

SECTION ONE

THE PROPHETIC STANCE IN THE FACE OF VIOLENCE AND WAR

In his thirteen-year life in Mecca, the Messenger of God faced every kind of violence, but not once did he reciprocate in kind. The Qur'anic verses that were revealed during the course of revelation that began with Hira commanded justice and fairness even if the Prophet's addressees had far overstepped the mark, and pointed to patience as the sole recourse in such circumstances.²² He was the Prophet of mercy,²³ and he forever treated them with mercy. Although he faced persecution at their hands, he exerted himself almost to his own detriment and sought to take them also into his atmosphere of mercy.²⁴ Neither was there any room in his world for causing harm, nor returning harm with harm.²⁵ Whatever the circumstances, the Messenger of God forever did what became him.

He guided his Companions in the same course of action also;²⁶ no one who had been hurt, attacked, who had their property pillaged, and whose life was endangered retaliated and did not appear in the same scene as the Meccans who had rendered violence their second-nature. Because from the outset, God's Messenger advised everyone, Abu Dharr,²⁷ Abu Bakr²⁸ and 'Umar²⁹ first

²² As a case in point, refer to: "(Even so, O Messenger) adopt the way of forbearance and tolerance, and enjoin what is good and right, and withdraw from the ignorant ones (do not care what they say and do)." (7:199); "They spend (out of what God has provided for them,) both in ease and hardship, ever-restraining their rage (even when provoked and able to retaliate), and pardoning people (their offenses). God loves (such) people who are devoted to doing good, aware that God is seeing them." (3:134); "Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and argue with them in the best way possible..." (16:25); and, "O you who believe! Come in full submission to God, all of you, (without allowing any discord among you due to worldly reasons), and do not follow in the footsteps of Satan, for indeed he is a manifest enemy to you (seeking to seduce you to rebel against God, with glittering promises)." (2:208). See also Mümteħine 60/8; Vâkıa 56/25, 26; Furkân 25/63; Kasas 28/55; Zuhuf 43/ 89; Nisâ 4/90; Enfâl 8/61; Muhammed 47/35; Mü'minûn 23/96; Mâide 5/13

²³ Enbiyâ 21 /107; Müslim, *Birr* 24 (2599); Ebû Dâvûd, *Sünnet* 11 (4659)

²⁴ Kehf 18/6; Şuarâ 26/3; Fâtır 35/8

²⁵ God's Messenger expresses this in the following way: "There is no harm nor return of harm." İbn-i Mâce, *Ahkâm* 17 (2340); Mâlik, *Muvatta'* 4/1078 (2758)

²⁶ For instance, he once advised Abu Dharr, "Fear God wherever you are, and follow up a bad deed with a good one so that it wipes it out, and behave well towards people." Tirmizî, *Birr* 55 (1987). On another occasion, he said to 'Alî: "There will come the time where you will see disputes after me, so if you have a way of ending them in peace, then do so." Ahmed İbn-i Hanbel, *Müsned* 2/106 (695). On another occasion, he addressed Salama ibn Akwa', who had recovered the possessions that the Ghatafan had seized and wanted to respond to the thieves with even greater severity, saying, "O son of al-Akwa', You have been given power, so be kind." Buhârî, *Megâzî* 37 (4194); Müslim, *Cihâd* 45 (1806); Ahmed İbn-i Hanbel, *Müsned* 27/42 (16513)

²⁷ Tirmizî, *Birr* 55 (1987)

and foremost, to act in restraint and prudence, and did not want anyone to react, to return in kind the wrong done to them, and to become a party to violence. It was again God's Messenger who showed them exactly what stance they needed to take, assuring them, "The most beloved of you to me, and the closest of you to me on the Day of Judgment, are the best of you in character. Those among you, who talk with affectation, are given to boasting, and who offend others with their words and actions, will be the most repugnant to me and farthest from me on the Day of Judgment."³⁰ In any event, he described gentleness and mercy as actions beautifying a person, and violence and crudeness as actions making them repugnant.³¹ When such Companions as 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf came to him and said, "O Messenger of God, while we were honored in our days as polytheists we are held in contempt and despised as believers," and thus requested permission to retaliate, God's Messenger said, "I have been commanded to forgive the people and not to fight them." In so doing, he did not permit them to take retributory action.³² This was, after all, God's decree; Gabriel had come to him and had said: "(Even so, O Messenger) adopt the way of forbearance and tolerance, and enjoin what is good and right, and withdraw from the ignorant ones (do not care what they say and do)."³³ When archangel Gabriel had revealed this verse, God's Messenger turned to the angel of revelation and said, "O Gabriel, What is the meaning of this?"

"O Muhammad!" Gabriel replied, "God commands you to forgive those who have wronged you, give to those who deprived you, and keep relations with those who have severed their ties with you."³⁴

Was it at all possible for God's Messenger to do anything but hearken immediately to God's command!

What is more, for those who wanted to exact retribution in the face of the persecution to which they had been subjected, Gabriel came once again on another occasion to declare that permission had not been granted in this regard: "Surely God defends strongly those who believe. Certainly God does not love any treacherous, ungrateful one."³⁵³⁶ For this reason, God's Messenger constantly exhorted his Companions at a time when the Meccans could not yet brook their presence, instructing them to observe even their most innocent posture, their prayer, in the

²⁸ Ibn-i Kesîr, *Bidâye* 3/32; Ibn-i Asâkir, *Târîh* 30/46

²⁹ Ibn-i Kesîr, *Bidâye* 3/33; Ibn-i Asâkir, *Târîh* 30/53

³⁰ Tirmizî, *Birr* 71 (2018)

³¹ Müslim, *Birr* 23 (2594)

³² Nesâî, *Cihâd* 1 (4279); Hâkim, *Müstedrek* 2/382 (2424); Beyhakî, *Kübrâ* 9/19 (17741)

³³ A'râf 7/199

³⁴ Taberî, *Tefsîr* 9/165; Ibn-i Kesîr, *Tefsîr* 3/531

³⁵ Hacc 22/38

³⁶ Taberî, *Tefsîr* 17/183

uninhabited quarters of the city's outskirts.³⁷ This was because he was the representative of the way expressed in the words, "By the Name of Him in Whose Hands is my soul, I will accept anything they ask of me, provided it does not violate the ordinances of God."³⁸

He did not merely utter these words, but actualized these in his actions. There was no room whatsoever in his world for responding in kind to threats, insult, and violence. The sole statement that God's Messenger uttered in the face of such ordeals was, "O Bani 'Abd Manaf, what kind of neighborly treatment is this!"³⁹ In fact, such a stance was the Qur'anic commandment and he himself was an embodiment of the Qur'an. God warns His Messenger, first and foremost, followed by all the believers, declaring: "(So O believers, as a requirement of the wisdom in, and purpose for, your life of the world,) you will surely be tested in respect of your properties and your selves, and you will certainly hear many hurtful things from those who were given the Book before you and those who associate partners with God. If you remain patient (are steadfast in your Religion, and observe the bounds set by God in your relations with them) and keep within the limits of piety (in obeying God, and in your conduct toward them), (know that) this is among meritorious things requiring great resolution to fulfill."⁴⁰ It was, no doubt, God's Messenger who was the first to translate this ordinance into action. As Usama relates, the Messenger of God was always patient in the face of the torment and persecution of the Meccan polytheists and the People of the Book, never reacted, and even went a step further, forgiving the thankless souls of the age in spite of everything they did.⁴¹

Almost every day of his thirteen year life in Mecca he faced a brand new stratagem, experienced an ordeal that distressed or pained him, and was subject to every kind of way to prevent and thwart him; however, he patiently endured all the oppression and torment and

³⁷ When he was once offering prayer with friends in one of the city's outer neighborhoods, a band of Meccan polytheists attacked and in the ensuing altercation, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas struck the head of one of them with the jawbone of a camel and wounded him. This was the first blood to be shed in Islam. Ibn-i Hişâm, *Sîre* 1/171. In the early days, God's Messenger did the same, offering his prayers with his wife Khadija and 'Ali in Mina, which was then of considerable distance from Mecca. Buhârî, *Târîh* 7/74-75; Ahmed Ibn-i Hanbel, *Müsned* 3/306 (1787); Ibn-i Hişâm, *Sîre* 1/171; Ibn-i Abdilberr, *İstiâb* 2/204; Beyhakî, *Delâil* 2/162-163

³⁸ He made this statement upon setting off to visit the Ka'ba and being prevented from doing so by the Meccans. Buhârî, *Şurût* 15 (2731-2732); Ebû Dâvûd, *Cihâd* 3/75 (2765); Ahmed Ibn-i Hanbel, *Müsned* 31/213 (18910)

³⁹ The Messenger's most inveterate enemies were his next door neighbors. The closest to him in kin was Abu Lahab, whose house adjoined his. Though his other neighbors with adjoining houses, separated only by a wall, were no different to Abu Lahab. Hakam ibn Abi al-'As ibn Umayya, 'Uqba ibn Abi Mu'ayt, 'Adi ibn al-Hamra', and Ibn al-Asda' al-Hudhali took their enmities as far as Abu Lahab, doing whatever they possibly could to cause him grief at any opportunity. Those closest in proximity, Abu Lahab and 'Uqba ibn Abi Mu'ayt, took the cake in antagonism and estrangement. Abu Jahl's house was not considered far either. They were this close to God's Beloved, yet stood just this far from him. They were complicit in unremitting evil. On one day, they would throw sheep filth on top of him, and on another day they would fill that filth into the jug containing the Messenger's ablution water. To prevent further harm to come from them, God's Messenger constructed a wall between them, but the leopard had no intention of changing its spots. They confronted him with a brand new scheme every day, and relentlessly repeated their unchanging acts of ignominy for thirteen years.

⁴⁰ Âl-i İmrân 3/186

⁴¹ There are a great number of examples in latter sections of this work.

received every kind of tribulation with deliberation.⁴² Despite all the difficulty and hardship he perpetually suppressed his feelings with his willpower and never once surrendered his reason to his emotion. He displayed a formidable example of patience in relation to time; this was, however, a patience outwardly constant, while in essence active. When Mecca's conquest is taken into account, for most of his addressees, this period lasted for exactly twenty years. When examined from such a perspective, there is no doubt that God's Messenger is the most patient individual that human history has ever witnessed.

To be sure, this is not a matter which the people of our day, who get angry and fly into a rage at the smallest wrong, can readily understand. Such a stance might today be viewed as a lack of identity, meekness or even a want of character, and a disproportionate response viewed as virtue. However, this serves no other purpose than to magnify the problem or to burn the bridges with those addressed. On top of that, in the hands of people who act in full awareness of their actions, this methodology stands as a strategy that will take them far ahead in terms of future interests. No doubt these instances where God's Messenger took a step back carried him hundreds of steps forward. Building bridges with all people and solving every kind of problem by winning over their hearts were the fruits of these cases.

In point of fact, an individual who aspires to serve all humanity cannot act on impulse and on their own. Especially a person who seeks to reach everyone in the name of guidance and conveying the message, they cannot walk the same path as one who talks off the top of their head, supposes themselves to be guiding and reaching out to others by hiding behind their self-generated slogans, or who aimlessly pace the streets. The burden of one with an aim is heavy indeed and their being able to shoulder such a load is only possible through treading the Prophetic path. As is well known, the Messenger of God aimed to win over the hearts of all those he addressed, sought to change the course of all those being dragged in droves into the Fire to the path of Paradise, and wanted to remove all the obstacles to this end. For the severing of communication is the greatest obstacle in the matter to be conveyed to the addressee. And conflict, violence, and war constitute the biggest cause for such a severance. You cannot convey anything to a person with whom you are in conflict. Especially if you have hurt them or killed one of their loved ones, then you would have burnt all the bridges and condemned your addressee to the blindness of emotion. Such situations are at the same time instances where emotions are triggered and suppress reason and judgment. And those who act upon emotion have next to no chance of making the right decision.

So, by stepping back despite all the difficulty he faced, God's Messenger constantly sought to appeal to their mind and reason, and as such aimed to prevent their falling prey to their emotion and feeling. On a more practical level, let us now examine a relevant scene from the Meccan period:

The Abu Jahl's of the day had seen God's Messenger perform his prayer at the Ka'ba and took action; they would carry out yet another operation in the name of their denial and thus intimidate all those around him.⁴³ Seeking a partner in his crime Abu Jahl asked, "Is there not a stouthearted

⁴² For the Qur'anic verses revealed expressly state that one is only permitted to defend oneself and respond in like manner when they are wronged or face persecution; nonetheless, patience is advised, with the route of pardon again being shown as the right path. Bakara 2/194; Şûrâ 42/39-43; Nahl 16/126; Mâide 5/45

⁴³ The maledictions that God's Messenger invoked upon them in one or two cases, as an exception, need to be considered within precisely such a context, as just as these men personally confronted and opposed God's

youth among you to bring the entrails of a camel sacrificed by So-and-so last night and throw them over Muhammad as he prostrates in prayer?” Meanwhile, making eye contact with ‘Uqba ibn Abi Mu’ayt, Abu Jahl motioned for ‘Uqba, the agent of brigandage, to take him up on the challenge. The latter then went to the specified address and returned soon after. With the camel entrails that he carried with the skill of his men, he threw the entrails, along with all its filth, onto God’s Messenger. This was the treatment deemed suitable for God’s most beloved, when he was closest to Him, and at God’s House. They then stepped to one side and began shrieking with laughter. They supposed themselves to have done a good job and were now savoring the moment.

Were we to perceive the incident as one merely lived historically, we would not be able to fully appreciate the worth of the Prophetic stance. Let us, therefore, try to empathize and take a closer look at the issue. Suppose that we are observing the prayer in the courtyard of the famous Blue Mosque in Istanbul. Somebody comes and does a similar thing to us in front of everyone’s eyes. The people then gather around us in hysterical laughter. What would we do?

Look at what the Messenger of God did. He continued his worship. Meanwhile, his household were informed of the situation and one of his daughters⁴⁴ rushed to the Ka’ba. Seeing her father in such a state grieved her greatly and she invoked God’s wrath upon the perpetrators. Comforting her was again left to God’s Messenger. He turned to her and said, “Grieve not, dear daughter, for God will not forsake your father.”⁴⁵

Subjected to all this tribulation, God’s Messenger was consoling his daughter who felt great sorrow at what had befallen him.

How much time, then, had elapsed from the moment the entrails were thrown on top of him to his getting up and leaving? Eyewitnesses to the event did not possess today’s means of communication to call his residence and inform his household of what had happened. It was clear that one of those present thought of going there and letting his family know. The family members rushed to the Ka’ba upon hearing the news. When the distance between the Ka’ba and the house and the time needed for a person to get ready and leave the house is taken into account, this means that a period of at least ten minutes elapsed. Now let us once again put ourselves in his place and ask, which one of us would do what he did?

God’s Messenger was still there. He neither threatened those around him, nor hurled such comments as, “I may not be able to do anything today, but I’ll show you tomorrow.” He did not gnash his teeth, cast vengeful glances and look hostilely at them. Instead, he turned to his Lord regarding those who caused matters to get out of hand and contented himself with referring them

Messenger themselves, they also came in between him and the Meccans, and through the pressure they exerted on the people and the walls they put up, they prevented any chance of the people's seeing reality for what it was. Many a right-minded person remained in Mecca as a result of these incomprehensible attitudes and left this world without ever having become acquainted with the truth. Otherwise, when left to their own devices, there were a significant number of people who appear to have been of two minds; had their paths crossed with God's Messenger in one way or another, they too would have come to Islam, like the others whose paths did cross, and would have secured both their world and their Hereafter.

⁴⁴ This member of the family is mentioned in some transmissions as being his daughter Zaynab (Taberânî, *Kebîr* 3/268; İbnü'l-Esîr, *Üsdü'l-Gâbe* 5/124; İbn-i Abdilberr, *İstiâb* 1/170), while Fatima in other sources (Buhârî, *Vudû'* 69 (240); Müslim, *Cihâd* 39).

⁴⁵ Taberânî, *Kebîr* 3/268; İbnü'l-Esîr, *Üsdü'l-Gâbe* 5/124; İbn-i Abdilberr, *İstiâb* 1/170

to Him. "My Lord," he said. "I leave the Quraysh to You! My Lord! I leave Abu Jahl ibn Hisham, 'Utba ibn Rabi'a, Shayba ibn Rabi'a, Walid ibn 'Uqba,⁴⁶ Umayya ibn Khalaf, and 'Uqba ibn Abi Mu'ayt to You. Surely only You can devastate them."⁴⁷

He then rose and made his way home.⁴⁸

Unchanging Manner

The Messenger of God made no concessions in his manner even during his most trying and sorrowful times, and approached his addressees, who did not hesitate to cause him the greatest pain, with mercy even when he shed the most tears. At the city of Ta'if to which he went in hope, he faced the violence of their mobs and was the target of stones that were pelted at him for a distance of close to three kilometers. Zayd ibn Harith who had accompanied him was drenched in blood. He was perhaps experiencing one of the most grueling days of his life.⁴⁹

In spite of this, he took shelter beneath a tree and began offering the much-loved prayer that he had referred to as, "the light of my eye". Clearly, there was a need to turn wholeheartedly to the

⁴⁶ While the narration names Walid ibn 'Uqba, this individual is said to have been Walid ibn 'Utba. Buhârî, *Vudû'* 69 (240); Nevevî, *Şerh-u Müslim*, 12/152

⁴⁷ Buhârî, *Vudû'* 69 (240); Müslim, *Cihâd* 39; Nesâî, *Sünen* 1/188 (292). Witnessing this incident on the day, 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud explicitly states that he himself saw that these individuals (the seventh whose name he did not remember and thus could not cite) whom God's Messenger left to God, were killed at Badr without exception. Buhârî, *Vudû'* 69 (240), *Megâzî* 7 (3960); Müslim, *Cihâd* 39; Nesâî, *Sünen* 1/188 (292)

⁴⁸ When God's Messenger, who was experiencing one of the most difficult days of his life, left the Ka'ba to return to his home, he chanced upon Abu al-Bakhtari on the way. Abu al-Bakhtari was a fair man. When he saw God's Messenger to be grieved and sorrowful, he asked him, "What is the matter?" God's Messenger's heart was so pained that he could not even bring himself to speak. He merely wished to be left to continue on his way and this is what he requested of Abu al-Bakhtari. But Abu al-Bakhtari would not give up. He was, after all, an understanding man and the manner of God's Messenger showed that something very serious had indeed happened to him. Hence, he said, "God knows that I will not leave you until you tell me what has happened, for it is clear that something has happened." Seeing that Abu al-Bakhtari would not let up on him, God's Messenger began to relate everything that had happened to him. Abu al-Bakhtari was infuriated at what he heard and he exclaimed, "Come on, we're going to the Sanctuary!" And so they came back to the Ka'ba together. Meanwhile, Abu Jahl and his cohorts were as happy as could be, laughing away without the slightest care in the world. It could even be said that they were laughing so uncontrollably that they had to lean on one another to avoid falling. Abu al-Bakhtari went straight to Abu Jahl, the ringleader. "O Abu al-Hakam," he boomed, "was it you who instructed camel entrails to be thrown onto Muhammad? For this is how cruelly he has been treated!"

With an air of utter indifference, he seemed to say, "What of it?" No sooner did his admission come out of his mouth than Abu al-Bakhtari raised his whip and smote Abu Jahl with it on the head. Clearly this inhumanity perpetrated against all these innocent people had stirred the fair-minded into action.

Everyone stood aghast as one of the rare moments where life in Mecca came to a standstill was being experienced. Once their astonishment passed, they reacted to the treatment their leader had received and jumped down Abu al-Bakhtari's throat. The matter was about to get out of hand and Abu Jahl's first words were directed at them: "Shame on you!" he shouted. "Can't you see, Muhammad wants us set us against one another so that he quietly slip away." He then thrust his filthy hands towards towards God's most beloved servant and, as if wanting to hold the pulse of the people in his hand, he said, "Go easy on him." In saying this, of course, he had some other, ulterior motive. For right after, he pointed to Abu al-Bakhtari and said, "Otherwise, we're going to lose our close friends!" Taberânî, *Evsat* 1/232-233 (762); Bezzâr, *Müsne'd* 5/240 (1853); Sâlihî, *Sübûlî'l-Hüddâ* 2/437

⁴⁹ When 'A'isha asked, "Have you ever experienced a worse day than the day of Uhud?" God's Messenger replied, "I experienced much harm from your people," and related this incident. Buhari, *Bed'ü'l-Halk* 7 (3231); Müslim, *Cihâd* 39

true possessor of strength and power at such times. That is to say, fine-tuning one's bearing accordingly was a prerequisite to freeing oneself from human weaknesses and being imbued with a celestial hue. Perhaps all these were together a message to his community, to prevent their acting in anger and haste. Following the two units of prayer that he offered, he raised his hands as far as he was able to and broke out in supplication and entreaty. Zayd was stricken with awe before the circumspection and patience that he saw in God's Messenger and listened carefully to what he was saying: To You, my Lord, I complain of my weakness, my want of resources and the humiliation I am made to receive.

O Most Merciful of the Merciful!

You are the Lord of the weak and the powerless
and you are my Lord.

To whom do You leave me?

To a distant stranger who receives me with hostility? Or to an enemy You have given power over me?"

Thus voicing his state to the Divine Court, God's Messenger collected himself right at this point; It was as though he had said something that he should not have said and was almost as he himself was troubled by these words that he uttered. He then raised his hands even higher towards the heavens and continued his supplication in the following manner:

As long as you are not displeased with me, I care not what I face. Your favor is all that matters to me.

I seek refuge in the light of Your face, by which all darkness is illuminated and the affairs of both this world and the next are set right, lest I incur Your wrath or become the subject of Your anger.

To You I submit, until You are well pleased.

There is no power and no might save in You."⁵⁰

The Messenger of God had not even finished his supplication when the Truthful Gabriel suddenly appeared by his side accompanied by the angel of the mountains. It was clear that the entreaty of the grieved Messenger shook the highest heavens and God had sent the two angels to his aid. "O Muhammad," he said. "Indeed, God has full knowledge of what your people said to you and what they did after turning away from you. And He has sent to you the angel in charge of the mountains that he may do to them whatever you please."

Meanwhile, the appointed angel had greeted God's Messenger and added: "Should you so wish, O Muhammad, I will crush them between these two great mountains."

The world was witnessing a mercy and compassion with no precedent, since the very beginning of its existence. This was the extraordinary singularity of the Prophet of Mercy. His choice was unquestionably to mean a great deal for those to come after him. He turned to the angel and said, "No!" And his justification for such a decision was also remarkable: "Rather, I hope that God raise from their offspring servants who worship none but Him and who do not ascribe to Him any partners."⁵¹

⁵⁰ İbn-i Hişâm, *Sîre*, 2/268; İbn-i Ebî Şeybe, *Musannef* 6/68 (29528)

⁵¹ Buhârî, *Bed'ü'l-Halk* 7 (3231); Müslim, *Cihâd* 39 (1795)

This was the distinction of an absolutely lucid disposition and a willpower subordinating its each and every step to the ideal of letting live. Unable to conceal his astonishment before such profoundness, the appointed angel exclaimed, “How benevolent and compassionate you truly are, just as your Lord has described you.”⁵² Surely, in so doing, he sought to call to mind the Qur’anic verse, “There has come to you (O people) a Messenger from among yourselves; extremely grievous to him is your suffering, full of concern for you is he, and for the believers full of pity and compassion.”⁵³ Thus did he draw attention to the two attributes with which God invested and honored him, and demonstrate precisely what a paragon he was in mercy and compassion.

We see a continuation of this same Prophetic stance at Uhud where his blessed teeth were broken, two metal pieces pierced his temples, he lost a further two teeth to remove these metal pieces,⁵⁴ seventy of his Companions were slaughtered, and where a smell of blood came from every direction. On that day, as he wiped the blood which dripped down his face and wet his beard, he said, “How can such a people attain salvation who color the face of their Messenger with blood and break his tooth, while he only calls them to God?” Indeed on that day Uhud was witness to heart wrenching scenes. To be sure, this was a scene unbearable for the Companions: blood trickled down the face of the very Messenger for the sake of whose cause they had devoted their lives. There were those who approached him wanting to sharing his sorrow and those who wanted for him to entreat God and curse those who put him through such grief, saying, “Raise your hands and invoke God’s wrath upon them, O Messenger of God!” But God’s Messenger, the Prophet of mercy and compassion, did not yield to their request even under such circumstances. While wiping from his face the blood which flowed towards his beard on the one hand, he turned to them on the other and said, “I was sent not to curse the people, but to call them to mercy.”

Meanwhile, archangel Gabriel came to his aid once again, just as he had done at every other important juncture, and had brought with him another new message. God informed His Messenger that this was not an affair at the disposal of mortals and by declaring, “(O Messenger, you are a servant charged with a certain duty, therefore) it is not a matter for you whether He turns towards them in mercy (to accept their repentance for their unbelief, and grants them faith) or punishes them because they are wrongdoers,”⁵⁵ He affirmed the truth of His Messenger’s stance. At the same time, this came to mean that those who on that day broke his teeth and wounded him, perpetrating a savagery which made even beasts look innocent, would one day change and be transformed, and gave the glad tidings of their leaving their feelings to one side, returning to the course of sound judgment and reason, and thus repenting.⁵⁶ This was what God’s Messenger sought in the first place and he immediately raised his hands and began beseeching God exclaiming, “My Lord!” He had all but forgotten his own pain, bent double in the anguish and agony that awaited such ingrates

⁵² Halebî, *Sîre*, 2/57, 58

⁵³ Tevbe 9/128

⁵⁴ As is well known, Abu 'Ubayda had broken two teeth to remove the two pieces of metal from the shattered helmet that pierced the face of God's Messenger.

⁵⁵ Âl-i İmrân 3/128

⁵⁶ Taberî, *Tefsîr* 7/194; İbn-i Kesir, *Tefsîr* 2/114

at such an unspeakable end as the Fire. He lowered his head and said, "Forgive my people, for they do not know!"⁵⁷

We see yet another example of the Prophetic stance again at Uhud, at his seeing the grievous situation of his uncle Hamza. Having lost sight of Hamza after a certain point, the foremost man sought on the battlefield, God's Messenger asked 'Ali to find his uncle and milk brother. 'Ali subsequently found him in a place known as Batn al-Wadi and came straight to God's Messenger to let him know. God's Messenger then hastened to him. It was a heart wrenching scene indeed that met him, for Hamza's belly had been gashed open, his liver plucked out, his nose and ears cut off, and his body mutilated. Moreover, this was not something perpetrated against Hamza alone; sixty-nine of the seventy Companions killed on that day shared Hamza's fate.⁵⁸ Sixteen women coming to the battlefield from behind the Meccan army that had launched an onslaught against Uhud like savage wolves, swooped down on the slain like ravenous beasts and mutilated the bodies of the Uhud martyrs with the knives and daggers they carried in their hands. On top of that, they even went as far as to string the ears, noses and other limbs to hang them around their necks as necklaces. Hind, Abu Sufyan's wife, wore Hamza's limbs around her neck. Upon receiving the news that freedom chaser Wahshi had killed him, Hind gave to him the necklace she wore at the time in gratitude. She then followed him, did what she did, and strung Hamza's limbs on a thread to hang them around her neck instead. Such savagery was there at Uhud on that day that even commander of the day Abu Sufyan could not defend or take responsibility for it. Prior to leaving the battlefield, he called out to God's Messenger saying, "O Muhammad, today, you will find among your dead some who have been mutilated. I neither ordered nor approved of this."⁵⁹

The Messenger of God, however, was grief-stricken and in tears. This was perhaps the time that God's Messenger had wept the most. He had long forgotten about his broken tooth, and could no longer feel the pain in his temples. Before such a blood-curdling scene, he was at first about to say, "And seventy of your men..."⁶⁰ However, this was not in line with the Divine will. God enjoined the Prophet of Mercy to act with utmost compassion and mercy. *For at Uhud, Gabriel appeared once again and revealed, "If you have to respond to any wrong, respond (only)*

⁵⁷ Muslim, *Cihâd* 37; İbn-i Mâce, *Fiten* 23 (4025); Beyhakî, *Delâil* 3/215. In the face of such degree of magnanimity, such individuals who came forth in anger exclaimed, "May my mother and father be your ransom, O Messenger of God, while Noah invoked God's wrath upon his people saying, 'My Lord! Do not leave on the earth any from among the unbelievers dwelling therein!' you, bent double, face stained with blood, and your teeth even broken, still pray for them and say, 'My Lord, forgive my people for they do not know!' Whereas had you entreated God thus also, surely we would have all been destroyed, never again to be redeemed!" Gazali, *İhya* 1/273

⁵⁸ The only Companion whose limbs had not been severed and body mutilated was the very young, recently married Hanzala. When his father Abu 'Amir, who had come to Uhud with fifty of his men, saw that his son had been martyred, he approached him and, nudging him for some time with the tip of his foot, said, "This would not have happened had you listened to me!" He then turned to the Meccan women who were mutilated the martyred and asked them not to touch him, saying, "This is my son!" Vâkîdî, *Megâzî* 229

⁵⁹ Buhârî, *Megâzî* 17 (4043); Vâkîdî, *Megâzî* 229; İbn-i Hişâm, *Sîre* 2/61; Beyhakî, *Delâil* 3/214

⁶⁰ Hâkim, *Müstedrek* 4/202 (4946); Bezzâr, *Müsned* 17/21 (9530); Taberânî, *Kebîr* 3/143 (2937)

to the measure of the wrong done to you; but if you endure patiently, it is indeed better for the patient."⁶¹

God's Messenger looked for something with which he could cover Hamza's body. A Companion from the Medinan natives came forward, removed the garment he was wearing and draped it over Hamza, but this was not enough to cover his whole body. Thereupon, a second garment was brought and, as such, arguably one of the most brutal killings throughout human history was covered up.

Meanwhile, when God's Messenger saw that his paternal aunt Safiyya bint 'Abd al-Muttalib had arrived, he called out for those present to mind out for her lest she see her brother Hamza in such a state. Even if her son Zubayr stood in front of her as a result, and wished to prevent her from seeing his uncle, Safiyya pushed her son aside and said, "Be off! For I see you not at present!"

Continuing to call out from behind her, Zubayr said, "Mother! The Messenger of God orders you to go back!" Upon hearing these words, she inquires as to the reason for this and then adds: "I have heard that my brother was mutilated."⁶² Though I cannot bear the thought of what has happened, I shall be resigned to it and will endure it with patience."

When Zubayr related his irrepressible mother's state to God's Messenger, the latter turned to Zubayr and said, "Leave her." In immediate consequence, Safiyya, a pillar of fortitude, came to her brother Hamza's side and entreated God for him at length. She repeated the words, "Surely we belong to God (as His creatures and servants), and surely to Him we are bound to return." (And they act accordingly)"⁶³ and asked God for his forgiveness.

Among the Companions witnessing this scene were those like Abu Qatada who could not contain themselves, moving to one side and invoking God's punishment upon the Quraysh for what they had done. Despite the intensity of his own emotions and despite his arguably weeping more than he had at any other time during his life, the Prophet of Mercy turned to Abu Qatada and said affectionately: "O Abu Qatada, surely the Quraysh are a people of trust. Whoever exceeds the limit in relation to them, God will deal with them. Perhaps the time will come, provided God grants you a long life, when you will make light of your deeds in consideration of their deeds and servanthood, and when you will rue your not having done more."⁶⁴

⁶¹ Nahl 16/126; Ibn-i Hişâm, *Sîre* 2/63; Hâkim, *Müstedrek* 4/202 (4946); Bezzâr, *Müsned* 17/21 (9530); Taberânî, *Kebîr* 3/143 (2937). It is stated that the Qur'anic verse in question was revealed in response to the Companions' voicing their feelings of vengeance against the Meccans after the atrocity at Uhud, and that when they had the opportunity at Mecca's conquest, God's Messenger did not permit this. Tirmizî, *Tefsir* 17 (3128); Ahmed Ibn-i Hanbel, *Müsned* 3/152 (21267); Nesâî, *Kübrâ* 10/145 (11215)

⁶² Such mutilation was generally performed by cutting of the ears and noses and the hacking of bodily limbs. The Messenger of God forbade this act of savagery unequivocally and never allowed his Companions to engage in this, even when they had such a chance. Buhârî, *Mezâlim* 30 (2474); Ebû Dâvûd, *Cihâd* 120 (2666); Ibn-i Hişâm, *Sîre* 2/63

⁶³ Reciting the words, "Surely we belong to God (as His creatures and servants), and surely to Him we are bound to return," upon receiving news of someone's death, is referred to as *istirja*. The transliteration of which is: *Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un*.

⁶⁴ Sâlihî, *Sübülü'l-Hüdâ* 4/224

The meaning of this was clear: God's Messenger, an embodiment of Divine mercy, viewed the entirety of those he addressed as his potential Companions, even in the most difficult situations, and he thus precluded any step that would deprive them of such an outcome. Moreover, the message that Gabriel brought when he came to their succor, echoed the same course of action, confirming the righteousness of the Prophet's stance: "It was by a mercy from God that (at the time of the setback), you (O Messenger) were lenient with them (your Companions). Had you been harsh and hard-hearted, they would surely have scattered away from about you."⁶⁵

There is no doubt that this stance was not merely one specific to the Messenger of God at that particular time. Even when he obtained the opportunity years later to punish those responsible for the atrocity at Uhud, he did not allow anyone to touch them, and opposed those who said on the day of Mecca's conquest, "Consider the Quraysh finished from this day forth!" Again he did as behoved him, ordering them, "Do not touch anyone save these four people."⁶⁶ For the message that Gabriel brought was unmistakable: "If you have to respond to any wrong, respond (only) to the measure of the wrong done to you; but if you endure patiently, it is indeed better for the patient."⁶⁸ As a matter of course, this injunction is for all believers.

War and the Prophetic Stance

This was the true reason underlying the Prophet's aversion to conflict, his not becoming a party to violence, and his walking away from any arena of fighting. There was no room for war in his world. Why, then, are the battles that took place and why did they take occur? What were their underlying causes and what kind of course was taken from the moment they came to the fore? What was the Prophet's strategy when it became inevitable and what was his stance during battle? Which steps were taken in the aftermath, aimed at healing the deepening wounds, and with what outcome? As a matter of fact, unless answers are found for these questions and the matter resolved on a more authentic grounds, there is no way of grasping the actual dimensions of the subject. Let us now try to comprehend the following:

Causes of Violence and Perception of War

⁶⁵ Âl-i Īmrân 3/159

⁶⁶ There were only thirteen people, two of them women, for whom a death warrant had been issued, in punishment for their previous killings, and only four of them were executed. The rest of them returned with the protection and immunity granted to them by God's Messenger and embraced Islam. The reason for such a sentence being given by God's Messenger was due to the large number of murders, which amounted to a violation of the "rights of God" (huquq Allah) – what can be described in contemporary legal parlance as 'public law'. As expressed by 'A'isha, while God's Messenger forgave those evils perpetrated against his own person, he was extremely sensitive in punishing the murderer in crimes against the rights accorded to God. Besides, the reverse would mean punishing the community, the myriad examples of which we see in our day.

⁶⁷ Tirmizî, *Tefsîr* 17 (3128)

⁶⁸ Nahl 16/126. While there are those who assert that this verse was revealed on the day of Conquest, (Tirmizî, *Tefsîr*, 17 (3128); Ahmed İbn-i Hanbel, *Müsned* 3/152 (21267); Nesâî, *Kübrâ* 10/145 (11215) it is more plausible that it was revealed at Uhud. İbn-i Hişâm, *Sîre* 2/63; Hâkim, *Müstedrek* 4/202 (4946); Bezzâr, *Müsned* 17/21 (9530); Taberânî, *Kebîr* 3/143 (2937)

It is most regrettable that the life of God's Messenger has until our day been constantly related with a focus on its military dimension. Such an approach has given rise to the perception of him as an individual constantly at war and at odds with everybody. Such a misconception is no doubt grounded in the ayyam al- 'Arab culture prevalent in pre-Islamic Arabia. 'Heroism', one of the fundamental orders of the day, was one of the key causes of the customary conflict, constituted a means for superiority that the victorious overstated and glorified in their stories, and was a central subject of their poetry and rhetoric. They would measure their time accordingly, saying, "So much before or after such-and-such victory," and would draw attention to it as the bedrock of their superiority. They went to such lengths in this that when they could not find an example from their own day that they could relate in the name of heroism, they would appeal to their forebears and pride themselves in the exploits of the long-dead, pointing to their graves as a means for their own distinction.⁶⁹

Thus, the very first people addressed by Islam were those who were raised in such a culture. When a period of battle starting with Badr perforce began fifteen years afterwards, the heroisms exhibited in the battles became a focal point and the singularity of God's Messenger could not be realized. Naturally, the situation was considered from the perspective of enmity, the reason for the battles in the first place, as well as the hostility felt towards those who knew no limits in oppression and tyranny, and the Prophetic compassion was overshadowed by the anger felt towards the Abu Jahl's of the day. On the other hand, each of the Prophet's Companions performed heroic the deeds the likes of which had never been seen before. In short, there was a plethora of such heroisms, and triumph at the end of it to boot. Thus, those looking at Badr from the perspective of this victory and the heroic qualities put forth, preferred expressing these singularities which moved them to tears, in lieu of taking a more holistic view of the matter in their descriptions. That the vast majority of those early works aimed at relating the life of God's Messenger contain separate books entitled "Maghazi",⁷⁰ stands as the most salient demonstration of this fact.

⁶⁹ The Qur'anic verse, "Competing in increase of worldly goods (seeking and then boasting of the acquisition of things, wealth, pedigree, and posterity) distracts you (from the proper purpose of life), Until you come to the graves," points to this issue.

⁷⁰ An examination of the early works in the History of Islam demonstrates that almost ninety-percent of them either focused on battles per se, or were studies that were centered around the issue of battles.

1. Ebân İbn-i Osmân (100-5/718-23-4): Kitâbu'l-Megâzî
2. Âmir eş-Şa'bî (103/721): el-Megâzî
3. Vehb İbn-i Münebbih (104-110-4/722-3-4-8): Kitâbu'l-Megâzî
4. İbn-i Ebî Ayyâş: Kitâbu'l-Megâzî
5. Âsım İbn-i Ömer İbn-i Katâde (119-20-1/737-8): Kitâbu'l-Megâzî
6. Şurahbîl İbn-i Sa'd İbn-i Ubâde (123/740-1): Kitâbu'l-Megâzî
7. İbn-i Şihâb ez-Zühri'nin (124/742): Kitâbü'l-Megâzî
8. Amr İbn-i Abdillâh es-Sebiî el-Hemdânî (127/745): Megâzî ve Fütûh
9. Yezîd İbn-i Rûmân el-Esedî (130/747-8): Kitâbu'l-Megâzî
10. Abdullâh İbn-i Ebî Bekr İbn-i Muhammed (130-135/747-752-3): Kitâbu'l-Megâzî
11. Muhammed İbn-i Abdîrrahmân el-Medenî (131/748-9): Kitâbu'l-Megâzî
12. Dâvûd İbn-i Huseyn el-Emevî (135/752-3): Kitâbu'l-Megâzî
13. Mûsâ İbn-i Ukbe (141/758): Kitâbu'l-Megâzî
14. Süleymân İbn-i Tarhân et-Teymî (143/760): Kitâbu'l-Megâzî
15. İbn-i İshâk (150-1/767-8): Kitâbu'l-Megâzî
16. Muhammed İbn-i İshâk (151): Kitâbu's-Sîre ve'l-Mübtede' ve'l-Megâzî

The prevalent attitude in later periods was no different. Continuing as a tradition through the centuries, when this attitude was paralleled to the same extent in current media and film production, with action and tension sought-after elements for watchability, a similar perception was regrettably formed in the mind of today's generations. Of course, the role of radicalism, the examples of which are regrettably observed from time to time, must not be forgotten in the rise of such a perception.

The Duration of the Battles from a Temporal Perspective

When compared to the close to 8,000 days⁷¹ of God's Messenger's Prophethood, such military campaigns where he was forced to engage in active conflict as Badr, Uhud, and Hunayn, did not carry over to a second day. Upon consideration of their duration, it becomes evident that they occupied only half a day:

Badr was a battle that ended just as quickly as it had begun. A consideration of its beginning, the number of men on both sides, its phases, and outcome reveal that it did not take longer than a total of three hours. It came into question on the second day of the month of Ramadan and⁷² transpired on the Friday⁷³ corresponding with the seventeenth day of Ramadan. Three days were spent in Badr after the battle, followed by a return to the city of Medina. It can be said that from the moment it became a subject of discussion up until the return to Medina, and including the process of resolution pertaining to issues concerning the prisoners of war, a maximum of twenty days passed.

Uhud was no different; while the battle began in a similar way to that of Badr, on the basis of the descriptions of what happened on that day from those who witnessed it firsthand, and in taking into account the oscillations experienced on the day, it was a battle that did not exceed five hours. At Uhud, which began after sunrise when the sun rose above the horizon, God's Messenger offered the

17. Ma'mer Ibn-i Râşid (152-3-4/769-770-1): *Kitâbu'l-Megâzî*

18. Ebû Ma'ser es-Sindî, Abdurrahmân İbnü'l-Velîd (170/787): *Kitâbu'l-Megâzî*

19. Vâkîdî (207/822): *Kitâbu'l-Megâzî*

As can be seen, almost all of these works have focused on battles first of all, and have been authored with titles whose main theme is battle.

⁷¹ The Prophethood of the Messenger of God began in the month of Ramadan, of the year 610, and he passed away on the twelfth of Rabi' al-Awwal, in the year 632. Under normal circumstances, the time between these two dates is 7,960 days. However, due to the habitual tendency, particularly during the Meccan period and continuing all the way until the Farewell Pilgrimage, to tamper with the number of months, there is no way of providing an exact figure. When the desire to go to battle clashed with the 'sacred months' during which fighting was prohibited, the Arabs at the time intercalated a month and, as such, prevented people saying of them that they, "fought during the sacred months." This practice, which the Qur'an refers to as *nasi*, was abolished by God's Messenger and by raising the issue during the Farewell Pilgrimage, he declared, "Surely time has completed its cycle and is as it was on the day that God created the heavens and the earth." Vâkîdî, *Megâzî* 730; Ibn-i Hişâm, *Sîre* 2/379

⁷² Some sources indicated that this was a Monday which coincided with the eighth day of the month of Ramadan. Ibn-i Hişâm, *Sîre* 1/361. However, according to Ibn Hisham's assessment here, Badr should have taken place on the nineteenth of Ramadan. Whereas the same author also states that Badr took place on a Friday. In saying such, he presumably refers to the date at which God's Messenger set off in pursuit of the Meccan caravan.

⁷³ After a discussion of Badr having taken place on the seventeenth of Ramadan, Ibn al-Athir also mentions the possibility of its coinciding with the Friday that was the nineteenth of Ramadan. İbnü'l-Esîr, *Kâmil* 2/12