

tribesmen viewed as the compassionate father figure who protected them and saw to their welfare. Removing such a leader from his position at such a time was not a matter that was at all easily accepted. At the same time, he was leading his men in the greatest of all conquests. The matter was as delicate as not to allow for changing horses in midstream. Despite the fact that conditions were anything but conducive to putting such a preference into play, God's Messenger addressed the incident head-on and did not leave it unresolved. Even if it was a commander who uttered these words, he stripped him of his title and appointed Sa'd's son Qays in his place.⁵⁴²

In this way, he demonstrated to those members of his community who were in positions of leadership that removing an individual or commander from office when necessary was also part of the Prophetic methodology. But this was not a Prophetic practice that could be implemented anywhere and at anytime, and only those walking on the Prophetic path could do so.⁵⁴³

Attitude of the Meccans

Abu Sufyan was reborn at Marr al-Zahran and he now returned to Mecca with a brand new identity. Seeing his arrival from afar, his wife Hind had gone into a rage. She noticed almost at once that her husband, whom they had sent to inspect the surrounds, had returned a changed man. This she read from his manner of walking. She called out to the Meccans, pointing to her husband, "Kill this traitor!" When he came up to her, she seized him by the collar, screaming insults at him while pulling at his beard. "Kill this old coward! What a rotten protector and disgraceful leader of the people," she screamed, kicking her husband, the chief of Meccan, for all the Meccans to see.

An argument between husband and wife getting too far out of hand. Hind possessed a spirited and dominant temperament; she knew how to make herself heard in assemblies and drew the attention of the people with her flair for language and literature. But the times had changed, and the era was now another. Even the sun rose over Mecca in a different way that day. Worried of his wife's evil intent, Abu Sufyan's attitude was that there was no need for foolhardiness and he invited the Meccans to common sense. "O people of the Quraysh," he proclaimed. Indicating his wife Hind with one hand, he scolded the Meccans saying, "Shame on you! Let not this woman deceive you. Here is Muhammad in full march upon us with an army that you cannot possibly resist. And he is right on our doorstep."

⁵⁴² Vâkîdî, *Megâzî* 554; İbn-i Seyyidi'n-Nâs; Uyûnu'l-Eser 2/221; İbn-i Asâkir, *Târih* 23/454; İbn-i Kayyım, *Câmi'* 194; Sâlihî, *Sübûlü'l-Hüdâ*, 5/221-222. It seems to me that this incident has much to teach us, on the point of solving those problems in our day that have become gangrenous and that we have just not managed to resolve.

⁵⁴³ The message that the Messenger of God gives to his community, with such sensitivity and resolve is axiomatic. By means of the steps that he took at such a time where a tangible action had not yet been undertaken and where emotion had only just been rendered into speech, he says to us who constantly make the same mistakes and who cannot seem to get back on our feet: "If you seek to solve your problems which have become affected by gangrene, then be as transparent as you possibly can!" Do not cover up the mistakes of others, even if they be those closest to you. For that matter, impose even heavier sanctions on their wrongs, however small. When people who are required, by virtue of their position, to display even greater sensitivity and care make such outbursts, subject them to a penalty that everyone can see so that similar wrongs are not repeated by those in similar positions."

This was the moment where all their worst fears came true. Their leader Abu Sufyan brought the news that they had so dreaded. All hope was lost and the Quraysh who could not even see beyond the end of their nose was done for. They looked at one another, trying to make sense of what Abu Sufyan was saying. He was in dead earnest. Medina had truly come all the way to their door in the tens of thousands, unawares. Would could they have possibly done at this point in time against an army that was but a short distance away. At a loss as to what to do, there were some who questioned what could indeed be done. The fairest suggestion came again from Abu Sufyan: “O people, embrace Islam and you shall be safe.”⁵⁴⁴

This was the second shock they experienced. They had already suspected as much, but merely thought that they had to have been mistaken. Now, however, the situation was completely different and at a time they least expected it, Abu Sufyan was himself saying that he had become Muslim. What is more, he invited them to do so too, wanting them to accept the religion that they had resisted for twenty-one years, and he deemed this the sole means of their deliverance.

They were in complete despair. Until that day, they had spoken nothing but hatred and hostility in Mecca and had constantly thought of evil where God and His Messenger were concerned. Even if the objections of the consciences they could not entirely dominate rose from time to time, they perpetually suppressed these with the strategies of chaos that came out of the Dar al-Nadwa, and they imprisoned the Prophetic mercy that struggled for them despite everything they had done, behind the thick walls that they had built in front of them. The despair they now faced brought these dark and thick walls to their notice and they strove to empathize by looking at the matter through the eyes of their leader who had overcome them. This was not all that he had to say to them, in any case, and he thus began to convey the amnesty he had received from God’s Messenger. “Whoever enters the house of Abu Sufyan is safe,” he had barely managed to say when one of people from the crowd shouted, “May God denounce you! What good will Abu Sufyan’s house be against all our numbers?”

He had reacted in exactly the same way at Marr al-Zahran and made a similar objection. Looking at the interjector as if to say, “Just wait. Do not rush!” Abu Sufyan continued:

“Whoever closes their door is safe! Whoever enters the Ka’ba is safe.”

Even if their feeling did not respond to this call, there was nothing else to be done. It appeared that they Quraysh had no other choice but to acquiesce. The truth of the matter was, however, that the Power Who years earlier heralded entry into Mecca in peace and security, bestowed an equitable leader like Abu Sufyan with insight, and he was now playing the role that fate had cast for him in the surrender of Mecca.

Self-Effacement and Humility

The self-effacement and humility that God’s Messenger put forth in realizing the conquest of Mecca on its own holds importance in his winning over the hearts of the people. This stance of God’s Messenger was not one that was particular to just this day, or one that he exhibited temporarily in regard solely the Meccans. He was forever the hero of self-effacement and humility. God’s Messenger, the humblest servant of the All-Merciful to walk the earth, is the

⁵⁴⁴ Ibn-i Hişâm, *Sîre* 4/22, 23; Taberî, *Târîh* 2/331, 332; İbnü'l-Esîr, *Kâmil* 2/228, 229

perfected human being who represents God's will⁵⁴⁵ in this regard to the utmost degree and who prescribed⁵⁴⁶ the same to his Companions. This is because humility is the most important criterion of greatness. Bowing and being bent double in humility is the hallmark of those of elevated stature.

Hence, at the conquest of Mecca that was the pinnacle, the completion of his twenty-one year composition of verse, we see God's Messenger at the peak of humility also:

One Friday, coinciding with the thirteenth of Ramadan, he set off from Marr al-Zahran with his Companions and came all the way to a place called Dhu Tuwa. He was to advance on the homeland that he was forced to leave eight years earlier, the blessed city Mecca, hosting the Sacred House within its walls. Everyone wanted to set off within him on this historic journey, and like stars haloing around the moon, they flowed towards the Valley of Becca in anticipation of a certain victory. He had wrapped a long turban around his head, letting the end trail down over his shoulder.⁵⁴⁷

Behind him,⁵⁴⁸ rode curly-haired Usama, the son of Zayd the freedslave whom God's Messenger had promoted to the rank of commander. Even this in itself constituted a separate dimension of his humility. Clinging on to him from behind on such a historic journey, with arms that carried the potential to rule the future, was not the child of one of his leading Companions, or even one of his his grandchildren Hasan and Husayn who he described as two sweet basils, but the son of the dark-skinned slave who nobody anything of until he was taken by the hand with Islam.⁵⁴⁹

Meanwhile, he himself was physically bent double on the back of his blessed camel, so much so that his beard was almost touching the saddle of his camel Qaswa'.⁵⁵⁰ "My Lord," he said. "The true life is the life of the Hereafter."⁵⁵¹

In this way, he reminded the people that it is not the conquest of lands that is difficult; the true conquest was a person's doing justice to their willpower and ruling over their own inner world in spite of all the emotions and faculties compelling them. He thus exhorted those around him of the need for a person to avoid making the errors that would leave them in a difficult situation in the Hereafter. At the same time, for the Meccans this stance was laden with messages concerning how they would today be treated, despite their knowing no bounds in their hostility for the past twenty years. No one would be looked down on, nobody would be omitted, feelings of revenge would not be taken up, let alone anything unfavorable from the past brought up, nobody's wrong would be held against them, and not a single person would be

⁵⁴⁵ As a case in point, see Furkan 25/63; Şuara 26/215

⁵⁴⁶ For a sampling of relevant Traditions, see Ebû Dâvûd, Edeb 48 (4895); Tirmizî, *Birr* 82 (2029); İbn-i Mâce, Zühhd 16 (4176, 4179); Taberânî, 9/94 (8512)

⁵⁴⁷ Vâkîdî, *Megâzî* 555; Beyhakî, *Delâil* 5/68; İbn-i Kesîr, *Bidâye* 4/315

⁵⁴⁸ [Translator's note: He rode with God's Messenger on the camel's back, behind the saddle, in the manner of a pillion rider (radif). Customarily, the radif would use a cloth wrapped around the hump of the camel as a saddle.]

⁵⁴⁹ Vâkîdî, *Megâzî* 561; Sâlihî, *Sübülü'l-Hüdâ* 5/239

⁵⁵⁰ Vâkîdî, *Megâzî* 555; Beyhakî, *Delâil* 5/68; İbn-i Kesîr, *Bidâye* 4/315; Sâlihî, *Sübülü'l-Hüdâ* 5/226

⁵⁵¹ Vâkîdî, *Megâzî* 555; Sâlihî, *Sübülü'l-Hüdâ* 5/226

harmful. For the Messenger of God came to Mecca with the ideal of letting live. This is why he exhorted his Companions constantly: if a resistance was mounted, they were only allowed to fight against those who fought against them. His each and every step was an expression of yet another originality, and the Messenger's Conquest was again being realized in a manner and context that behooved him. He again divided his Companions into four columns and ordered them to each enter the city from four different directions.

He himself entered from the upper Ma'la quarter. These were places which bore the traces of three years' exile. These were places where Yasir and Sumayya were martyred, where Bilal's cries of pain reverberated in the Paran Mountain ranges, and whose streets bore the trace of many a bitter memory, of Khadija the hero of faithfulness, stoicism, and patience, first and foremost.

Meanwhile, the Meccan women displayed their jubilation by brushing the necks of the steeds with the kerchiefs they held in their hands. Far from any resistance, as the Messenger of God entered Mecca both doors and hearts had been opened wide for him. A conquest accompanied by the Meccans' songs of festivity was taking place. Upon entry into the city, slight resistance was encountered only at one of the points of entry, where Khalid ibn al-Walid entered from the lower end of the city. Those mounting this resistance were Khalid ibn al-Walid's former friends. Suhayl ibn 'Amr, Safwan ibn Umayya, and 'Ikrima led the small band, and when they realized that they could not contend with the Khalid ibn al-Walid they knew so well, they scurried off and resorted to fleeing. Clearly, this was demonstration that the true conquest was accomplished earlier, and that those who had trouble stomaching this had been relegated to a small, local faction. Hearts had been conquered and the only thing that remained to do was to come to the city today and 'certify' it. While now this certification was taking place and herein after, Mecca was preparing to host its true owner. When God's Messenger saw the state of the women, he called out to Abu Bakr saying, "What was it that Hasan had said?" This person of great discernment had grasped the meaning of this and began to recite a poem that depicted the scene laid out before him. This was of course the very same poem that Hasan ibn Thabit had voiced prior to Mecca's conquest and, precisely as was the case now, portrayed the women brushing the necks of the horses with their kerchiefs in jubilation upon entry into Mecca by way of Kada'. The Messenger of God commanded his division to "Enter from the direction indicated by Hasan."⁵⁵²

He had also summoned Zubayr, who he referred to as his "disciple", and ordered him to fix the banner he carried with him at Hajun and wait for his arrival there. Hajun was another source of sorrow for him, for it was to this land that he had entrusted his beloved wife of twenty-three years Khadija who supported him in the most difficult days in Mecca, after a three-year boycott. He would soon go and stand beside her grave and pray for her at length. Even when on the road to Conquest, God's Messenger changed his route and, in a profound sense of loyalty to her, prayed beside Khadija's grave for a considerable period of time.⁵⁵³

When he passed Adhakhir and saw the Meccan houses, he stopped and began praising God in deep gratitude and thankfulness. Again he had turned to God and was beseeching Him. He then

⁵⁵² Beyhakî, *Delâil* 5/66; Ibn-i Kesîr, *Bidâye* 4/317; Sâlihî, *Sübûlü'l-Hüdâ* 5/227

⁵⁵³ Buhârî, *Megazî* 48 (4280); Sâlihî, *Sübûlü'l-Hüdâ* 5/227

said, “O Jabir, this is where we will pitch our tent. This is also the place where the Quraysh swore an oath of loyalty to unbelief and where they once resolved to destroy us.”⁵⁵⁴

This no doubt meant: “From this day forth, it is not they who will set the agenda in Mecca, but us.” This was simultaneously an outcome that demonstrated the greatness of Divine power. The site that would bear witness to the judgment that the Meccans would make on that day against God’s Messenger and his Companions and the one that would attest to the judgment that God’s Messenger would today give in regard to them, was one and the same. The sole difference was that everyone had now begun to realize the variation between the two.

As he then continued to advance upon his mount, he recited the Qur’anic chapters Fath (The Victory) and Nasr (Help) and declared: “This is what God has promised me.” On that day, there were those who approached him and asked, “O Messenger of God, where will you stay tomorrow?” They presumably wished to learn whether he would go to the house that he was forced to leave years earlier, so that they could go and prepare it for his arrival. This would also constitute a means for the other Emigrants who would also betake themselves to their former homes. But God’s Messenger said, “Has ‘Aqil left for us any house to lodge in?” Abu Talib’s eldest son ‘Aqil had taken possession of everything that God’s Messenger had left behind, his house included, and had later sold them to others. Those who were witness to this scene offered other houses for God’s Messenger to stay in, but he did not take up any of these, instead indicating the direction of Hajun, where Zubayr had planted his standard. Whilst God’s most beloved servant was conquering this most venerable city in His eyes, he was not to expect nor indeed desire applause and show, and was to stay in a tent pitched at Hajun. And this is where he would remain up until his departure for Medina.⁵⁵⁵

There was another detail here that is worthy of note: God’s Messenger who conquered Mecca – the land where he was born and raised, where he had so many memories, bitter and sweet, and where he was honored with the mission of Prophethood – and was reunited with his twin⁵⁵⁶, shortened his prayers.⁵⁵⁷ This was plain indication that he would stay in Mecca for no more than ‘fifteen’ days. That is to say, contrary to the misrepresentation and propaganda aimed at instilling fear withing the people, he had not come here to stay. He had set off from Medina with the intention of returning there after taking on board his ship the Meccans who had not been able to understand the language of his call from afar.

Suhayl ibn ‘Amr

⁵⁵⁴ The words that Jabir heard from God's Messenger on this day reminded him of those which he had heard previously, when in Medina. God's Messenger had said: "If God grants us victory, we will camp at Khayf, of the Banu Kinana, where the Meccan polytheists swore an oath of loyalty to unbelief." On that day, the Meccans had come together and pledged to drive the Muslims out of Mecca and leave them to perish. But fate would now have it that God's Messenger and his Companions come to the same place, that which was foretold by God's Messenger, and from the very place the decree of their death was signed, they entered Mecca in victory. Vâkîdî, *Megâzî* 558; Sâlihî, *Sübülü'l-Hüdâ* 5/230

⁵⁵⁵ Vâkîdî, *Megâzî* 558-559; Sâlihî, *Sübülü'l-Hüdâ* 5/230-231

⁵⁵⁶ The saints and people of spiritual knowledge have, all along, viewed the Ka'ba as the twin of God's Messenger, for while is the first light that was created, the Ka'ba was the first place of worship on earth.

⁵⁵⁷ İbn-i Mâce, *İkâmetü's-Salât* 76 (1076); Vâkîdî, *Megâzî* 584

Suhayl ibn ‘Amr was one of the small band of Meccans who sought to resist Mecca’s conquest, but who instead took flight when they realized that they did not have the power to do so. He was one of those who read the situation early on. For there was not the slightest sign of hate or enmity in this advent, and God’s Messenger was coming to acquaint God’s servants with God. As soon as he realized this, he sent word to his son ‘Abd Allah via his grandchildren, having summoned them to his place of hiding. This was the son he had subjected to years of torture and to whom he now appealed, while he had stopped at nothing to make life a living hell for him. He had one clear wish: he wanted his son to secure amnesty from Muhammad the Trustworthy for him also. Even if the general state of affairs caused him to be hopeful, he was still nonetheless afraid for his life. Putting himself in the shoes of God’s Messenger, he thought about what he would do if were he to be given such an opportunity – recalling all that he had done – and he thus issued in mind his own death warrant. After all, what would the Quraysh not have done had they had such a chance!

For ‘Abd Allah who received his father’s message, this was a development that made him forget all the years of hardship and sorrow. In great joy, he ran up to God’s Messenger who was then walking towards the Ka’ba. He was certain that God’s Messenger too would be overjoyed at this news that had been the cause of his own happiness. “O Messenger of God,” he said. “My father... Will you grant protection my father Suhayl protection?”

The heart of God’s Messenger was big enough to accommodate everyone, and his eyes had filled with tears of happiness. How could they not, for here was a message from the eloquent orator of the Quraysh who until that day had financed the army of hatred and animosity, and knew no bounds in his vituperation. He had brought down his wall of hate and had now begun to see boundless mercy. Thus, as soon as he heard these words, he replied, “Yes, he too is protected and he has the protection of God, so let him now come out.”

But he did not stop here as Suhayl ibn ‘Amr had hurt so many and had done evil to all those who stood around God’s Messenger. One of these people might perchance be unable to compose themselves and say hurtful things to Suhayl on his way here, and might make his coming to God’s Messenger difficult. God’s Messenger needed to ensure Suhayl’s safety along the way so as to prevent such a mistake from being made and he said to those who were around him:

“Let whoever meets Suhayl not stare at him. Let him now come out from hiding. For by my life, Suhayl is a possessor of intelligence and honor. And a person like Suhayl cannot possibly remain indifferent to Islam. Surely he has realized that where he stood until now could not avail him.”⁵⁵⁸

These were words that could confer great honor and dignity upon Suhayl, right at the point when he thought he was done for. Hearing them from God’s Messenger, ‘Abd Allah scampering to the place where his father was in hiding, in all the excitement of sharing with them these developments. When he finally reached him and informed him of God’s Messenger’s words, it felt as though his heart would skip a beat. Even if he strove to suppress his elation, this was not possible, and he wept in the enthusiasm of knowing that he would henceforth see the father who made life for him unbearable, in the same rank.

Suhayl was overjoyed at the news his son relayed to him, and having once again received mercy from the place that he had so vehemently opposed, was deeply moved. Just when he

⁵⁵⁸ Vākīdī, *Megâzī* 569; Sâlihī, *Sübülü’l-Hüdâ* 5/250

thought he had been spent, he clung onto life once more. He looked at ‘Abd Allah who he had until yesterday been filled with hatred and contempt towards, and for the first time in years felt a warmth in his heart. The countenance that had paled with concern until that moment now glowed, and his knees that had gone weak from disappointment, gained strength. He rose from his seat, paced back and forth, trying to process all these gestures. On the other hand, he uttered the words, “By God, he was righteous in his youth as he is now, while he is in possession of such power!” in his attempt to express his appreciation of God’s Messenger. Suhayl had entered a vast garden of love. He lost himself in the tears of happiness which flowed down his son’s face, and had begun to feel deep remorse for all that he had done to such a pure heart. The happiness of his son only added to his own. These were the feelings bringing together a father holding onto life anew and his son who longed for his coming, at the same point. Two hearts hitherto estranged had united, and were clinging onto each other never again to be separated.

He could not remain indifferent to such a clear and unmistakable message and he immediately set forth with his son ‘Abd Allah. The address where he would find God’s Messenger was obvious. The influential orator of the Quraysh Suhayl ibn ‘Amr, too, was going to the Ka’ba.

It was as though a red carpet had been rolled out beneath his feet. He heard neither ill word from anyone, nor caught sight of a hateful glance. Far from it, everyone who saw him coming gave him way, as if seeing the difference in his step, and did what they possibly could to avoid being the cause of any further delay to his reunion with God’s Messenger. And so, in the city of Mecca with a population of ten thousand and with even more than this number having just arrived, Suhayl came all the way to the Ka’ba without experiencing even the slightest disturbance that would be indicative of disharmony.

The Horizon of Divine Approval

The ‘minbar’ in Medina had reunited with the ‘mihrab’ in Mecca, and the Messenger of God was at the Ka’ba. He first greeted it from afar with the staff he had in his hand and then began to recite proclamations of God’s greatness. Everyone who heard him started repeating his proclamations at the top of their lungs, so much so that it seemed as though the city shook. God’s Messenger then motioned for the people to be silent. For it was now time for circumambulation. After hailing the Black Stone from a distance, God’s Messenger began to circumambulate the House, with Muhammad ibn Maslama holding the reins of his camel.

On that day there were three hundred idols around the Ka’ba, each of them coated with lead. The city’s inhabitants would slaughter their sacrificial animals here beside them, and would voice their needs kneeling before them. Since the Ka’ba had now become a united whole with Islam, it had to be purged of the wide array of idols, with names such as Hubal, Isaf and Na’ila. As God’s Messenger passed by each of them, he pointed at it with the staff he held in his hand, and the idol at which he pointed fell face first to the ground. While doing this, he recited the verse from the Qur’an which reads: “The truth has come, and falsehood has vanished. Surely falsehood is ever bound to vanish by its very nature.”⁵⁵⁹

At the completion of his circumambulation, after each circuit⁵⁶⁰ of which he hailed the Black Stone, he dismounted his camel and immediately headed for the Station of Abraham, where

⁵⁵⁹ Īsrâ 17/81

⁵⁶⁰ A single circuit during circumambulation (tawaf) is referred to in Arabic as shawt.

Prophet Abraham had stood for prayer. At this point, he was still donning his armor and helmet, and the turban he wore fell down over his shoulders. He offered two units of prayer at the Station of Abraham and then approached the well of Zamzam, where he said, “Had the ‘Abd al-Muttalib not prevailed over me, I would have drawn one bucket of water from the well.”⁵⁶¹ Abbas immediately grasped the meaning of God’s Messenger’s words, and took to drawing a bucket of water from the well and offering it to God’s Messenger. The Messenger of God then both drank from it and performed his ablution with it. In the meantime, the Companions had gathered around him, racing to catch whatever water they could from his ablution water, wiping it all over their face and hands to obtain its spiritual blessing.

In every step of God’s Messenger was the exhilaration of worship. Contrary to the rumors, he was dispelling all fears and concerns, and was demonstrating in person that his sole objective was God’s good pleasure and approval.

General Amnesty

God’s Messenger went inside the Ka’ba with Usama ibn Zayd and Bilal al-Habashi, offered prayer between its pillars. He then stepped out on to its entrance, looked out at the curious eyes gathered around him, and said: “What do you expect of me and what do you think of the treatment that I am to accord you?” He asked the question to be sure, but the Quraysh who had no strength left to speak had been enveloped by a deathly silence. For they heard these words from one whom they had banished from his homeland for the sake of nothing, whose life in the city they turned into a living nightmare by waiting at every corner, and who they made repeated attempts to kill. Had it been anyone else in the same situation, he would have put everyone to the sword, or would have reduced to them to degradation of slavery from which they could never again free themselves for generations. They were face to face with a greatness they could not even dream of; he did not domineer despite the fact that he possessed domination over everything, and he did not stoop to opportunism despite the fact that he had every opportunity. What things, however, had been said in Mecca about him, including but not limited to, “He’s going to kill us,” “He’s going to take revenge,” “He’s going to interfere with our way of life,” “He’s going to meddle with what we wear,” and “He’s going to intrude into our night life,” and what smear campaigns had been waged against him. That is to say, Mecca had until that day, been completely engrossed with lies and falsehood, and had done the most righteous servant of God great injustice.

They could not find anything to say. Heads lowered, nobody said a single word. Finally, a voice rose from the crowd, breaking the silence: “We say what is good, and expect nothing but goodness from you. For you are a noble brother and the son of a noble brother.”

Naturally, all eyes turned in the direction of the voice, and before them stood yesterday’s implacable enemy Suhayl ibn ‘Amr. He had come in the meantime, joining those who followed this worship-driven course with no other objective than earning God’s good pleasure and approval. As one doing justice to the rostrum, he now rushed to the aid of the silent masses, and voiced to God’s Beloved who sought any excuse to forgive, that he hoped for forgiveness for the yesterday’s ingrates. What did God not have power and disposal over! If Suhayl had come to

⁵⁶¹ There are also reports that the individual who drew out the bucket of Zamzam water was Abu Sufyan ibn al-Harith ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib. Vâkîdî, *Megâzî* 560; Sâlihî, *Sûbûlû’l-Hüdâ* 5/235

heel, who could not! They were experiencing a day so contracted that it seemed as though years had been squeezed into minutes. Before they could even get over one shock wave, another followed, and in the light of the flashes of lightning coming one after another, they seemed to see the illumination of their horizon.

God's Messenger too had seen the owner of the voice. It was he, in fact, who was the master of the spoken word, and he had well understood the implication of Suhayl's words. Suhayl was asking God's Messenger for the treatment that Joseph had afforded his brothers after everything had been revealed – his brothers who made plan after plan to kill him, who threw him into a well and left him for dead, who robbed him of his life by opening up spaces for him where he would imbibe one suffering in the dungeon after another. Or he had inferred this from his general manner and was informing him of what he was going to do.

A smile beamed upon his countenance like the full moon, and with a tone of voice that pierced their souls he declared: "Go, for you are all free!"⁵⁶² This was truly a magnanimity the likes of Prophet Joseph's call to his brothers. Upon those who saw themselves as full ears of grain ready to be gathered, kingdoms were being bestowed, and neither censure nor even the slightest innuendo was being made. These were chivalries and gestures to melt even the hardest of hearts. The heads that had been enshrouded by a deathly silence shortly before had now been lifted and were looking at each other in utter stupefaction. They had attained favors they could not even dream of and had been received with a humanity beyond their comprehension.

From this day forth, the proclamation of faith resounded from the Sacred House. Suhayl ibn 'Amr⁵⁶³ first and foremost, the masses flocked in hosts, lining up to delve into the sea of mercy that they had only just begun to recognize despite its having cascaded for twenty-one years, and they let themselves go with Islam's boundless mercy to be able to attain purity therein.

All of a sudden, Mecca had become transformed into a place of combined festival and rejoicing. The masses that had been all but spent were beginning to be reborn. When those who had discovered the wealth of belief that they had been late in acquiring put all negative preconditioning aside, they began to see what they had not been able to see before, and had only just begun to realize that there were also sounds their ears had been stranger to. Those who were slave to an empty obstinance, a blind envy and a futile hatred until this day, were swept up in remorse for having living in complete oblivion to the most magnanimous people the world had seen, and made pledge after pledge in the presence of God's Messenger to have their past wrongs forgiven. They occasionally interrupted their joy with praise and thanks to God and experienced the jubilation of having been acquainted with God's Messenger before departing from this world like some of their friends had. Even if late, they had found him and what did anything else matter! Notwithstanding their having been reborn with the choice they made today and having been thus purified,⁵⁶⁴ those who could not forgive themselves were to henceforth begin their

⁵⁶² Ibn-i Hişâm, *Sîre* 2/258; Taberî, *Târîh* 3/174; Ibn-i Kesîr, *Bidâye* 4/324; Ya'kûbî, *Târîh* 2/39; Ibn-i Kayyim, *Câmi'* 197

⁵⁶³ There is a narration to the effect of his participation at Hunayn despite not having embraced Islam and his having professed his belief after the victory here. Vâkîdî, *Megâzî* 569

⁵⁶⁴ The Messenger of God himself informs us of a person's being purged and cleansed of all sin with their acceptance of Islam. See for examples Ahmed Ibn-i Hanbel; *Müsned* 29/315 (17777); Zehebî, *Târîh* 2/271

quest for expiation with twofold exertion and endeavor. For instance, Suhayl declared: “By God, however I have exerted myself alongside the polytheists, I will exert myself at least to the same degree in the cause of Islam. Whatever wealth I spent while with the polytheists, I will put forth at least an equal measure in charity. Perhaps in this way, I can hope to atone for all the wrong I have done.”⁵⁶⁵

Living for Others

In Mecca, which had until only yesterday been hellbent on killing, a life oriented to living for others had begun. Those who saved themselves went in pursuit of another to save them also, and strove to allow those who could not see this Sun of Mercy open their eyes to him. This was, in any case, parallel to the Messenger’s stance. There were many who had indeed come to him, but for those who broke away stood the question of eternal loss. This was one of the key matters incessantly on his agenda in days that he lived so fully in Mecca. His eyes sought them, he inquired after them to their family and relatives, and he sent people after them. In relation to those he waited upon for thirteen years, for whom he concerned himself for another eight years in Medina, and to whom he finally came in all humility as a result of their inability to comprehend the language of his call, he did not take the approach: “I have done what I needed to do. What else can I do, they shouldn’t have gone!” He viewed no one as ‘casualties of education’. Indeed, he had all the Meccans in his sights. He was to reach those who ran away as a result of the influence of their negative preconditioning also, he was to sit and speak with them, and was to, at the very least, free them of their emotionality and thus allow them to exercise their preference on the basis of their own volition.

‘Utba and Mu’attib

After Conquest, God’s Messenger called his uncle and asked, “O ‘Abbas, where are your nephews ‘Utba and Mu’attib? I do not see them.” His manner in inquiring after them was imbued with the all-embracing nature of mercy and compassion. Whereas ‘Utba and Mu’attib were the two sons of Abu Lahab, who was lost for all eternity and whose destruction was confirmed in the Qur’an. In addition, one of them had fallen for the empty promises of the Quraysh years earlier and had divorced one of the daughters of God’s Messenger, thus abandoning her. “O Messenger of God,” ‘Abbas replied, “they have disappeared from sight, together with some other Meccan polytheists.” The Messenger of God called out to ‘Abbas once more in the same tone:

“Go and bring them to me.”

At the behest of God’s Messenger, ‘Abbas investigated and inquired, until he eventually found Abu Lahab’s two sons in the valley of ‘Urana. He sat with them and spoke with them at length. He described the air of festivity experienced in Mecca after their departure and then called them to the warm climate of the Sun of Mercy, saying: “The Messenger of God invites you.” Before long, ‘Utba and Mu’attib hastened to return with him back to Mecca.

Filled with delight at the arrival of Abu Lahab’s sons, the Messenger of God stood up, took their hands, gave each of them his arm, and led them to the Ka’ba. He stood with them at length at Multazam, or the area between the door of the Ka’ba and the Black Stone. ‘Abbas too had

⁵⁶⁵ Buhârî, *Târîh* 4/103; İbn-i Hacer, *İsâbe* 3/214