

limited the number of women a man could marry - the customary practice in pre-Islamic Arabia - and encouraged monogamy, allowed for God's Messenger to marry several women in order for him to reach all his addressees in their entirety within as short a time as twenty-three years. The Messenger of God made use of this means in loosening such closely knit ties at a time when all the doors on which he knocked were slammed shut in his face. Moreover, it is not possible to suppose that the marriages of God's Messenger, who stated, "God has assuredly willed that I marry only those who are of Paradise,"<sup>339</sup> and who took his each and every step in line with the Divine injunctions, could be realized except by God's permission. Within this context, he states: "Each of my marriages and those of my daughters was conducted as a result of Divine permission conveyed to me through Gabriel."<sup>340</sup> In this way was he able to come together, on the basis of kinship, with those people who were not capable of being approached, and it was in these assemblies that the hearts of those who were consumed with hatred and enmity were softened. The marriages of God's Messenger functioned as a bridge in his communication with them, and served to relax the atmosphere as well as legitimize his steps in their regard. He extended hospitality towards them, invited them to his wedding feasts using his marriages as a means to come together, and sent them gifts, drawing attention to their affinity. In a culture where maintaining the ties of kinship held great importance, he found opportunities to converse with them through visiting them or hosting them at his home. It could even be said that in this way the Messenger of God established such a connection with those whose hostility was most intense, and ensured that their animosity was soon afterwards transformed into mildness and affection. The most salient example of this is his marriage with Umm Habiba the daughter of Abu Sufyan, at a time when the latter's audacity and effrontery was at its height.

### **Marriage to Umm Habiba**

Tension in Mecca had reached its peak. The unrivaled chief and representative of this tension, especially in the post-Badr period, was Abu Sufyan. Having turned into a bird of prey, he made all plans imaginable to end the life of God's Messenger, even sending a contract killer to Medina for this purpose. He was the ponserson behind the savagery at Uhud and it was again him who held the position of commander at Khandaq. It was precisely in such a period that Gabriel came to God's Messenger and revealed to him the following verse:

"(When you obey God in His commands and prohibitions,) it may be that God will bring about love and friendship between you and those of them with whom you are in enmity. God is All-Powerful, and God is All-Forgiving, All- Compassionate."<sup>341</sup>

The timing was rather striking: at a time when hostility was most intense, this verse announced that this hostility would fade away and, what is more, heralded that it would be replaced by love and affection. There was more good news to come: it affirmed that such a transformation was possible in regard to God's power, and that such love and friendship could only be attained through forgiveness, acceptance, humility, avoiding reactionary attitudes, and compassion. This verse also echoes other Qur'anic statements wherein those who convey in

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<sup>339</sup> Ibn-i Asâkir, Târîhu Medîneti Dîmaşk 69/149

<sup>340</sup> Ibn-i Asâkir, Târîhu Medîneti Dîmaşk 69/149

<sup>341</sup> Mümtahne 60/7

ineffable messages of fellowship when they were in fact once enemies, are described,<sup>342</sup> and prescribes the necessary steps to be taken for the realization of this message. The unmistakable message is that even the staunchest enemies will one day come face to face with reality and lay down their arms, and in defiance of the past, lead the rest of their lives as heroes of love.

For by no means does God's Messenger harbor enmity towards any other. His enmity is directed at enmity itself. So those who acted in enmity were, more often than not, the Meccans, and at the helm as their leader, was none other than Abu Sufyan himself. While he as not present in person at Badr,<sup>343</sup> he was the commander of the forces at Uhud and Khandaq. He is again the protagonist of the various skirmishes that took place between these two events. Abu Sufyan expressly stands as the fulcrum of the enmity mentioned in the verse, that is to be transformed into affection in the near future. The verse also indicates that not just Abu Sufyan's enmity, but all manner of enmity would be eradicated when the compassion cited in the latter part of the verse was rendered the essence of one's occupation and when the path was trod with active patience. The hearts of the Meccans would then be filled with love instead of hatred.<sup>344</sup>

Naturally, the establishment of love is possible only through knowledge, for one is indeed an enemy of what one does not know. The Abu Sufyans of the era showed hostility because they did not know God and His Messenger, and did their level best to avoid such knowledge. In this sense, the verse pointed to Abu Sufyan as the first objective for the believer in achieving this acquaintance. The most potent way of ensuring this acquaintance, as mentioned at the outset, was through kinship.<sup>345</sup> The scholarly Companion 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbas, honored with the special prayer of God's Messenger and extolled with the epithet Hibr al-Umma (the Sage of the Community), offers an account of these events as follows:

"The marriage of the Messenger of God to Umm Habiba was conducted after the revelation of the verse: *'It may be that God will bring about love and friendship between you and those of them with whom you are in enmity. God is All-Powerful, and God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.'*<sup>346</sup> Mu'awiya thus became the maternal uncle of the believers."<sup>347</sup>

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<sup>342</sup> Âl-i İmrân 3/103; Enfâl 8/63; Ahmed İbn-i Hanbel, *Müsned* 3/57, 76, 77; 3/104, 105, 253; 4/42

<sup>343</sup> Abu Sufyan was absent from Badr, as he had gone to Damascus with the Meccan trade caravan. His two sons Hanzala and 'Amr, however, were present, the first of whom was killed and the second taken prisoner. When the entire Meccan leadership cadre were killed at Badr, Abu Jahl most particularly, he remained the undisputed leader in the Mecca of the post-Badr era. The task of representing the spite and vengefulness of the Meccans who were in sackcloth and ashes in mourning, henceforth lay on his shoulders. As a matter of fact, Abu Sufyan who assumed a more levelheaded bearing until the Emigration, became rather anxious after it due to economic concerns, while after Badr turning complete 'hawk.' The first thing he did on the day was to send a hired assassin to Medina to kill the Messenger of God. For more information, see Kesmez, Ümit, Fethin Mü'minleri 70 vd.

<sup>344</sup> This verse, is a verse from the Qur'an that we, too, read today and which offers us the same glad tidings – of course for those who take the Prophetic way as their guide and thus aspire to reach all people.

<sup>345</sup> On the basis of the expression and style employed in the verse, many exegetes purport that implied in the love and friendship mentioned is this kinship that God's Messenger was to establish with Abu Sufyan. Vâhidî, *Tefsîr* 2/1089; İbn-i Kesîr, *Tefsîr* 4/349, 350; Kurtubî, *Câmi'* 18/58; Suyûtî, *Dürü'l-Mensûr* 8/130

<sup>346</sup> Mümtehine 60/7

<sup>347</sup> İbn-i Asâkir, *Târîhu Medîneti Dımaşk* 3/207; 69/148, 149

Not only did the Messenger of God understand the verse's implications, but he also took pains with putting the words of the Qur'an into practice. This marriage took place in the following manner:

Having received a message from Gabriel, the Messenger of God sent his Companion 'Amr ibn Umayya to the Negus, or King, of Abyssinia, *giving him two letters to present to the sovereign.*<sup>348</sup> In one of these letters, God's Messenger invited<sup>349</sup> to Islam<sup>350</sup> the new Negus, successor to the throne of Negus al-Asham ibn Abjar who had sixteen years earlier welcomed Ja'far and his friends to Abyssinia. In the second letter, God's Messenger requested that the Negus wed him to Ramla bint Abi Sufyan,<sup>351</sup> whose husband<sup>352</sup> had died and left her alone with her daughter in Abyssinia.<sup>353</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> The term Najashi (Negus) denoted the king or ruler of Abyssinia.

<sup>349</sup> As with his predecessor, this Negus too embraced Islam and indicated in the letter that he wrote to the Messenger of God that should he so wish, he was prepared to renounce the throne, leaving everything behind to come to him in Medina. The Messenger's letter of reply advised his remaining in Abyssinia. Hamidullah, *Vesâik* 118-120

<sup>350</sup> The letter includes the Prophet's request for the Negus to send those of his Companions who had emigrated there. *İbnü'l-Esîr, Üsdü'l-Gâbe* 4/182

<sup>351</sup> Umm Habiba's husband was 'Ubayd Allah ibn Jahsh, son of the Prophet's paternal aunt. He was also brother to Uhud martyr 'Abd Allah ibn Jahsh and Zaynab, the wife of God's Messenger, whose marriage was ordained in the heavens. Hamna bint Jahsh, who was married to Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr, was another one of his siblings. He was among the first to profess belief in Islam. Had he been able to preserve this privileged position, we would have seen his name among those held up by the Qur'an as Sabiqun al-Awwalun (the First and Foremost to embrace Islam and excel others in virtue). He was also a person of reputable standing in his community. This is precisely why Abu Sufyan, one of the two individuals who had their sights set on governing the Mecca of the future, gave his own daughter in marriage to him. But even if Abu Sufyan's son-in-law, an individual's becoming Muslim in Mecca at the time, was turned into a nightmare in and of itself. Like many of his friends, he too emigrated to Abyssinia with his family to practice his religion more freely there.

However, the emigration to Abyssinia was not an emigration of three to five days, but lasted for exactly sixteen years. During this time, 'Ubayd Allah ibn Jahsh's two weaknesses surface. To begin with, he severed all contact with Mecca, closed himself off to any news coming therefrom and retreated into his own little world, and broke away from the single most dynamic sources of spiritual sustenance - the Qur'an and the Messenger of God. Subsequently, he broke off his ties with his friends in Abyssinia and began a solitary existence. According to the express statements of God's Messenger, Satan was the associate of one alone, and this loneliness handed him over to the hands of his carnal self and Satan. And as estrangement happens gradually, he could not see what was happening, until he one day eventually stumbled into the abyss. The cultural surroundings in which he found himself in the Abyssinia to which he had emigrated sixteen years prior, so as to freely practice his faith, began to have greater appeal. Rather, with the emptiness in spiritual nourishment came other things to fill the void, and 'Ubayd Allah ibn Jahsh washed onto different shores. His wife Umm Habiba also put pressure on him. But she was a woman who knew how to stand firm; her nourishment was complete and her bearing amongst her friends was as it always had been.

Unfortunately, in the end, 'Ubayd Allah ibn Jahsh died a Christian in the lands to which he went to live freely as a Muslim. *İbn-i Sa'd, Tabakât* 8/77; *İbnü'l-Esîr, Üsdü'l-Gâbe* 7/116

<sup>352</sup> Famous more so with her honorific title than with her own name, Umm Habiba's actual name was Ramla bint Abi Sufyan. *İbn-i Sa'd, Tabakât* 8/76; *İbn-i Hacer, İsbâbe* 4/2508; *İbnü'l-Esîr, Üsdü'l-Gâbe* 7/116; Zehebi, *Siyeru A'lâmi'n-Nübelâ* 1/441

<sup>353</sup> The Negus put both requests into action. Firstly, he sent a messenger to Umm Habiba (it is rather interesting that this messenger was chosen from among the women). A date was then set for a wedding feast, with a bridal due being determined for the bride, and a marriage ceremony taking place by proxy in Abyssinia. The Messenger of

Abu Sufyan was pleased<sup>354</sup> upon learning of his son-in-law's passing<sup>355</sup> and from the moment he received the news entertained the hope of his daughter Umm Habiba's speedy return to Mecca. However, the latest report reaching him had it that Muhammad the Trustworthy daughter had taken his daughter in marriage.

He was dumbfounded yet again. Indeed, he knew Muhammad the Trustworthy, and even felt a certain closeness for him in terms of kinship.<sup>356</sup>

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God was in Medina at the time. See Ibn-i Sa'd, *Tabakât* 8/77; Ibn-i Hacer, *Îsâbe* 4/2508; İbnü'l-Esîr, *Üsdü'l-Gâbe* 7/117, 4/182

<sup>354</sup> Umm Habiba had seen her husband in her dream before all these events erupted and clearly understood, on the basis of her interpretation, that things would not go well. Ibn-i Sa'd, *Tabakât* 8/77; Ibn-i Hacer, *Îsâbe* 4/2508; Zehebî, *Siyeru A'lâmi'n-Nübelâ* 2/221

<sup>355</sup> Underlying Abu Sufyan's joy was without a doubt his son-in-law's conversion to Christianity, as much as expectation of his daughter's return to Mecca.

<sup>356</sup> At the same time, Umm Habiba was most closely related to God's Messenger, prior to her marriage, than any of his other wives, and there are a great many examples of cases where this affinity giving rise to others. This is one of the reasons, in particular, behind her father Abu Sufyan's assuming a more democratic stance towards the Prophet until Badr. A notable case in point is the occasion where Abu Sufyan was once seated with Abu Jahl when the Messenger of God passed by them. As soon as Abu Jahl saw God's Messenger approach, he turned to Abu Sufyan and said, mockingly, "O Banu 'Abd al-Shams, look, here comes your Prophet." In spite of their being on the same side (in opposition to God's Messenger), Abu Sufyan said in reply,

"Why does it surprise you that that one of us should be a Prophet? While that Prophet arose from those among us who are fewer in number and lower in status."

Abu Jahl continued,

"What surprises me, is that such a young man should be a Prophet when there are instead all these elders and nobles of seniority and status."

The Messenger of God saw them thus putting their heads together and overheard their discussions. He approached and said, addressing them directly,

"As for you, Abu Sufyan, it is not that you care for God and His Messenger that you objected, but did so purely for the sake of your lineage. But you, Abu al-Hakam, you are going to laugh little and weep much."

Realizing that he had blundered yet again, Abu Jahl took to hiding his chagrin and still attempted to justify his actions, saying derisively, "O son of my brother, how you have frightened me with your tidings!" Ibn-i Kesîr, *Bidâye* 3/65; Suyûtî, *Hasâisu'l-Kübrâ* 1/241

When Abu Sufyan learned, on another occasion, of Abu Jahl's hurling insults at the Prophet's daughter Fatima and slapping her in the face, he took Fatima with him, expressly stating that he could not remain silent in the face of such injustice. So affected by Abu Sufyan's manner in dealing with this situation was God's Messenger, that he spoke of him in praise. Kazvîni, *Tedvîn* 1/201

There are also narrations which refer to Abu Sufyan's coming to the Messenger of God, again at around the same time, at asking him to make the prayer for rain. (Buhârî, *İstiska* 2, 13; *Tefsîru Sûre* (30), (44) 5; Müslim, *Sifâtu'l-Münâfikîn* 39; Tirmizî, *Tefsîru Sûre* (44) 1. See also Hamîdullah, 1/99, 100

On another occasion, their paths had crossed and Abu Sufyan, who was traveling with his family, asked his son Mu'awiya to get down from the riding beast and asked God's Messenger to mount it instead. Seeing this as an auspicious opportunity, God's Messenger related the beauties of Islam to him throughout the journey and invited him to accept Islam. But this was something that Abu Sufyan was not yet ready for. When it came time to part, God's Messenger went on his own way. Hind, *who witnessed all this, could contain herself no longer and expressed her complaint saying, "Did you have my son get off the riding beast in order to listen to all this!" Abu Sufyan's reply was thus:*

"Do not speak such words, for his is a noble spirit." Ibn-i Ebî Şeybe, *Musannef* 1/458; Taberânî, *Mu'cemü'l-Evsat* 6/361; Heysemî, *Mecmeu'z-Zevâid* 6/20

But just as he had set his hopes on the moment when he could let bygones be bygones and welcome his daughter with open arms once again, it was not at all easy for him to stomach his daughter's marriage to the person he deemed his archenemy, and upon whom he had advanced with his forces. Despite this being news that made the powerful Meccan chief's blood boil, he was not one naive enough not to see that there was nothing to be done. This is why he merely remarked, "A suitable match!" He then added the proverbial phrase, "A noble camel can't be bridled."<sup>357358</sup>

By means of this marriage, God's Messenger had also become brother-in-law to Safwan ibn Umayya, another one of his fiercest enemies. Safwan was married to the sister of Umm Habiba, Umayna bint Abi Sufyan.<sup>359</sup>

What has been related thus far concerns the central objective of the Prophet's marriage to Umm Habiba and the manner in which it took place.<sup>360</sup> Let us now take a look at what transpired on Abu Sufyan's front following after the marriage took place:

Abu Sufyan, who was also a prominent merchant, began seeing Medina differently, especially on his travels to and from Damascus. The trade route passed through Medina and residing in this city to which he had come so close, was his very own daughter Umm Habiba. As a result, he began coming up with various excuses to call upon his daughter whenever he had the chance. He was now frequenting the house of the man whose sight he could not bear, especially after Badr. Needless to say, he encountered a great many new things on each of these visits. Until that day, he had closed all doors to Medina, except the one that led to hate, while now he was beginning to discover Medina, not through the accounts and construals of others, but through his personal observations. For instance, on one of his Medina visits, he called upon his daughter Umm Habiba. Naturally, he expected reverence from his daughter, but was met instead with a reaction he by no means expected. When he wanted to sit down on a mattress, Umm Habiba promptly pulled the mattress out from under him and did not allow him to sit down on it. In astonishment, he exclaimed, "Dear daughter! I hardly know if you think that I am too good for the mattress or that the mattress is too good for me?"

The answer Umm Habiba gave to her father only increased his shock: "On the contrary," she said. "It is the mattress of God's Messenger. I merely deemed you unworthy to sit on it, for you are an idolater, and are impure. This is why I did not want you to sit on the mattress of the Messenger of God."

His shock compounded. "O daughter," he said, "How you have changed since I saw you last!"<sup>361</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> Due to the camel's being one of the limited subjects of Arabic literature at the time, their idioms appear to exhibit parallels with this concern.

<sup>358</sup> Hâkim, *Müstedrek* 4/24; İbn-i Sa'd, *Tabakât* 8/99

<sup>359</sup> İbnü'l-Esîr, *Üsdü'l-Gâbe* 7/397

<sup>360</sup> Examining the end results of this letter in terms of both Mecca as well as Abyssinia, it certainly has a lot to say in regards to international relations and must definitely be discussed further from such a perspective. The kind of contribution it can make in the solutions to the accumulated problems of our day warrant special analysis by authorities in this field.

It was true that his daughter had changed a great deal. This change had brought her to her true essence, had enabled her to be a slave to the All-Merciful. Whereas Abu Sufyan was still doing the incomprehensible. This is why she turned to her father and said, “On the contrary! God has honored me with Islam. As for you, father, you bring yourself to worship stones, mere idols that have power neither to see nor hear.”<sup>362</sup>

Only just beginning to find himself, Abu Sufyan had now taken a completely new course. Every episode he encountered, every sentence he heard, and every person he spoke to was toppling over the sacrosanct idols within his world one by world. Now, he too could discern that everything spoken in Mecca for the past eight years was nothing but a big lie.

This marriage was thus the beginning of a new era. It simultaneously served as one of the breaking points in the lead up to Mecca’s conquest, as God’s Messenger had opened a crucial door at a time such as this, when all doors had been shut one after the other. God’s Messenger, too, would pass through this door at least as much as Abu Sufyan, and was to build new bridges to the Meccans, beginning with the family of Abu Sufyan first and foremost.

This was indeed what happened. After this marriage, Abu Sufyan’s policy began to change. He was no longer consumed by hatred, and did not utter cries of death in fits of rage. He had assumed a character much changed, one that could sit down and actually talk. The glad tidings conveyed in the Qur’an were thus beginning to bear fruit, and an eighteen-year enmity was rapidly melting away in the warmth of this closeness that was established. The ‘Perfect Embodiment of the Qur’an’ who God had confirmed with Divine revelation was reaping the fruits of every step that he took. This was not, of course, a step that was intended only for Abu Sufyan. Before long, Abu Sufyan’s other daughter Durra<sup>363</sup> joined her sister in Medina without the knowledge of her father, and embraced Islam.<sup>364</sup>

The Messenger of God, the Pride of Humanity, was weaving the fabric of a new future, stitch by stitch. He had used a strong mortar in building the foundations of the Meccan conquest that would be realized several years later; Abu Sufyan was to play a critical role in the smooth surrender of the city.

There was also the dimension of the matter which pertained to Mecca itself. Until that time, the leader that the city’s inhabitants viewed as a ‘falcon’, was now exhibiting an altogether

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<sup>361</sup> Abu Sufyan’s statement can also be translated to mean: “Terrible things have happened to you since you left me.” Such a preference was made here, however, for the sake of fluency.

<sup>362</sup> Vâkîdî, *Megâzî* 1/321; İbn-i Sa’d, *Tabakât* 8/99, 100; İbn-i Kesîr, *Bidâye* 4/280; Halebî, *Sîre* 3/7; İbn-i Asâkir, *Târîhu Medîneti Dîmaşk* 69/150, 151

<sup>363</sup> Her name is also recorded as being *Hasana*, *Hamna*, or *'Azza*. *İbnü'l-Esîr*, *Üsdü'l-Gâbe* 7/102; *İbn-i Hacer*, *İsâbe* 4/2497

<sup>364</sup> When her sister Durra came to join her in Medina, Umm Habiba was reported to have said, “O Messenger of God, will you not marry my sister, the daughter of Abu Sufyan?” She sought, in her own way, to see to the welfare of her sister, and wanted to crown her sister’s sacrifice with the honor of being a Mother of the Believers. She was in all likelihood unaware of the legal ruling in this matter. Moreover, upon receiving such a proposal from Umm Habiba, he said, “Would you really like for me to do that?” to which she replied: “Yes, for I should like that my sister share with me in good.”

To this, God’s Messenger said, “This is not permitted me.” The Qur’an had an explicit injunction in this regard: it expressly forbade taking two sisters together in marriage. *Nisâ* 4/23; *Buhârî*, *Nikâh* 20, 25, 26, *Nafakât* 16; *Müslim*, *Radâ* 15; *Taberânî*, *Kebîr* 23/224; *İbn-i Hacer*, *İsâbe* 7/586, 633

different stance, taking on a completely transformed identity when it came to Medina in particular. Even if they brought pressure to bear on him to return to his former days, these proved fruitless, and they resorted to bypassing him in certain matters. Khalid ibn al-Walid, 'Ikrima, Safwan ibn Umayya, and Suhayl ibn 'Amr in particular, had come to the fore, acting the part of the fatal foursome in opposition and animosity towards Islam. They were, for instance, those who stopped God's Messenger at Hudaibiya. It was again they who kept the compensatory pilgrimage process under their firm control and followed it most closely.<sup>365</sup> It is also true that God's Messenger was in quest of them too.

### Marriage to Safiyya

When looked at from this perspective, it quickly becomes apparent just how pivotal and strategic was the marriage of God's Messenger to Safiyya.<sup>366</sup> As is well known, she was the daughter of Huyayy ibn Akhtab - the most intractable figure among the Jewish communities the Prophet was in contact with at the time. Her father Huyayy was a chief of the Banu Nadir. He made fighting with God's Messenger to the death his life's mission, and by inciting his tribe, caused their ultimate banishment from Medina. During this period of exile, he settled in Khaybar, only this time to provoke the people of Khaybar into active revolt against God's Messenger. Perhaps his greatest attack was his traveling with the group of Jews he took with him, first to Mecca and then to all the other tribes and clans, uniting all of them on the same front to form the Confederate forces, with his promise of worldly gains and glory.<sup>367</sup> His hopes for the venture, where everyone other than the Muslims mobilized and advanced upon Medina, were great. Besides, from appearances alone, there would be left nothing standing in Medina, merely by their marching through. Moreover, it was Huyayy himself who persuaded the Banu Qurayza into fighting - the same Banu Qurayza who had remained faithful to their truce right up until the Confederate forces surrounded Medina and with whom God's Messenger had renewed their agreement during this time. He went to the house of Ka'b Ibn Asad, to impel him to renounce the agreement with God's Messenger, and while not successful to begin with, managed to persuade him also after much insistence. The Banu Qurayza thus raised the flag of rebellion.<sup>368</sup> No doubt, it was again Huyayy who led the way in inveighing against the Messenger of God and injuring him personally with his insult and invective.

As is known, relationships that had pursued a normal course until Badr<sup>369</sup> slowly began to take a tense turn, and as a result of this, some Jewish tribes then began rising against the State of

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<sup>365</sup> Due to such independence, some scholars have asserted that Abu Sufyan lost his former power and gave this dissenting group a free hand in the administration of Mecca. Halebî, *Sîre* 2/653

<sup>366</sup> Safiyya's actual name is Zaynab. This name, meaning 'distinguished', was given to her after Khaybar as a result of the Prophet's choosing her as his wife. At the time, the commander was customarily entitled to a horse or a slave, or a concubine was appropriated for him, who was referred to as Safiyy, denoting 'chosen'. God's Messenger had chosen the daughter of Huyayy ibn Akhtab for himself, and with this choice, Zaynab the daughter of Huyayy was thereafter to be known as Safiyya. İbn Hacer, *Fethu'l-Bâri* 7/480

<sup>367</sup> Vâkidî, *Megâzî* 321; İbn-i Hişâm, *Sîre* 2/135; Beyhakî, *Delâil* 3/408; Halebî, *Sîre* 2/415

<sup>368</sup> Vâkidî, *Megâzî* 329-331; Beyhakî, *Delâil* 3/428-429

<sup>369</sup> Relations with the Jews can be delineated into four distinct phases: 1. The preparatory process prior to the Emigration, from the beginning of the Messenger's Prophethood in Mecca. 2. The first two years of Emigration

Medina. These, however, remained local and the situation that transpired under the control of God's Messenger was never turned into a battle between Judaism and Islam. For, there is in question certain tribes rising against the state and engaging in armed insurrection, and a defense reflex on the part of the state. Here, too, the foremost priority of God's Messenger, after having investigated the truth of the reports, was diplomacy. He sent emissaries to this end, more often than not going in person for deliberations, explaining the futility of the uprising and the severity of its consequences, and thus trying to dissuade them from pursuing their ambitions. Despite all the efforts to deter them from taking such a course, they refused to change their position. When they instead carried the matter too far, they were advanced upon and God's Messenger took to resolving the matter in this instance by means of state rationale.

This process culminated in Khaybar. Given that Khaybar took place in the seventh year after the Emigration, in the month of Safar,<sup>370</sup> the problematic period experienced with the Jews can therefore be said to have lasted for close to four years. Khaybar was to prove a turning point in relations with the Jews, where the tension experienced would come to an end, strained relationships would be mended via new agreements that would be made, and relationships were restored to a normal plane, free of latent hostility or distrust. However, those God's Messenger addressed then were human beings too, and in this period continuing for close to four years, sensitivity increased both vis-a-vis the Jews and vis-a-vis the Muslims, and even the smallest shortcomings began to be viewed as great wrongs.

As was the case after Badr, the Messenger of God began repairing relations which required extra sensitivity, and took a step that neither side expected - he married the daughter of the most difficult figure Huyayy ibn Akhtab. This marriage was, without question, a two-faceted operation. Putting all the troubles experienced well behind him, God's Messenger personally demonstrated to the Muslims that enmity cannot be shown to anyone because of their Jewishness. By also showing the Jews the boundlessness of his heart, he proclaimed to them for them his door remained wide open.<sup>371</sup>

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wherein no problems were experienced. 3. The problematic years until Khaybar. 4. The three-and-a-half years of peace from Khaybar until the Prophet's demise.

Unfortunately in our day, the period of peace in which the Messenger of God solved all existing problems is not considered, while Khaybar, where tension had reached a peak, is made the center of focus. It is impossible for resolution to come from a problematic foundation and the outcome forever transpires along this course. If people today seek a solution and are sincere in their desire, they should focus on the last three-and-a-half years of the Prophet's coexistence with Jews, in which he resolved every manner of difficulty and dilemma.

<sup>370</sup> Khaybar is the course of events beginning with the expedition from Medina in the last days of the month of Muharram, including the siege which continued until the end of Rabi' al-Awwal, and which ended with ultimate victory in the month of Safar. See Vâkîdî, *Meğâzî* 441; İbn-i Hişâm, *Sîre* 2/202; Halebî, *Sîre* 3/45; Taberî, *Târîh* 3/144

<sup>371</sup> We cannot possibly understand the greatness of the Messenger's preference on that day without first asking ourselves the question, "What kind of reaction would we, as today's Muslims, have given if one of our leaders were to marry a Jewish woman?" One who took such a step today would be completely rejected in the Muslim world, whoever they may be, and even if they were to accomplish the impossible, that leader would never receive favor again. In fact, if, for the sake of argument, God's Messenger were alive today and he made the same preference today as he did on that day, then today's Muslims would have raised objection to this and would not have approved of his doing so. The reason for this is obvious: from the very establishment of the State of Israel, the first news item on the agenda in the Muslim world has been its leader, while the second has always been the issue of Palestine. To be more precise, a overt hostility toward Jews has been shown on the basis of Palestine. Such a fear has perpetually been presented as material for domestic politics, and for 65 years the minds of



Among those who were taken prisoner at Khaybar were Safiyya, daughter of Huyayy ibn Akhtab, and the daughter of her uncle. After her father,<sup>372</sup> now her husband Kinana ibn Abi l-Huqayq had been killed at Khaybar, and she had begun to worry about what might come of her along with the other captives.

Meanwhile, Dihya al-Kalbi asked the Messenger of God for one of the captives and God's Messenger agreed. Dihya al-Kalbi who was an emissary of the Prophet and in whose form Gabriel often appeared to God's Messenger, subsequently went to the captives and chose Safiyya for himself. One of the Companions witnessing this immediately approached God's Messenger and said, "O Messenger of God, you gave the noblewoman, the daughter of Huyayy ibn Akhtab, chief of the Banu Qurayza and Banu Nadir, to Dihya, while she befits none but you."

Such was the discernment of the Companions who had been molded by Divine revelation and educated by God's Messenger himself. They were right. Such a preference also meant the conquest of Khaybar from the inside. God's Messenger thus called Dihya and asked that he choose another one of the captives for himself instead. He then called out to Bilal, requesting that they be brought to his presence.<sup>373</sup>

Bilal rushed to Safiyya who had been closely and anxiously eyeing developments and informed her that the Messenger of God had sent for her. As soon as she heard, she remembered the dream she had seen years earlier. Moreover, she had drawn the reaction of her husband after having reminded him of it before Khaybar, and he had even struck her as a result of it.<sup>374</sup> Furthermore, the Messenger of God was the talk of virtually every Jew, her own father and uncle first and foremost, and now he summoned her.

So that they could reach God's Messenger even sooner, Bilal took a short cut through the battlefield. Naturally, strewn across the field were the vestiges of the skirmish. Seeing the corpses

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Muslims have been shaped with this enmity. The Muslim world today is at a dead end in this regard and has come to the point where it will not be able to think clearly until the matter of Palestine issue is resolved. It is to be regretted that the Palestine issue cannot possibly be solved with the methods used to date. Frankly speaking, the matter has reached deadlock, and until we are able to shed this format that has been configured over the years, there is no way of making headway in finding a solution. However, upon examination of the interactions that God's Messenger had with them and his practices in this regard, it quickly becomes apparent that problems of any nature can be resolved. At the same time, this subject is too important to be relegated to a single footnote. So much so that a work which takes as its central theme the Prophet's diplomacy with the Jews is currently in preparation for publication.

<sup>372</sup> Her father Huyayy ibn Akhtab was killed as a war criminal alongside the Banu Qurayza. Vâkidî, *Meğâzî* 368; Taberî, *Târîh* 3/110; Zehebî, *Târîh* 2/180

<sup>373</sup> Buhârî, *Salât* 12 (371); Müslim, *Nikâh*, 14; İbnü'l-Esîr, *Üsdü'l-Gâbe* 7/168; İbn-i Kesîr, *Bidâye* 4/214

<sup>374</sup> There were bruises on Safiyya's face, around her eye, the day she was brought to God's Messenger; she was beaten by her husband who responded with such aggression for fear that her dream would come true. For when God's Messenger had come all the way to their door during Khaybar, she understood that the dream she saw on her wedding night would be fulfilled and also told her husband as much. On the night of her marriage to Kinana ibn Abi l-Huqayq, she saw a full moon coming from the direction of Medina and then falling into her lap. When she related her dream to Kinana the following morning, he immediately understood its meaning and in a fit of rage, exploded, "What is this dream but that you seek the new king of the Hijaz, Muhammad, for a husband!" And more than mere reaction, he gave her such a blow in the face that he blackened her eye. Vâkidî, *Megâzî* 1/674; İbn-i Kesir, *Sîre* 3/374; İbn-i Kayyım, *Zâdu'l-Meâd* 3/290

of two Khaybarites on the way, her uncle's daughter let out a scream and began throwing soil all about her. God's Messenger who saw the scene, called out: "O Bilal!" God's Messenger was crushed with sorrow. He continued his words, as though wanting to teach his addressees a lesson in kindness, an ounce of which he himself had never received:

"Have you no compassion, that you brought these women past their dead?"<sup>375</sup>

When Safiyya appeared before God's Messenger, he presented Islam to her. He merely explained and left her free to choose whether or not she would accept it. This was not the only option he presented her with. He informed her that he would take her in marriage in the event of her acceptance of Islam, while should she refuse, she would be set free and sent back to her people.

Everything about him clearly demonstrated that he was the awaited Last Prophet to come at the end of time, who was foretold in the scriptures. While he was a victorious commander, he had addressed one the captives directly and was conversing with them. What is more, instead of saying, "Should you refuse, I will make you pay," he said, "I will release you and send you back to your people." Only a Prophet could have exhibited such rectitude. "O Messenger of God," she began by saying. This was, in any event, an expression of acceptance, but she continued:

"I had long desired to embrace Islam before you invited me to accept it and had wished to affirm your Prophethood. I no longer have any concern with Judaism, nor any connection to it. You leave me free to choose between unbelief and Islam and I choose God and His Messenger. God and His Messenger are dearer to me than my freedom and than my returning to my people."<sup>376</sup>

These were, at the same time, expressions which indicated the profundity of her knowledge, and God's Messenger first set Safiyya free and then took her as his wife. The daughter of the most intractable figure in Medina and one of those captured, Zaynab<sup>377</sup> suddenly found herself as one of the Mothers of the Believers. Her dream had come true and she had, at this moment, forgotten all her cares.<sup>378</sup> What is more, upon their arrival in a place two nights' distance away from Medina, the Messenger of God gave a wedding feast as a sign of his marriage to Safiyya and asked her to invite those close to her.<sup>379</sup> When they preparations for the return to Medina at the end of the feast, the Companions saw God's Messenger covering Safiyya with some cloth on the one hand, and down on his knees on the other, waiting to allow for her to mount her camel with ease. Safiyya then placed her foot on his thigh and got up on her camel like so on this day.<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>375</sup> Vākidi, *Megâzî* 465; İbn-i Hişâm, *Sîre* 2/209; Taberî, *Târîh* 3/147; Beyhakî, *Delâil* 4/232; İbn-i Hacer, *İsâbe* 4/2558; İbnü'l-Esîr, *Üsdü'l-Gâbe* 7/169; İbn-i Kesîr, *Bidâye* 4/214

<sup>376</sup> Vākidi, *Megâzî* 465

<sup>377</sup> As expressed earlier, Safiyya's former name was Zaynab.

<sup>378</sup> This place is referred to as Sadd al-Sahba' or Sadd al-Rawha' in the sources.

<sup>379</sup> Safiyya avoided the wedding banquet under discussion when God's Messenger brought it up some six miles distance from Khaybar. When he later inquired as to her reason for her reluctance, saying, "What was it that prevented you from doing this earlier?" Safiyya replied, "Since we were then in close proximity to the Jews, I feared that they might harm you." İbn-i Hacer, *İsâbe* 4/2558

<sup>380</sup> Buhârî, *Büyü'* 111 (2235)

An incident which took place in the meantime is rather interesting: when they entered the Prophet's tent at nightfall, God's Messenger heard the sound of footsteps coming from outside the tent. Considering how close the individual had come, they must have sought to appeal to God's Messenger in a particular matter. God's Messenger stepped out of his tent before the person had taken a step further. Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, the pride of the city of Istanbul, was standing guard, girt with his sword. Seeing him in such a state, God's Messenger asked, "O Abu Ayyub, what is the matter?" "O Messenger of God," he said. "I feared that harm would come to you from this woman for her father, her husband, and her people were killed at Khaybar, and she was until just recently in a state of unbelief. I was afraid for you on her account and so kept watch."<sup>381</sup>

Such was the singularity of the Companions. They took it upon themselves to see to the situation, considered the potential outcomes of the Messenger's being left alone with a woman whose closest relations had only recently been killed, and had come to stand sentinel outside the tent of God's Messenger. This was at the same time a scene which reflected the attitude of the Companions towards the tribe that Safiyya represented. They assumed vigilance in regards to a matter by which they had taken blow after blow and were as on the alert as they could possibly be. Nonetheless, this was a delicacy that needed to be appraised in any case and God's Messenger raised his hands and beseeched God with the supplication:

"My Lord, guard Abu Ayyub just as he came here with the intention of spending the night guarding me."<sup>382</sup>

So, what happened next?

The other wives of God's Messenger did not take kindly to his marriage to the daughter of a Jew who had constantly escalated the tension for the past four years. There were those who censured her purely because of her Jewish origin and who condemned her for her connections. Someone who had entered the boundless atmosphere of God's Messenger and whom he had taken into his intimate sanctuary as a member of his household, was viewed differently. On top of that, highlighting the close ties of kinship of their own fathers and ancestors, they stated that they were closer to God's Messenger, and that Safiyya was more distant to him. What is more, her relations had done all that could be done in way of exacerbating such distance. When some of them even professed their superiority in the eyes of God's Messenger due to their relationship by descent as well as through marriage, God's Messenger became angry and said to her, "When they speak to you or dismiss you, say, 'How can you fare better than me when my father is Aaron and my uncle, Moses?'"<sup>383</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> İbn-i Hişâm, *Sîre* 2/211; Hâkim, *Müstedrek* 5/37 (6865); Beyhakî, *Delâil* 4/233; İbn-i Sa'd, *Tabakât* 8/99; Zehebî, *Siyer* 2/408

<sup>382</sup> İbn-i Hişâm, *Sîre*, 2/211; İbn-i Kesir, *Bidâye* 4/230

<sup>383</sup> İbn-i Hacer, *İsâbe* 4/2558; İbn-i Esîr, *Üsdü'l-Gâbe* 7/169. Hurt by all these incidents which seemed to come one after the other, Safiyya was on another occasion sitting downheartedly on her own, when God's Messenger noticed her being thus dispirited. When he discovered the reason upon asking her the reason, he uttered similar words to her on that day also: "You ought to have responded to them by saying, 'My husband is Muhammad, my father is Aaron and my uncle, Moses!'" Vâkîdî, *Meğâzî* 466; İbn-i Sa'd, *Tabakât* 8/127; Kurtubî, *el-Câmi' li Ahkâmi'l-Kur'an* 16/326; İbn-i Hacer, *İsâbe* 8/101; İbn-i Esîr, *Üsdü'l-Gâbe* 3/375. It is quite probable that these were perceived to be separate events as a natural outcome of its being transmitted by different narrators.

During one of his travels, the Messenger of God took Safiyya to accompany him and during the journey Safiyya's camel became unruly and took off. As a result, God's Messenger then turned to another one of his wives who also accompanied him on the journey,<sup>384</sup> to ask, "Safiyya's camel has run away. What about giving one of your camels to her?" To which she replied, "Give my camel to that Jew?" Hearing such hate-filled words coming from someone so close to his inner sanctum, God's Messenger was greatly angered and severed his relations with the utterer of these words for two or three months.<sup>385</sup>

In the early days of her arrival in Medina, she remained a guest in the home of Haritha ibn al-Nu'man, where all the women of the Ansar came to visit her and expressed their admiration of her beauty. 'A'isha had also come, her face veiled. Seeing her leave, God's Messenger approached her and, referring to Safiyya, asked her, "How did you find her, O 'A'isha?" When he received the reply, "I found her to be Jewish," he was very saddened by this and said to 'A'isha, "Do not speak such words, for she has become a Muslim and quite a fine one at that."<sup>386</sup>

Against Abu Bakr's daughter 'A'isha and 'Umar's daughter Hafsa, the Messenger of God supported the daughter of his most inveterate enemy amongst the Jews, Huyayy ibn Akhtab, and by means of a truth he expressed half jestingly, his undertaking realized a dual objective. As a part of this undertaking, the phobia of the Jews that had begun to form among the Companions was amended, and being Jewish was no longer a cause for enmity. For the Jews too were now relatives of God's Messenger. Given that his wives were "Mothers of the Believers,"<sup>387</sup> the Companions began to view the Jews as maternal uncles and aunts.<sup>388</sup>

There was also the dimension of this marriage which pertained to Safiyya's family and relatives.<sup>389</sup> Following the marriage, some of those who at once found themselves within the

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<sup>384</sup> There are accounts to the effect of this wife being Zaynab bint Jahsh. She is reported to have been deeply grieved by the remark she made on this day. *Ībn-i Hacer, Īsābe 4/2558*

<sup>385</sup> *Ībn-i Hacer, Īsābe 4/2558; Ībn-i Esīr, Ūsdū'l-Gābe 7/169*

<sup>386</sup> *Ībn-i Hacer, Īsābe 4/2558*

<sup>387</sup> Qur'an, 33:6.

<sup>388</sup> In the last days of the Messenger's fatal illness, all his wives were present by his side. Seeing him in such a state, Safiyya said, "O Messenger of God, Would that I had suffered in your place what you now suffer." Upon hearing these words, the other wives looked at one another, slightly, implying her insincerity in these words. The Messenger of God picked up on the situation and asked them, "What is it that makes you wink at one another?" "What is it that you mean, O Messenger of God?" they asked, in their attempt to evade the predicament they found themselves in, whereupon he said, "These facial gestures of yours." He then continued: "By God, she spoke the truth in her words, in complete earnestness." *Ībn-i Hacer, Īsābe 4/2559*

<sup>389</sup> During the Caliphate of 'Umar, Safiyya's maidservant went to the Caliph and complained that Safiyya sanctified Saturdays, and that she maintained her ties with the Jews. 'Umar asked her about what he had heard. She replied: "I have not loved Saturday ever since God has replaced it with Friday, and I only maintain ties with those Jews with whom I am related through kinship."

With the matter coming to light, Safiyya then asked her maidservant what it was that made her say such a thing to the Caliph and she replied, "It was Satan." To this truthful confession, Safiyya responded, "Go, you are free," and thus emancipated her. *Ībn-i Hacer, Īsābe 4/2559*

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.<sup>390</sup>

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.<sup>391</sup>

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

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<sup>390</sup> 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.

<sup>391</sup> 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.