

atmosphere engendered by this closeness came to the presence of the Last Messenger for whom they had been waiting for years on end, and professed their belief in Islam.³⁹⁰

The following question ought to be asked at this juncture:

Why, at a time when every woman aspired to be wed to God's Messenger, did God's Messenger marry the daughters of Abu Sufyan and Huyayy ibn Akhtab, the very two men who went out of their way to cause him every kind of offense and injury? And what is more, when both of them were widows.

The meaning of this is crystal clear: it was again the Messenger of God who took the first step and made the first sacrifice in order to put a stop to the problems that continued to escalate. Just when relationships had reached break point, he made a move that was as novel as it was completely unanticipated.³⁹¹

In solving the backlog of problems we now face, had we been able to take similar steps today as three or five families and enabled the intermarriage of our children with those who deem us enemies, in lieu of hurling insults at one another in the public arena, then we would have solved most of those 'chronic' problems that have cost thousands of lives and that have caused immeasurable fortunes to go to waste. Alas! In any case, when the path taken is not a 'Prophetic' one, the road that is seemingly traveled will in reality amount to nothing other than one's running around in circles.

Juwayriya

Another one of the marriages God's Messenger conducted in a strategic sense was that with Juwayriya. Juwayriya was the daughter of chief of the Banu Mustaliq, Harith ibn Abi Dirar. Just as her father Harith was engaged in preparations for an offensive against Medina with whatever forces he could muster, God's Messenger had information gathered about their movements and

³⁹⁰ At the time, there was a group of eight or ten people who held sway over the Medinan Jews. As a result of the pressures exerted by this group, those members of the community whose hearts inclined to Islam came to the point where they were unable to express their true identities. Else, they became sitting targets and were immediately ostracized. For instance, while it is evident that Safiyya's brother was Muslim, no mention of his name is made in the canonical hadith collections. Ebû Dâvûd, Eymân 18. When the entirety of the narrations concerning the Jews is taken into account, two categories of traditions stand out: While the names of those Jews who came to God's Messenger and named one by one in the first of these, the second category contains such expressions as, "A group from among the Jews," "Some Jewish scholars," or "A group of Jews." The content of the discussions with those in the first category are negative, tense and unsettling in tone. The atmosphere of the gathering where the second group of people were present, however, is characterized by warmth, friendliness, and the desire to learn. Taking into consideration the pressures of the overbearing faction in question, it becomes very clear why the Companions transmitting the aforementioned conversations did not name the Jews in the second category – namely, not to divulge these people who had been forced to hide their true identities.

³⁹¹ From another standpoint, it can also be argued God's Messenger experienced various associations in connection with the persons of Umm Habiba and Safiyya. A sensitive, feeling soul such as himself, and the possessor such a strong memory, whose memories of the past were as fresh and vivid in his mind then as they were when he lived them firsthand, naturally remembered the plots and conspiracies that Abu Sufyan and Huyayy ibn Akhtab formed against him. However, God's Messenger, who also represented the epitome in respect to his willpower, never made such sentiment felt, by no manner of means projected it to his wives, and not in the least were these associations ever externalized. This goes to show that what matters most in problem resolution is to be able to endure trials and hardship patiently, to hide the distress one suffers from others, and to be able to take lasting steps in the name of sacrifice, even if a bitter pill to swallow.

activities, thereafter acting before he had the chance to attack the city and defeated him. Juwayriya was among those captured following this defeat and she had fallen to the lot of one of the Companions. She made an contract with her captor for her release, according to the terms of which she was to pay a hefty sum and thus be set free.³⁹²

At one point, she summoned all her courage and came to God's Messenger, to plead her case to him. "O Messenger of God," she began. "Indeed I am a Muslim woman and I bear witness that there is no deity (to be worshipped) but God and that you are the Messenger of God. I am Juwayriya, daughter of Harith ibn Abi Dirar, the leader of my people. The troubles that have befallen me are not unknown to you. I fell to the share of Thabit ibn Qays ibn Shammas and his cousin. Thabit released me from his cousin with a portion of his date orchards in Medina (in payment). Thabit concluded an agreement concerning me that I have no power to fulfill. To that, however, I agreed of my own accord. Nothing forced me to it except that I hoped help to come from you, that you would assist me in obtaining my liberty."

Listening very carefully to Harith's daughter Juwayriya, God's Messenger asked her, "Would you like that which is better than that?" Surprised by such a response, she said, in nervous excitement, "What is it, O Messenger of God?" He said, "That I pay the amount stipulated in the contract and that I marry you."

What greater felicity could there have been than this? Before a person who had lost everything that she possessed, including her freedom, were the doors leading to the palaces of bliss in this world and the Hereafter being thus opened. What is more, she was being received personally by the sultan of this palace himself, and falling to her lot was being a Mother of the Believers in exchange for a lifetime's abasement as a slave. She was insightful a woman as not to miss out on such a opportunity being offered her, without her paying even a single cent. "Yes, O Messenger of God," she said. "I accept."³⁹³

Seeing that his offer had been accepted, the time how now come to meet with Thabit ibn Qays. God's Messenger sent for him and before long, Thabit was in the presence of God's Messenger. He then informed Thabit of his wish to pay Juwayriya's ransom in full and take her as his wife.

The Messenger's offer had pleased Thabit immensely. He had already supposed that the daughter of the Banu Mustaliq chief beseemed God's Messenger. And this was, after all, the general practice at the time.³⁹⁴ And Huyayy had arguably understood the Messenger's purpose. God's Messenger was just about to take another Prophetic initiative in way of healing their hearts and rebuilding their wounded pride. Thabit said, "By my father and my mother, she is yours, and without recompense."

³⁹² Such contractual agreements are termed mukatab in Islamic legal theory. Accordingly, one could manumit the slave or concubine in their possession by stipulating a certain sum of money to be paid within a specified time. That this was, at the same time, the encouraged attitude is also clear. So much so that it was considered gracious gesture for one who held the status of slave. Indeed, it is understood that Juwayriya, who was on the receiving end of such a gesture on this day, and witnessed who knows what other scenes during these discussions and deliberations, became Muslim in spite of her father.

³⁹³ Ibn-i Hişâm, *Sîre* 2/183; Zehebî, *Târîh* 2/145

³⁹⁴ As was the common practice at the time, the triumphant commander's marrying the wife or daughter of the commander of the vanquished forces was taken to be testament to his victory.

In spite of this, the Messenger of God paid the amount to Thabit that had been agreed upon in her contract, released Juwayriya, and then married her.

It was the events unfolding after this that are of great import. News of the Messenger's marriage quickly spread among the Companions and every Companion who heard thus viewed the captive in their possession as the Messenger's relations by marriage. The Banu Mustaliq whom they had only just faced on the front line, and when they had least expected it, had suddenly become related to God's Messenger.

How ever could the relations of the Messenger of God be looked upon and treated as captives? As mentioned in the discussion on prisoners of war, Juwayriya not only freed herself from captivity, but was the means for the liberation of all her people. For all the Companions began releasing the captives they had and yet another example of magnanimity the likes of which never before been seen in human history, was displayed. Purely for the sake of this kinship, one hundred families were set free and had come, availing themselves of the blessings of this auspicious marriage, to declare their acceptance of Islam. Upon learning of these developments from the daughter of her uncle, Juwayriya glorified God and praised Him for allowing the freedom of her people to be secured through her means.

In depicting Juwayriya's benevolence, 'A'isha was to later refer to this transformation that came about through her, with the words, "I know not a woman who was a greater blessing to her people than she." And she was to state that a hundred families were released out of respect for the Messenger's marriage-relationship to them.³⁹⁵

Interestingly, even if her father Harith ibn Abi Dirar who had made such a narrow escape on that day, lost his reputation and personal properties, he sprung into action a few days later to free his daughter, and came to Medina taking the remaining camels with him. He would give, in exchange for his daughter, however many camels were demanded in ransom and would take her and return back home. When he reached 'Aqiq Valley, he began looking at his camels over and over again, for he was about to forsake what wealth of his remained, with his own fair hands. This gnawed away at him, and the two camels he admired in particular he set aside, hiding them in one of the passes of the valley. He planned to give the other camels with which he traveled for his daughter's ransom and, upon his return, retrieve these two camels and return with them.

When he eventually arrived in Medina, he went to God's Messenger with his daughter's ransom and said, "Muhammad, you have taken my daughter captive; here is her ransom!"

The Messenger of God was sorry to see the current state of the man who until scarcely one month ago had very different aspirations. He looked at the camels that Harith offered in return for his daughter's freedom and said, "And where are the two camels that you hid in such-and-such pass in the valley of 'Aqiq?"

Harith was at a loss for words. He had hidden the camels in a desolate place and, what is more, there was not a living soul around to see what he had done. How, then, could Muhammad the Trustworthy possibly have known about the existence of these camels? No, this was not a matter that could be known by any mortal. This demonstrated that Muhammad the Trustworthy indeed

³⁹⁵ Ebû Davud, Sünen 4/22 (3931); Ahmed İbn-i Hanbel, *Müsned* 6/277 (26408); Hâkim, *Müstedrek* 4/28 (6781); Beyhakî, Sünen 9/74. The rest of the captives were to gain their freedom via an amount of ransom being paid by fellow members of their tribe, and thus all the captives from the Banu Mustaliq tribe were to be set free.

acted upon Divine revelation after all. Following a dazed interlude, he turned to God's Messenger and after his daughter and his people, he too declared, "I bear witness that you are the Messenger of God!"³⁹⁶

The Prophetic strategy had conquered yet another hardened heart. This conquest was not to be limited to Harith; in spite of all the tribulations they faced, his entire tribe was to come before God's Messenger and release themselves to his atmosphere of mercy.³⁹⁷

Other Wives of God's Messenger

When considered from this perspective, the same question applies to all of the wives of God's Messenger as all of the Mothers of the Believers were each a member of their respective tribes and clans – to whom God's Messenger addressed himself – and all had their parents, their uncles, siblings, and other relations. These ties were the most powerful points of contact considered important by the society. Through his wives, the Messenger of God aimed to reach a tribe, a city, and a nation, and in time achieved his objective. Each of the Mothers of Believers served as bridges connecting him to their own communities.³⁹⁸ As the central theme of our discussion is not the marriages of God's Messenger in and of themselves, we looked at his marriages with Umm Habiba, Safiyya and Juwayriya to give the reader some idea in this regard. Else, whichever one of his wives is taken into consideration, the same fact, that he reached a great number of people by means of them, emerges. For instance, Maymuna, whose marriage to God's Messenger was proposed by his uncle 'Abbas, was one of the few people who had ties of kinship to a great many people in Mecca. Abu Sufyan's mother Safiyya bint Hazn ibn Bujayr al-Hilaliyya was her paternal aunt.³⁹⁹ Her mother Hind bint 'Awf ibn al-Harith was known as the most honorable woman among Arabs at the time, by virtue of her descent.⁴⁰⁰ She was one of ten sisters,⁴⁰¹ and on the day that God's Messenger married her, he became at once related to nine tribes simultaneously. He became brother-in-law to Walid ibn al-Mughira and Ubayy ibn Khalaf, and established connections with their relations, and as a result to their deceased ancestors, and drew

³⁹⁶ Ebû Dâvûd, *Itk* 2 (3931); Ahmed İbn-i Hanbel, *Müsned* 6/277 (26408); İbn-i Hişâm, *Sîre* 2/183

³⁹⁷ İbn-i Hişâm, *Sîre* 2/184

³⁹⁸ Through the Messenger's marriage with Sawda, who joined the felicitous household following the death of Khadija, a softening began in the attitude of her blood relations and after a certain period of time, this marriage too began to bear fruit. For instance, her brother 'Abd ibn Zama'a himself provides an account of how he tore his hair out on the day that the Messenger of God married Sawda, how he arrived from pilgrimage his hair covered with dirt, and how he thought this when he came to perceive the truth later, saying in embarrassment, "What a fool I was! The day the Messenger of God married Sawda, I covered my head with dirt!" İbnü'l-Esîr, *Üsdü'l-Gâbe* 3/510; İbn-i Hacer, *İsâbe* 2/1203

³⁹⁹ İbnü'l-Esîr, *Üsdü'l-Gâbe* 2/14; İbn-i Hacer, *İsâbe* 3/412; İbn-i Abdilberr, *İstîâb* 3/255; Mizzî, *Tehzîbü'l-Kemâl* 13/119

⁴⁰⁰ İbn-i Hacer, *İsâbe* 8/95

⁴⁰¹ These were Lubaba Sughra who was married to Walid ibn al-Mughira, 'Abbas's wife Lubaba al-Kubra, 'Isma' who was married to Ubayy ibn Khalaf, the wife of Ziyad ibn 'Abd Allah 'Izza, Huzayla who was married to an unnamed Bedouin, Asma who was married to Ja'far, Hamza's wife Salma, Salama the wife of 'Abd Allah ibn Ka'b, and Zaynab bint al-Khuzayma who was married to 'Abd Allah ibn Jahsh.

the attention of the pair once more. Although God's Messenger was in Medina at the time, he brought his relatives in Mecca closer to one another and paved before them a new path by which they could overcome their preconceptions and prejudices. This was because the children of Walid ibn al-Mughira, Ziyad ibn 'Abd Allah and Ubayy ibn Khalaf, Khalid ibn al-Walid first and foremost, and the children of 'Abbas, Ja'far and 'Abd Allah ibn Jahsh were cousins through a maternal. In the case of Khalid ibn al-Walid particularly, the marriage of God's Messenger with his maternal aunt Maymuna⁴⁰² was pivotal to his acceptance of Islam. The marriage took place during the Compensatory Pilgrimage. Through it, God's Messenger sought to give a banquet to the Meccans who had just the year before prevented him from performing the lesser pilgrimage ('umra) and who, even then, had allowed him to stay at the Ka'ba for only three days. But he could not get them to accept. As always, he did not fail to do what fell to him to do.

He sent for Walid ibn al-Walid⁴⁰³ and asked him, "Where is Khalid?"

Like the others, Khalid too had taken to the hills to observe what they deemed to be 'humiliation', over the three days where a lot was squeezed into a very short time. As a result, Walid replied, "I know not, O Messenger of God. I have not had to chance to speak with him."

For there were things that God's Messenger had knowledge of. And so the Messenger of God he began describing Khalid ibn al-Walid in the presence of brother, referring to everything from his intelligence and bravery to all his other virtues. Praising him to the skies, it was as though making a legend of him, depicting him as the ultimate hero.

He then asked, "Will he still not come?" And added, "A man like Khalid cannot keep remain ignorant of Islam for long." He then paid compliment to him saying, "And were he to come, we would certainly have honored him and preferred him to others."⁴⁰⁴

With God's Messenger's departure, Walid ibn al-Walid wrote a letter to his brother Khalid, saying, "Despite the fact that you have left no adversity that you have not inflicted on us, God's Messenger asked me about you on his return. While I could not relate anything to him about you, he said a great many things about you."⁴⁰⁵

When this letter, in which the Messenger's statements concerning his brother were conveyed, eventually reached Khalid, the situation was to be altogether altered. A letter had come to him from the very place that he had hitherto chosen to observe from afar and upon which he had only marched sword in hand, and its gracious contents had become imprinted on his heart. He read it again and again. What kind of logic was this? What kind of magnanimity and humanity was this?

⁴⁰² İbnü'l-Esîr, *Üsdü'l-Gâbe* 2/140

⁴⁰³ As mentioned earlier, Walid ibn al-Walid had embraced Islam after Badr. After this day, God's Messenger made special prayer from Medina for Walid, who was subjected to much torture from his brothers including Khalid ibn al-Walid, reciting the qunut in his prayers. After he subsequently found an opportunity to escape to Medina, he never returned to Mecca. Sâlihî, *Sübülü'l-Hüdâ* 4/79

⁴⁰⁴ Compiled from different sources and put in order. Even if not in precise chronological order, their content and essence remain unchanged. İbnü'l-Esîr, *Üsdü'l-Gâbe* 5/423, 424; Beyhakî, *Delâil* 4/350; İbn-i Kesîr, *Bidâye* 4/258

⁴⁰⁵ İbnü'l-Esîr, *Üsdü'l-Gâbe* 5/423, 424; Beyhakî, *Delâil* 4/350; İbn-i Kesîr, *Bidâye* 4/258; Suyûtî, *Hasâis* 1/412; Hamidullah, *Vesâik* 85, 86

The person for whose downfall and ruin he worked for twenty years, now bestowed him compliments as though he had been following his every step, and called him with a view to conferring distinction upon him.

First, he went to Abu Sufyan and said, “Come, let us go together.” But he was not yet ready, or perhaps there were other things that he still needed to do in Mecca, as part of his mission. He then knocked on the door of his brother-in-law⁴⁰⁶ Safwan ibn Umayya. He, too, refused.⁴⁰⁷ Subsequently, he made arrangements with ‘Uthman ibn Talha to set out to Medina together. They met up with another traveler on the way, ‘Amr b. al-‘As, and together, the three of them came to God’s Messenger, to the luminous world of Islam.

The role of Umm Salama in ‘Amr’s acceptance must not be overlooked, as he was a member of the Banu Makhzum – Khalid ibn al-Walid’s tribe.⁴⁰⁸ Walid ibn al-Mughira was his paternal uncle.⁴⁰⁹ In other words, he and Khalid ibn al-Walid were cousins through a paternal uncle. At the same time, the Banu Makhzum was also the tribe of the Abu Jahl, and by connection, of ‘Ikrima.⁴¹⁰ Umm Salama was also related to Zama'a ibn al-Aswad. She was the sister of his sister-in-law Qurayba bint Abu Umayya.⁴¹¹

Assistance

Following the Qur’anic verse revealed after the Battle of the Trench and heralding the coming of a time where love reigned supreme, was the verse which declared that God did not forbid the believers to deal kindly with those did not fight them on the basis of their religion and who did not drive them out of their homes. The verse ended with the declaration that God loves those who deal kindly and justly.⁴¹² After the revelation of this particular verse, God’s Messenger immediately stirred into action and, by marrying Umm Habiba, took a firm step towards putting an end to all manner of hostility. The time had now come for the second step. Given that all hostility was to end, all his attention was focused on them.

The news since Uhud were not very positive; trade was slow. On top of that, they were suffering under the scourge of famine. The people struggled to make a living and writhed under financial trouble and hardship. Despite their being the ones who challenged God’s Messenger when leaving Uhud, calling out, “O Muhammad, you were victorious at Badr,

⁴⁰⁶ Safwan ibn Umayya was married to Khalid ibn al-Walid's sister Fakhita.

⁴⁰⁷ Suyûtî, *Hasâis* 1/247

⁴⁰⁸ Zehebî, *Siyeru A’lâmi’n-Nübelâ* 2/202

⁴⁰⁹ İbnü’l-Esîr, *Üsdü’l-Gâbe* 5/423; Zehebî, *Siyeru A’lâmi’n-Nübelâ* 2/202

⁴¹⁰ Zehebî, *Siyeru A’lâmi’n-Nübelâ* 2/202. Similarly, Sawda was from the tribe of Suhayl ibn ‘Amr and was married to one of his brothers before she married God’s Messenger. At the same time, she was the sister of Hakim ibn Hizam. Zaynab bint Khuzayma, who was only able to remain married to God’s Messenger for a few months, was a member of the Hawazin tribe who too virtually everything that moved with them in their advance against God’s Messenger at Hunayn. İbn-i Asâkir, *Târîhu Medîneti Dimaşk* 3/206

⁴¹¹ İbnü’l-Esîr, *Üsdü’l-Gâbe* 3/246; 5/427; İbn-i Abdilberr, *İstîâb* 2/61

⁴¹² Qur’an, 60:8.

while today at Uhud, we have defeated you. The matter thus remains undecided. We shall meet again at Badr next year, where the victor will be determined,” panic set in when the time approached, and they resorted to all manner of means to avoid going to Badr. Meccan leader Abu Sufyan, who was at the same time at the head of the city’s forces, was of the view that they should not be the side that takes the first step and made plan after plan to prevail upon Medina to accept. So as not to be the reneging party, it most certainly had to be God’s Messenger, and not them, who failed to come to Badr.

For all Abu Sufyan’s exertions, God’s Messenger still set forth for Badr when the time came with his Companions 1,500 strong, on the basis of Abu Sufyan’s call at Uhud. Even though Abu Sufyan wanted to cancel this invitation of his within this period, he was unable to do so in a manly enough fashion. He sent frequent messages without letting on that he did not want to go to Badr, and always on account of others, wanting God’s Messenger to be the one who did not turn up. He was thus to say to those around him, “Do you see, we were to face them once again at Badr, while they got scared and could not come! Victory is ours!” And he was to win a battle, in his own way, without lifting a finger. This is why he could not state, in so many words, that they had better give it up. While now, he had heard of the Messenger’s heading in the direction of Badr from Medina with his Companions, and was tormented with the agony of imminent disaster.

Desperate, he too set off with an army of two thousand men, but was well aware that he made for a dead end. There was no way that an army made up of all these troubled, destitute members who could not even see to their own needs, could ever win battle. Attempting such a venture, the end result of which was clear from the beginning, was unreasonable to say the least. To him, this undertaking spelled the end of the Quraysh. He advanced, but a fear that ate away at him held sway. When he eventually reached Marr al-Zahran and they encamped by the well known as Majanna, he addressed his men saying: “O people of the Quraysh, turn back! Only a plentiful year will suit us wherein we can pasture our animals on the herbage and drink their milk. Whereas this this year is a year of drought. How can we be expected to fight during such famine? Indeed, I shall return, and so must you.”

And so they did. As though expecting such a call, the Meccan army returned in high spirits. Moreover, as they had slaughtered camels on their way to Badr for food, the Meccan army had to make do with merely a barley soup. It was due to this that the Meccans called this army the Barley Army (Jaysh al-Sawiq).⁴¹³

And this situation only got worse with each passing day. They had begun to eat bones and carrion from hunger, their eyes had lost their luster, and they began to see even the clear blue sky as clouded over. Meanwhile, their animals had also come to the brink of death. It was on one of these days that they had sent Abu Sufyan to God’s Messenger to petition him to pray for rain. “Muhammad,” said Abu Sufyan. “You enjoin the people to keep good relations with their kin, whereas your people are now dying. Entreat God for them, that He may deliver them from their hardship.”

This was indeed a most strange predicament. They mobilized all the resources at their disposal for his downfall on the one hand, while still turning to him for assistance at a time when they were about to face annihilation, on the other. Even within such a contradiction, there was the

⁴¹³ Vākidi, *Megâzî* 288; İbn-i Hişâm, *Sîre* 2/132; İbn-i Sa’d, *Tabakât* 2/47; Taberî, *Târîh* 3/93; İbn-i Kesîr, *Bidâye* 4/96; Beyhakî, *Delâil* 3/386; Zehebî, *Târîh* 2/139

workings of Prophetic mercy: God's Messenger had not burnt the bridges linking him to anyone, even under the worst of conditions, and did not shut the door on anyone's face, with the hope that they might one day return. While now they had come and, though they did not believe in him, were begging God's Messenger to beseech God to succor them.

The Messenger of God now raised his blessed hands for them, and asked that His All-Merciful Lord deliver the Meccans from their tribulations, have mercy on them and send them rain. Then came the rain clouds. The Meccans had received a mercy that would gladden them and ease their hearts, for it was pouring rain.⁴¹⁴

Even if they be favored with Divine grace through the Messenger's prayer, they failed to appreciate this blessing, let alone recognize the true worth of that Prophet of Mercy, and once again returned to their former state. Needless to say, the punishment for such ingratitude was a return to their former days, and before too long, days of famine began again for the Meccans, and they were thus inflicted with manifold Divine punishments.⁴¹⁵

Several years more had passed, and the Messenger of God set forth to Khaybar to solve yet another problem. With a conquest that came after drawn-out sieges, he returned to Medina with a resounding wealth.⁴¹⁶

Contrary to general expectation, God's Messenger did not divide up the spoils gained from Khaybar among his Companions. He had it loaded on camels and sent it to the Meccans who had caused trouble for twenty years without interruption. The person taking to Mecca the camels which carried great material and monetary wealth was the Companion 'Amr ibn Umayya, while those to whom the aid was sent were those Meccan ringleaders of unbelief such as Safwan ibn Umayya and Suhayl ibn 'Amr. Among them, 'Ikrima, Safwan ibn Umayya, and Suhayl ibn 'Amr had no patience whatsoever for even a wind to blow from the direction of Medina. They led the way in denial and vehement hatred of Islam and the Muslims. In spite of this, however, a fortune headed for Mecca from Medina on the backs of camels. In this aid, for instance, were 500 dinars (of gold coin), which amounted to great riches at the time.⁴¹⁷

Human history was again witnessing a first. While he himself was constantly injured, God's Messenger never once caused injury. To those who dealt blow after blow to him, he responded with not the even the slightest aggression, but forever treated them with benevolence and compassion. Now he was doing the same thing. He extended a hand to those who were eager to

⁴¹⁴ It had rained so much that, this time, the Companions came and requested God's Messenger to pray for it to stop. He then raised his hands and said, "O Lord, around us and not upon us!" Buhârî, *İstiskâ* 13 (1020); İbn-i Kesîr, *Bidâye* 3/115

⁴¹⁵ It is said that verses 10-16 of the Qur'anic chapter Dukhan was revealed within this context, or that it describes their attitude. Badr is also identified as the result of this attitude of ingratitude. Buhârî, *İstiskâ* 13 (1020); İbn-i Kesîr, *Bidâye* 3/115

⁴¹⁶ The Khaybarites were a worldly-wise people. What is more, they possessed a collective coffer comprised of pots filled gold accumulated over the years. From this they would give loans only to replace the amount taken with the interest they charged on repayment. Following Conquest, they refused to reveal these treasures and upon the Prophet's urging retrieved them. Vâkidî, *Megâzî* 464; Beyhakî, *Delâil* 4/233; Halebî, *Sîre* 3/62; Zehebî, *Târîh* 2/243

⁴¹⁷ Serahsî, *Mebûsât* 10/92

destroy him and was sending them a fortune that was the stuff of legend in order to save them from the dire difficulty in which they found themselves.

The outcome that was intended, however, was not achieved. Even if they were suffering and dizzy from hunger, they turned the aid coming from the site of their onslaught into a matter of pride, and sent it straight back. Suhayl ibn ‘Amr, in particular, breathed fire. While they were well aware of the great need of those around them, they could not bring themselves to accept assistance from the very place that they had until now directed unbridled acts of violence and hate.⁴¹⁸ But this was, nonetheless, a most poignant message which struck a deep chord. Taking the past into account, they knew full well that not just anyone would offer them such help. Although they were not at all interested in taking up the offer, they saw the distinction of God’s Messenger once again, and were the recipients of yet another act to which they would render honor.

God’s Messenger was saddened to see the aid that he sent come back. But he did not give up, and re-sent the same contents back to Mecca, with one notable difference, however, as this time, both the recipient and the method had changed. ‘Amr ibn Umayya, with the letter God’s Messenger gave to him, took the camels he brought with him along with their load directly to Abu Sufyan.

Abu Sufyan received the letter of God’s Messenger and began reading it. “I send you all of this in exchange for the leather you have in Mecca.”

Failure to consider the Prophetic sensitivity here would lead one to overlook the tactfulness that is also evident. Note that after the return of the contribution in aid that God’s Messenger sent, he changed his method and likened the aid he wished to send as an exchange, trade or a bartering of goods. This was, after all, how business was generally conducted at the time. To veteran merchant Abu Sufyan he said, “Take these and send me leather in exchange.” Abu Sufyan was well versed in this language and responded favorably to his offer, distributing these goods to their correct destination in spite of the actions of his formers.

The following question may well arise at this point: “During this time, Abu Sufyan was the Prophet’s father-in-law, and this proximity gave rise to his softening and adopting a more reasonable position with respect to Islam and God’s Messenger. Why then, did God’s Messenger feel the need to alter his method in lieu of sending these goods as aid?” The answer, however, is clear: Had God’s Messenger sent this contribution as ‘aid’, the Meccans would have ruled Abu Sufyan out immediately and would have questioned his character, honor, and dignity. And even if he were to work wonders, would no longer care to listen to him. They would have completely dismissed the leader who they had already begun to disregard when it suited them, after his daughter Umm Habiba’s marriage to the Messenger of God, and they would never have followed him ever again. However, in Mecca’s seamless transformation was a vital mission that Abu Sufyan would fulfill. The Messenger of God therefore appeared before him having changed his method – again as an expression of mercy and in consideration of the situation of the Meccans – with a brand new offer which would strengthen his hand.

Having received such an offer, Abu Sufyan’s eyes shuttled between the wealth-laden camels to the letter in his hand. He was moved. First, he began his words by saying, “May God have

⁴¹⁸ Taberî, *Tārîh* 2/452; Ya’kûbî, *Tārîh* 2/37

mercy on the son of my brother and reward him with abundant good. For he has fulfilled the dues of kinship and has seen to our welfare.” Abu Sufyan distributed all of it to Mecca’s poor.⁴¹⁹ Now, it came time for sending the leather and Abu Sufyan fulfilled God’s Messenger’s request soon after. In the meantime, he wrote a letter of response to God’s Messenger informing him that he had dispatched the leather that he had specifically asked for.⁴²⁰

With these supplies that had come to their rescue at a time they most needed it, the hearts of the Meccans had been conquered once more. To be more precise, the steps that God’s Messenger took each time in a different way yielded results, and conquest billowed throughout the community.

That is to say, some of the most effective ways of penetrating hearts, solving problems, or winning people over, is to be with the people during times of difficulty, not hurting them even if one is hurt themselves, returning evil with acts of goodness, and being with them with every resource at our disposal, so as to revive lifeless hearts. Perpetually the representative of such a method, God’s Messenger saw the hatred and animosity of those he addressed melt away a little more with every passing day, and awaited the paradisaical future that would appear on the path on which he took these steps. His waiting took on the form of ‘active patience’; who knows what many actions he stood for even while outwardly appearing to be waiting.

International Diplomacy

The Meccans who looked for any opportunity to kill him, mobilized all possible means to overshadow all the good with which God’s Messenger came, were still the ones who applied to him when they faced a situation that they could not overcome. We saw a salient example of this in the discussion of the prayer for rain that they had sought from him at a time when they were suffering under drought and famine.⁴²¹

Chief of Yamama Thumama ibn Uthal, who was set free as a captive and who put aside his hatred and became Muslim as a result of the honorable treatment he received in captivity, came to Mecca upon the Messenger’s permission, seeking to complete the lesser pilgrimage that he had been unable to do so earlier.⁴²² He presumed that Mecca was a safe place and thought that all those who entered it would be assured safety as well. But the matter was not at all how he had suspected it would be. The Meccan polytheists who had cornered him took advantage of the situation and made an attempt on his life. Not only did they prevent him from performing his worship at the House, they wanted to kill a person who had come with such an intention and make an example of him, on top of that.

They were just about to realize their aim when one of those among them came forward and stated that this action would come at a high price for them. This was because Yamama was the

⁴¹⁹ Ya’kûbî, *Târîh* 2/37

⁴²⁰ İbn-i Asâkir, *Târîhu Dimaşk* 23/441-442; Hamîdullah, *Vesâik* 76

⁴²¹ Buhârî, *İstiskâ* 13 (1020); İbn-i Kesîr, *Bidâye* 3/115

⁴²² Thumama was captured on the way to make the Lesser Pilgrimage. As is known, Pilgrimage was a form of worship observed by certain individuals as a holdover from the time of Abraham, albeit in an altered and in a sense eviscerated form. When he embraced Islam upon his liberation, he referred the matter to God’s Messenger, consulting him as to what he needed to do in this situation. The answer he received led him to Mecca.