ibn Mālik ﷺ saw the Prophet ﷺ and called out, “The Prophet is alive!” The Muslim army rallied at the news. A group of nine men gathered around the Prophet ﷺ and fought to defend him until eight were martyred ﷺ. Now only one stood in between the Prophet and the advancing Makkkan army. He was Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqās ﷺ.

Ṭalḥah ibn `Ubaydillāh ﷺ joined up with Sa`d and they both fought in the Prophet’s ﷺ defence. They showed remarkable courage, as they had to often fight many adversaries at once. Their efforts were fruitful as the Prophet ﷺ remained safe.

The Muslims then mounted a fierce counter-attack, driving the Quraysh back into an untenable position and forcing them to make a hasty retreat.

Abū Sufyān expressed great joy at the deaths of so many Muslims and declared joyously, “Now we have equalled the score for our soldiers killed at Badr!” “Never!” responded `Umar, “Our dead are in Heaven, while yours are in the Hell!”

Some of the bodies of the Muslim martyrs were mutilated. Among them was the beloved uncle of the Prophet ﷺ, Ḥamzah ﷺ, killed by the slave Waḥshī ibn Ḥarb who had been promised freedom by Hind, the wife of Abū Sufyān. Hamzah ﷺ had killed members of her family in Badr and Hind had pledged to chew his liver, which she did at Uhud.

Seventy Muslims ﷺ were martyred in the battle as opposed to the Makkans who lost very few of their men. Prominent among Muslim martyrs were Ḥamzah ﷺ and Muṣ`ab ibn `Umayr ﷺ.

Dealings with the Local Jews

Mutual support in the event of foreign aggression and maintaining of peaceful relations were clauses enshrined within the pact made with the Jews. However, the Jews, to their own detriment, failed to keep to their agreement. Instead, they tried at every opportunity to bring harm to the Muslims.

The Banū Qaynuqā` was the first Jewish tribe that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ dealt with. They had conspired against the Muslims on numerous occasions and even went as far as to declare war against them. The Prophet ﷺ led an army to their stronghold and besieged them. After a siege of fifteen days, the Banū Qaynuqā` surrendered. They went into exile and moved to Syria.

The Banū Naḍīr, on their part, would tip off the Quraysh of Muslim activities in an attempt to undermine the Muslim cause. They even made an attempt on the life of the Prophet ﷺ when he paid a visit to them. The Prophet ﷺ besieged them for two weeks. They eventually surrendered and migrated, taking their possessions along with them.

Battle of Aḥzāb - Dhul-Qa`dah 5 A.H.

Though the Quraysh had killed many Muslims in the Battle of Uḥud, they had not been able to eliminate them. And so they considered the Battle of Uḥud an incomplete task. With the aim of extermination, they made their preparations for a bloody execution. Abū Sufyān was able to call up 4,000 men, then a huge figure, just from Makkah. From the East, the Ghaṭfān and the Banū Sulaim allied with Quraysh for the joint mission. And, surprisingly, from Madinah, the Jewish tribe of the Banū Qurayẓah, in breach of all treaties, also joined them. In all, ten thousand men marched towards Madinah for the butchering.

When the Prophet ﷺ learnt of the impending attack, he sought counsel from the companions on how best to meet the challenge and protect Madīnah. Indeed it was the biggest challenge as yet facing the Muslims. Various opinions surfaced, but one in particular drew the attention of the Prophet ﷺ. This was the opinion of Salmān al-Fārsī ؓ, who hailed from Persia. He said, “O Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, in Persia, in the event of a siege, we dig trenches to protect ourselves.” This was a unique proposition and one worthwhile implementing. The Prophet ﷺ gave orders for trenches to be dug. Every group of ten was allocated forty yards of digging.

When the army under the command of Abū Sufyān reached Madīnah, they were shocked to see a massive trench barring their way. They made many attempts to cross it but were unsuccessful. Consequently, they decided to lay siege to Madīnah in an attempt to starve the Muslims to death. During this period, no significant fighting took place, as the trench would not allow that to happen. The siege lasted for 27 days, after which it ended unexpectedly. Two factors contributed to this; one natural and the other human.

An eminent individual from the enemy ranks embraced Islām without the knowledge of his tribe, and came to the Prophet ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ capitalized on this opportunity. He asked him to go back to his tribe and spread false rumours of defections and breaking of alliances. Since he had a standing within his tribe, he was able to sow suspicions in the various factions of the alliance. This was the human factor. The natural factor was a violent storm that hit Madīnah. The effects were devastating upon the encamped army. Tents were uprooted and possessions were scattered. Fear gripped the allies and they were forced to return home.

This was the last time Madīnah was attacked in the Prophet’s ﷺ life.

Siege of Banū Qurayzah – Dhul Qa`dah 5A.H.

Soon after, the Prophet ﷺ was commanded by Allāh ﷻ to deal with the Banū Qurayzah for their betrayal. They were in clear violation of the treaty. The treaty set out that they would ally with the Muslims if Madinah was under attack. Far from supporting the Muslims, they, in violation of the treaty and expression of clear betrayal, allied against the Muslims. This could in no way be overlooked.

The Prophet ﷺ announced to his companions that they were to march on the Banū Qurayzah. The Prophet ﷺ besieged them for a month, after which the Banū Qurayzah offered to surrender, but only under the terms which were set by Sa`d ibn Mu`adh ؓ, chief of the Awṣ tribe with whom they had previous good relations. Sa`d ؓ applied to them the mildest Judaic law on betrayal; that all able men should be killed, women and children taken as prisoners of war, and their goods be taken as spoils of war, as God had allowed them. (Deut. 20:10-14)

This law was in actual fact for a lesser offence; the actions of the Banū Qurayzah actually deserved worse punishment. For their offence, the Torah decrees: "Thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth" (Deut. 20:16). So according to their Law, no man, woman, or child should have been spared.

Treaty of Hūdaybiyah - Dhul-Qa`dah 6 A.H.

In the sixth year of Hijrah the Prophet ﷺ saw in a dream that he had entered the Ḥaram at Makkah with his companions and performed `Umrah. When the Prophet ﷺ informed his companions of the dream, they were overjoyed, for they knew that a prophet's dream was divinely inspired and thus to be enacted.

The Prophet ﷺ set out for Makkah in the month of Dhul-Qa`dah with around one and a half thousand Muslims with the intention of performing `Umrah. The Muslims were told that all weapons were to be left behind in Madinah. A sheathed sword was the only exception, as it was a common article of travel in those days.

At a place called Dhul-Ḥulayfah, he instructed all to don their Iḥrām (pilgrimage garments); this was to make their intentions known.

The Prophet ﷺ then advanced towards Makkah. En route he was informed that the route to Makkah had been blocked. On hearing this, he changed route and camped at a place called Ḥudaybiyah.

The Quraysh sent a tribal chief by the name of Budayl to enquire of the Prophet's ﷺ intentions. The Prophet ﷺ explained that their intention was peaceful and not to fight. Budayl passed the message on.

The Quraysh were however still reluctant to allow them entry. Negotiations between the Prophet ﷺ and the Makkans reached nowhere. The Prophet ﷺ eventually decided to send `Uthmān ؓ on his behalf to talk to the Quraysh leaders. `Uthmān ؓ was chosen because he belonged to the most powerful family in Makkah and so none would dare harm him.

`Uthman ؓ arrived in Makkah and visited the nobles, informing them of the Prophet's ﷺ intentions; he made it clear that the Prophet ﷺ had come solely to perform `Umrah and to worship in the sacred Ḥaram and had no intention of fighting whatsoever. Despite this, the Makkans did not change their position. They, however, gave `Uthmān ؓ permission to perform `Umrah. `Uthmān ؓ declined by saying, "How could I when the Messenger of Allāh is denied it?"

`Uthmān's ﷺ return to the Muslim camp was delayed and rumours spread of his death at the hands of the Makkans. This outraged the Muslims and they took a pledge on the hands of the Prophet ﷺ that they would fight till their death to avenge the murder of `Uthmān ﷺ. This pledge is known as Bay`ah (pledge) of ar-Riḍwān.

`Uthmān ﷺ later returned safely. Seeing the determination of the Muslims to defend their faith at all costs, the Quraysh finally came to their senses and decided to come to an agreement with the Prophet ﷺ.

They sent Suhayl ibn `Amr to finalise the treaty. The main clauses of the treaty were as follows:

- The Muslims would return to Madīnah without performing `Umrah this year. They would come back the following year for `Umrah, but would only stay in Makkah for three days.
- All hostilities would be suspended between the two parties for ten years.
- The Arabs were free to enter into alliance with whichever party they liked.
- If anyone (Muslim or non Muslim) from Makkah was to go to Madīnah, he would be deemed a fugitive and be sent back to Makkah; but if anyone from Madīnah happened to come to Makkah, he would not be returned.

The Muslims were enraged to find themselves being treated with such inferiority and humiliation. The Prophet, however, explained that this would work out for the benefit of the Muslims, and it ultimately did.

The Message of Islām Spreads

While evidently very one-sided, the treaty of Ḥudaybiyah enabled the

Prophet ﷺ to spread the Message of Islām not only in the Arabian Peninsula but also to the kings of the then superpowers. Thus messengers were sent in all directions carrying the message of Islām.

ʿAbdullāh ibn Ḥudhayfah ؓ was sent to the Persian king, Khusroe. He was angered by the letter and tore it. When the Prophet ﷺ heard what he had done, he said, “May Allāh tear his kingdom to pieces too.” Soon after, his son murdered him and his kingdom was destroyed.

Diḥyah ibn Khalīfah al-Kalbī ؓ was instructed to hand the letter of the Prophet ﷺ to the Governor of Basra, who in turn would send it to Caesar, the Roman emperor.

Ḥaṭīb ibn Abī Balta`ah ؓ was chosen to take the letter to the King of Egypt, Muqawqis.

Letters were also sent out to various other kingdoms, such as Bahrain, Yamāmah, Damascus and Oman.

Conquest of Khaybar – Muḥarram 7A.H.

The Jews of Qaynuqā` sought refuge in the Jewish stronghold of Khaybar when they were expelled from Madinah. The Jews of Khaybar along with the tribe of Ghaṭfān took advantage of the long distance between them and Madinah and soon began to make preparations for a major confrontation. When their activities reached a stage which could no longer be tolerated, the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ took action.

The Prophet ﷺ set out for Khaybar with 1,400 men to end the threat. Khaybar was divided into two sections: the first had five fortresses and the second had three. The Prophet besieged them for two weeks. Then one evening he announced: “Tomorrow I will give this flag to a

person who loves Allāh and his Prophet, and at whose hands Allāh will grant victory.”

That morning, people waited anxiously as to who would receive the honour. The banner was given to `Alī ﷺ, who led the attack and fought until the enemy surrendered. The siege of Khaybar lasted for 20 days. 90 enemy combatants were killed whilst 15 Muslims were martyred.

The Jews begged not to be expelled from Khaybar. They promised in return to give half of their crops to the Muslims. The Prophet ﷺ agreed and the two parties signed a treaty to that effect.

`Umrah al-Qaḍā' (Required `Umrah) Dhul-Qa`dah 7A.H.

At the end of the seventh year of Hijrah, the Prophet ﷺ set out for `Umrah with his companions as was agreed in the treaty of Ḥudaybiyah the year before. The Prophet ﷺ stayed in Makkah for three days, and then returned to Madinah.

Conquest of Makkah Ramaḍān 8 A.H.

According to the treaty of Hudaybiyah, the Arab tribes were free to join in allegiance to either the Muslims or the Makkans. The Banū Bakr had allied themselves with the Makkans and the Khuzā`ah had joined the Muslims. They lived in peace for a few years, but soon old hostilities resurfaced. Banū Bakr attacked Khuzā`ah with the aid of the Quraysh. The Khuzā`ah sought refuge in the Ḥaram, but the sanctuary of the Ḥaram was not honoured either and many of them were slain. This breach nullified the treaty between the Muslims and the Quraysh.

The Quraysh realised what they had done and immediately sent Abū

Sufyān to Madīnah to try and revive the treaty, but this yielded no fruit, for the treaty had been broken and the culprits were the Makkans. If they could break it, the Muslims had the right not to revive it.

The Prophet ﷺ immediately prepared to leave for Makkah. Every precaution was taken to keep the Makkans unaware of the arrival of the Muslim army. On the 10th of Ramaḍān, 8 A.H., the Prophet ﷺ left Madīnah with ten thousand soldiers. The Muslims camped at a place called Mar az-Zahrān. Abū Sufyān came to investigate there in the evening and met the Prophet's uncle `Abbās ؓ before coming to the Prophet ﷺ. `Abbās ؓ encouraged him to embrace Islām and persuade the Makkans to surrender. Abū Sufyān then went to meet the Prophet ﷺ along with `Abbās ؓ. There, in the presence of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, Abū Sufyān ؓ embraced the faith he for so long had resisted.

The Muslim army triumphantly entered Makkah on the morning of Tuesday, 17th Ramaḍān 8 AH. The Makkans surrendered without any resistance. They then gathered in the Ḥaram and awaited the arrival of the Prophet ﷺ. The Muslims had the power to cause much death and destruction, yet they displayed the highest standards of humanity and civilization. It was possible for them to avenge the torture and suffering which they had sustained at the hands of the Makkans, yet they treated these very oppressors with compassion. They could have slain every living being of Makkah, yet they forgave and pardoned.

Onlookers described the entry of the Prophet ﷺ into Makkah. He entered not like a triumphant conqueror, but as a humble servant. His head was lowered in humility before the very God who had granted victory. Turning to the trembling Makkans, he asked, "What do you expect at my hands?" They replied, "Kindness, O compassionate brother, and compassionate nephew." The Messenger replied, "So be it. There shall be no blame. May Allāh forgive you, and he is the most Merciful of those who shows mercy.'

Many accepted Islam at this juncture. Most notable among these was Hind ؓ, the wife of Abu Sufyan ؓ who had inhumanely chewed the liver of Ḥamzah, the Prophet's uncle.

Many attribute mass conversions to Islām because of the sword. Which sword was put at the throats of the Makkans on this occasion? Indeed it was the sword of love and compassion; of mercy and forgiveness; of justice and humanity and nothing else.

The Prophet ﷺ then headed to the Ka`bah and purified it of the 360 idols that lay within it. He then asked Bilāl, the Abyssinian former slave, to climb the Ka`bah and call out the Adhān (call to prayer) from there.

Battle of Ḥunain – Shawwāl 8A.H.

Following the conquest of Makkah, the nearby tribes of Hawāzin and Thaqīf refused to coexist with the Muslims. The chief of the Hawāzin, Malik ibn 'Awf, rallied neighbouring tribes and mobilized an army against the Muslims. When the Prophet received news of this threat, he prepared an army of 12,000, which included 2,000 Makkans, and marched towards the valley of Ḥunain.

When the Muslim army advanced into the valley, they found the enemy forces lying in ambush. They were renowned for their skill in archery, which they now demonstrated brilliantly. The Muslim army was bombarded with arrows from all directions, causing confusion and disorder among their ranks, and eventually leading to a retreat of their forces. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, however, stood firm and continued marching forward. His rallying cry was a line which he sung in an almost poetic way:

*"I am the Messenger, beyond doubt;
I am the (grand) son of `Abdul Muttalib".*

Soon enough, people rallied to his call, and retreat quickly turned into counter-attack. The enemy were consequently forced back. The enemy troops fled to Tā'if and fortified themselves inside the town. The Prophet ﷺ too, in their pursuit, headed for Ta'if. He laid siege to the fort for approximately 2 weeks, after which he returned to Madinah. The reason for his return was his being informed that the enemy had enough supplies to last over a year.

March to Tabūk – Rajab 9 A.H.

The rising power of Islām was becoming unbearable for the Roman ruler of Syria. He decided to crush the growing force within the Arabian Peninsula before it expanded outwards. To achieve this aim, he mobilized a mighty force.

News of troops gathering on the border reached Madinah through merchants arriving from Syria. This had an adverse effect on the residents of Madinah, who now lived in constant fear of an impending attack. Seeing the deteriorating situation, the Prophet ﷺ ordered the Muslims to prepare for battle. He sought assistance from the Makkans and other Arab tribes.

Contrary to his practice, he informed the people of the destination, so that they may fully prepare for the long journey that lay ahead.

30,000 men were mobilized for the battle. The Prophet ﷺ encouraged the companions to give generously towards the cause. `Uthmān ؓ gave 10,000 dinars (gold coins) and 3,000 camels. `Umar ؓ brought half of his entire possession, and Abū Bakr ؓ left nothing behind at all.

The Muslim army left Madinah and marched towards Tabūk. Upon discovering the Muslim advance, the Romans and their allies turned

back and fled into their territories. The Prophet ﷺ stayed in Tabūk for twenty days and made treaties with local tribes there. He then returned to Madinah. This was to be the Prophet's ﷺ last expedition.

Farewell Pilgrimage - Dhul-Hijjah 10 A.H.

In 10 A.H. the Prophet ﷺ announced his intention to perform Ḥajj. People from all over Arabia gathered to perform the pilgrimage with the Prophet of Allāh ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ departed from Madinah in late Dhul-Qa`dah and arrived in Makkah in early Dhul-Hijjah. He performed `Umrah before proceeding for Ḥajj. On the plain of `Arafah, he addressed a huge congregation of approximately 124,000 people. In this historic speech he outlined many important points. He particularly highlighted basic rights of individuals and people's duties to one another. Upon completing the rituals of Ḥajj the Prophet ﷺ returned to Madinah.

Demise of Allāh's Messenger ﷺ – Rabi` al-Awwal 11 A.H.

The Prophet ﷺ returned from Makkah on Monday the 29th of Ṣafar. Subsequently, he fell ill. When his health declined considerably, he, with the permission of his wives, moved to the house of `Ā'ishah ؓ. It was here that he spent the last week of his life. During his illness he instructed Abū Bakr ؓ to lead the prayers. He lost consciousness many times prior to death. Even moments before death he reminded people not to forsake the rights of each other.

According to most historians, the Prophet ﷺ died on Monday, 12th Rabi`ul Awwal 11 A.H. His body was bathed by `Abbās, `Ali and Faḍl ibn `Abbās ؓ well into Tuesday night, approaching Wednesday morning. He was buried in the house of `Ā'ishah ؓ.