

INTRODUCTION

The Pre-Prophethood Period and the Early Years

A sound understanding of the overreaction that the Meccans showed after the beginning of God's Messenger's Prophethood is not possible without seeing the bigger picture of the time prior to his Prophethood. For a complete contradiction is evident between the position and attitude of the Meccans before and after the annunciation of Prophethood to Prophet Muhammad. An accurate reading of the Meccan years is not at all possible without understanding the underlying causes leading a people who did not even refer to him by name but with the honorific the Trustworthy, to come before him at a single stroke and become his greatest enemy. By way of summary:

Qusayy ibn Kilab³, sixth generation ancestor of the Prophet, made a series of important changes in the administration of Mecca that he took over from the Khuza'a and reinstated a Ka'ba-centered life in Mecca once more. He virtually rebuilt Mecca anew and so as to establish on solid grounds the major and minor pilgrimages that had continued since the time of Prophet Abraham, subjected the tribes to new housing arrangements starting with the Ka'ba surrounds. Accordingly, whilst placing the tribes with great male populations around the Ka'ba, those with less male members who were able to fight were housed towards the valleys. The underlying rationale behind this settlement was to be able to offer a thorough and perfect service to those who came to Mecca for the purposes of pilgrimage. To this end, various service sectors such as providing food and water to the pilgrims (⁴rifada and siqaya), command of troops in war (qiyada), possession of the keys and control of the Sanctuary (sidana), guarding the Ka'ba (hijaba), inter-tribal affairs or legation (sifara), carrying the standard in battle (liwa'), carrying the war banner (uqab), the tent in which donations for public emergency were collected (qubba), determining the value of pecuniary liabilities (ashnaq), presidency of divination (aysar), offerings to the Sanctuary (amwal muhajjara), bridling (a'inna), government (hukuma), use of an assembly for deliberation (nadwa), and consultation (mashwara). Each of these services were assigned to the charge of a given tribe.⁵ A council referred to as the Dar al-Nadwa was established where

³ Qusayy ibn Kilab is also known as the progenitor of the Quraysh tribe.

⁴ The privilege of providing the visiting pilgrims with water. As the Khuza'a is said to have covered and hidden the well of Zamzam before leaving Mecca, water became the most difficult commodity to obtain. The tribe charged with this difficult task would construct reservoirs where rainwater would be collected. Come the season of Pilgrimage, they would transport the water from here and offer it the God's guests who came for the purpose of worship.

⁵ These sacred offices, the tribes that assumed responsibility for these, and the representatives of the tribes can be summarized as follows:
Abu Jahl was responsible for carrying the war banner known as uqab, as well qiyada, or the command of troops in war.

eminent figures were selected from each tribe for the taking of important decisions, and the Meccan administration henceforth began to be run from this council. Naturally, the presidency of this council belonged to Qusayy ibn Kilab himself, as a powerful administrator and conquering commander of Mecca.

From the institution of such an administrative structure onwards, the Meccan tribes began to compete in good works and the superiority of the tribes over one another came to be measured with their acts of charity and the services they provided. Even if such a sense of benevolence was active in the first generations, feelings of hatred and animosity reared their ugly head in the succeeding generations; the race in charitable works which manifested itself in the form of who could provide the most service was replaced by the base feelings of why others surpassed them or why others became more prominent. As a matter of course, this milieu also brought with it conflict and commotion and opened the door for major dispute between the tribes. Most of such problems arose between the Banu Hashim who had the final say in matters of Meccan administration and the Banu Umayya and Bani Makhzum who grew increasingly in strength. Moreover, during periods where a middle way could not be found in these disputes, an 'arbitrator' was applied to and the arbitrators in question ruled in favor of the Quraysh on both occasions. So critical was the situation that as a result of the institution of *munaḡara* (arbitration) conducted between Umayya and his uncle Hashim, the former was forced to pay a fine of 50 camels and, banished from Mecca, was forced to live in Damascus⁶ for a period of ten years.⁷⁸ This is, no doubt, a vital event rendering permanent the rift between the two families.⁹

The Messenger's uncle 'Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib was the possessor of the *siqaya*, or providing water for the pilgrims in the name of the Banu Hashim.

Harith ibn 'Amr undertook *riḡada*, the administration of the poor tax collected from affluent Meccans and employed to provide food for the poor pilgrims, whether itinerant or resident.

'Uthman ibn Talha from the Banu 'Abd al-Dar was the custodian of the standard, or *liwa'*, which was the symbol of Meccan power. He also saw to the *sidana*, or possession of the keys of the Ka'ba. The office of *hijaba*, which pertained to the affairs relating to the covering of the Ka'ba, and the functioning of the Nadwa Council where the Meccan chiefs took all decisions, was held by the same individual.

Yazid ibn Zama'a was the figure who coordinated the consultative mechanism known as the *mashwara* when decisions were to be taken in the name of the Meccans.

Abu Bakr, the sage of the Banu Taym known for his command of the genealogy and family history of the Quraysh, was recognized as the authority of appeal in what was called *ashnaq*, denoting affairs relating to blood money, penalties and compensation.

Fellow tribesman of Abu Jahl, Khalid ibn al-Walid was in charge of *qubba*, collecting individual contributions for equipping the forces that were to set off on a campaign, in conjunction with the office of *a'inna*, or command of the Quraysh's cavalry corps. For highflyer Abu Jahl, Khalid ibn al-Walid's posts held added import, and he attached special importance to the offices of *qubba* and *a'inna*. He thus held Khalid ibn al-Walid in high esteem and, for the sake of these two institutions that he would render the foundations of the mission he was to attain in the future, he rendered Khalid ibn al-Walid untouchable.

'Umar from the Banu 'Adi held the office of *sifara*, or ambassadorship, being the plenipotentiary authorized to act on the State's behalf.

To Safwan ibn Umayya from the Banu Jumah belonged the presidency of *aysar*, or divination by arrows.

Harith ibn Qays from the Banu Sahn was responsible for *amwal al-muhajjara*, the offerings to the Sanctuary, protecting these on behalf of the State.

God's Messenger was to abolish these offices, which were to continue until the conquest of Mecca, leaving only those of *siqaya*, belonging to 'Abbas, and *sidana*, held by 'Uthman ibn Talha. Ebû Dâvûd, *Diya't* 17, 24; Ahmed Ibn-i Hanbel, *Musned* 2/36; 3/410; 5/411; Dârakutnî, *Sünen* 3/105

⁶ *Munaḡara*, is essentially a form of contest in which two individuals dispute their claims to honor and nobility before a judge or arbitrator.

Even if there were attempts, from time to time, by the Banu Umayya and Banu Makhzum to take over administration of Mecca during this increasingly tense period, both met with disaster and could not manage to achieve their goal. The chief reason for this was the presence of a powerful leader like the ‘Abd al-Muttalib before them. In particular, that which Abraha faced upon advancing upon Mecca with his army to destroy the Ka’ba, as well as ‘Abd al-Muttalib’s manner and bearing during this period, and the role he played in the rediscovery of the well of Zamzam following the three successive dreams he saw, consolidated Meccan Chief ‘Abd al-Muttalib’s position more than ever before and invested his administrative and political power with a divine dimension. Before such might, the Banu Umayya and Banu Makhzum were forced to postpone their takeover attempts. However, the struggle was not over and efforts to overcome in the long run the power that they then perceived to be insuperable, had gone underground and infiltration of the Dar al-Nadwa where Mecca was administered had begun. Upon examination of the expressions they used when dispatching their envoys to Abyssinia, it becomes apparent just how adept the Abu Jahls of the day were in setting the groundwork for influencing the people and the particular methods they employed to this end. As is known, the Meccans instructed the envoys they sent in pursuit of the emigrant Muslims to speaking with the dignitaries and clergy before meeting the Abyssinian King, and only after winning over their hearts with the expensive gifts they brought with them, requested them to appear before the King. Their purpose was to put pressure on the King in a matter on which everyone else reached consensus and to achieve their desired outcome, without risking the issue, with relative ease.

An intensification of such activity is evident during the time of Abu Talib who succeeded ‘Abd al-Muttalib as the chief of Mecca, with those in alliance against the Banu Hashim holding more sway. Although Dar al-Nadwa membership had its own set rules and criteria, these rules were not applied when it came to their own men and they turned these into rigid rules applied especially with regards to those they wanted to exclude. For instance, while no one under the age of forty was given membership to the Dar al-Nadwa, they accepted Abu Jahl amongst them at just thirty years of age. It would appear that the most important figure who designed the future of Mecca in line with his own will and was behind the projection of its days to come was Walid ibn al-Mughira, to whom the Qur’an draws attention in this regard.¹⁰

⁷ Mu’awiya, who appointed Umayya’s grandson as governor here years later, skillfully used the credit of his grandfather who lived amongst them years earlier as a Qurayshite who served the Ka’ba, and gained great influence in Damascus.

⁸ Ibn-i Sa’d, *Tabakât* 1/76; Taberî, *Târîh* 1/504

⁹ It could even be said that this incident forms the basis of the disputes and disagreements of the Andalusian Umayyads to continue to the very end. Ibn-i Sa’d, *Tabakât* 1/76; Taberî, *Târîh* 1/504, 505

¹⁰ Virtually in all Qur’anic exegetical works is propounded the view that the individual referred to in the following Qur’anic verses is Walid ibn al-Mughira: "Leave Me (to deal) with him whom I created alone, And I enabled for him abundant wealth, And children around him as means of power; And I have granted him all means and status for a comfortable life. And yet, he desires that I should give more. By no means! Surely he has been in obstinate opposition to Our Revelations. I will oblige him to a strenuous climb. He pondered and he calculated (how he could disprove the Qur’an in people’s sight). Be away from God’s mercy, how he calculated! Yea, be away from God’s mercy! How he calculated! Then he looked around (in the manner of one who will decide on a matter about which he is asked). Then he frowned and scowled. Then he turned his back and (despite inwardly acknowledging the Qur’an’s Divine origin), grew in arrogance, And he said: 'This is nothing but sorcery (of a sort

When conditions in Mecca had ripened and the time had come for the final move, an unexpected incident transpired and Muhammad the Trustworthy had been given the mission of Prophethood. For those who set their eye on the seat of Mecca and made preparations for a coup d'état, this was a situation impossible to foresee and from that moment on everything had changed. The Messenger of God who they had hitherto called The Trustworthy and could not speak highly enough of was placed at the center of the definition of the enemy and was declared the greatest enemy. For them, he is now the greatest obstacle on the path leading to the seat of Mecca and the first target that needed to be taken out. In his being declared the enemy, consideration was not made of his forty year past, his trust-inspiring stance was not taken into account, and the situation was viewed through the ruthless rules coming to the fore around self-interest. As Said Nursi states, in a politics along these lines where visions are blurred and emotion holds sway, even Satan would see the person siding with him as angel and an angel would see one who is on what they pronounce to be the opposing side as Satan. Consequently, they could not see the Embodiment of Mercy who even the angels looked upon with admiration. This situation was openly and repeatedly expressed by Abu Jahl himself who began to see himself as future leader and head of Mecca. For instance, when he once walked through the streets of Mecca accompanied by Mughira ibn Shu'ba, he crossed paths with God's Messenger and God's Messenger said, wanting to seize such an opportunity and invite him to belief, "O father of Hakam, I invite you to belief in God. Could you too not believe in God and His Messenger? But he took his usual insolent attitude and said to the Messenger of God, "O Muhammad! When will you abandon speaking ill of our idols! If your purpose in doing so is that we testify before God in the other world that you have duly conveyed to us the message with which you were sent, do not weary yourself. For I will be your witness. But do not inconvenience us at the present time (and leave us to ourselves). Indeed, even if I know your words to be true, I can never believe in your Prophethood.

In the face of the impudence of Abu Jahl who did not possess any such concern for the other world, God's Messenger again preferred to remain silent and departed so as not to heighten the tension. Watching him walk off from behind, Mughira ibn Shu'ba turned to Abu Jahl and asked in reference to God's Messenger, "What is your true opinion of him? Do you not indeed believe in his Prophethood?" After darting a glance at him as if to say, "Of course I do," he said,

"By God, I know his words to be true. But we compete with the Hashimites in everything. Until this time, they have boasted of guardianship of the holding the Honored Key to the Sanctuary. They have laid claim to the Nadwa (council), and we raised no objection. They asserted their right to the carrying of the war standard and we let it pass unchallenged. They assumed the duty of providing the pilgrims with water and again, we did not object. They provided food and so did we so much so that we were constantly neck and neck. And now they begin to boast of having a Prophet! By God, this I cannot endure at all."¹¹

transmitted from sorcerers) from old times. 'This is nothing but the word of a mortal.' I will make him enter a pit of Hell. What enables you to perceive what that pit is? It leaves none (but entirely burns everyone of those thrown into it), nor does it spare anyone (so that they might die and escape). It scorches up the skin. Over it there are nineteen (keepers)." Müddessir 74/11-30

¹¹ Beyhakî, *Delâil* 2/208; İbn-i Kesîr, *Bidâye* 3/70

Abu Jahl's view was not merely one he voiced on the spur of the moment but one he made clear in the presence of others also; while affirming God's Messenger's Prophethood, he did not hesitate to openly state that a sense of rivalry necessitated him to stand against him. His words subsequent to what he had seen and heard along with Abu Sufyan and Akhnas ibn Shariq for three consecutive nights, are of the same nature. As it is known, all three of them secretly and independently of the other, went out by night to listen to the Messenger of God as he prayed. They hid at a distance from him, wanting to see him more closely as he observed the prayer and recited the Qur'an. They were full of curiosity but they did not want others to know what they were doing, and thus preferred the dark of the night to do this, when everyone else had retired to their homes. Hence, none knew where his companion was sitting.

The sight was indeed a great one; the most beloved of God, rising like the sun at the House of God with his tongue of disposition and the language of his heart, met with his Lord and experienced a union at the Ka'ba that was a scene to behold. They watched in admiration and listened at length; the melodies they heard were like drops of mercy pouring forth in the heat of summer. They were so engrossed that they did not even notice how quickly time had passed. They had passed the night listening to him. When God's Messenger eventually completed his prayer and the recitation of the Qur'an at the Ka'ba had ceased, they dispersed, each setting out to return home. They walked with hurried and uneasy steps, anxious that somebody might see them. When their paths coincided, they faced an outcome that none of them had ever expected. The trio, who had gone to great lengths to ensure that nobody had seen, them had come face-to-face. Even if they did not concede that they had lent an ear to the voice of their conscience, they were embarrassed upon seeing one another. With heads down overcome by guilt, they reproached one other and said that they should never do such a thing ever again. "For if one of the flippant fools sees us in such a state, suspicion will be aroused in their mind and they will do the same."

It was easy to say, but it was impossible for them to forget the scene they had just witnessed and to ignore what that they had heard. A truth constantly lingering in their minds resounded within them. There was no way to prevent the feeling flowing forth from within; after all, what would have come of their going and listening just one more time.

In truth, all three of them were thinking the same thing, independently of the other. They had, therefore, returned again on the second night to their place and passed the night watching and listening. When they met again on the way home later that night, embarrassment was visible in their every manner. Even if their change of color could not be seen in the dark of the night, there was manifest a reality seen by them all. The chagrin in their voices in particular communicated just how defeated they were before this truth that they could not bring themselves to face. How could it be! They were all as surprised as each other.

They promised each other just as they had done on the first night: they were not going to come and listen to Muhammad again. On no account would they put themselves through such embarrassment again.

Perhaps Abu Jahl's heart had not yet become stone, Abu Sufyan's democratic side predominated, and Akhnas ibn Shariq had not yet become as driven in evil as in the years to come. The three cronies who thought that their friends would not come to the Sanctuary again after being cautioned for two nights in a row, stopped at the Ka'ba again on the following night; when darkness fell and the streets were all but empty, they again set off to listen to God's Messenger.

What is more, they waited until the early hours and when dawn broke, they too set off back home, confident that they would not be seen, when the three ran into each other again at the very same spot.

They could not believe it. They would both bear enmity against and oppose him, and vow that they would never come again, and they would also hasten to listen to him, giving each other the slip for a third time. They then began in reproof of one another and vowed to the death that such a thing should never happen again, no matter what. They took a solemn obligation that they would never return.

No sooner, the next morning, did Akhnas ibn Shariq took his staff than he rushed to the house of Abu Sufyan. "Tell me the truth, O father of Hanzala!" he said. "What is your opinion of what you have heard from Muhammad?"

Abu Sufyan was guarded in his speech; he did not want to reveal his true colors to the friend from whom he could not hide his position for how many days on end. He thought it safer to get his opinion first and therefore asked him a question in reply to his question:

"And what is your opinion on the matter?"

Akhnas ibn Shariq chose candor and said, "I believe what he has come with to be truth."

Cautious from the very beginning, Abu Sufyan breathed a sigh of relief, turned to him and said, "O father of Tha'laba, Bu God, to this day, I have heard many things whose meaning I do not know, nor what was intended by them. So, I have a pretty good idea what is meant by which particular words."

He had scarcely finished his words when Akhnas interjected,

"I feel precisely the same!

"But these are unlike any of them!"

Thus, they affirmed the truth of God's Messenger and acknowledged the veracity of the message with which he came. However, it was not all that easy to make this manifest and announce it, as there stood outside such a figure as Abu Jahl.

Subsequently, Akhnas ibn Shariq left Abu Sufyan's house and headed straight for Abu Jahl's place, to discuss the same things with him. "O father of Hakam," he began. "What is your opinion concerning all that you have heard from Muhammad?"

"And what have I heard anyway?" he initially said, wanting to make light of the matter. But Akhnas was determined:

"O father of Hakam," he repeated. "What is your actual opinion of Muhammad? Is he a man of truth or is he lying? Don't hold back. Look, there is no one else present to hear what you have to say."

Abu Jahl realized that he could not escape the question with an evasive answer. He had been caught out and it was clear that he could get away with nothing less than being as straightforward as possible. He first took a deep breath and then said:

"By God! Muhammad is telling the truth; he never speaks a single word of untruth. But it grieves me to think of the Banu Qusayy's possessing the right to raise the war standard and their services of the well of Zamzam, their ascendancy in serving food to the visiting pilgrims, on top of their claims to Prophethood. Now, can you imagine what will become of the Quraysh if they obtain exclusive possession of such a distinction as Prophethood? We have always been rivals with the Banu 'Abd Manaf for ascendancy and in honor; they fed the poor, and so have we. They assumed the burdens of others, and so have we. They have been generous and enabled others to

benefit from the resources at their disposal, and we too gave others a share in our wealth and property. Just when we had finally caught up with them, and we were like two horses of equal speed, they now claim to have among them a Messenger to whom revelation comes from the heavens. And when, pray tell me, shall we ever attain anything of the like? By God, we will never believe in him, nor shall we will affirm him.”¹²

Even if the voice of his conscience said otherwise, with his emotions driven by interests and politics this was just a case of Abu Jahl seeing black as white and white as black. From this moment on, there was no way of his seeing the truth. Because of the tarnishing of their consciences under the sway of hatred and animosity, it had become impossible for them to heed advice and it was as though the hearts that had become hardened had been shut tight, never to be reopened. For them, this was akin to fleeting breezes blowing in the coldest time in winter; even if it blew gently from time to time, storms immediately followed and the breezes were replaced by deluges that swept away everything before them.

In the meantime, Abu Talib’s position in the Dar al-Nadwa considerably weakened despite his continuing chieftaincy and Abu Jahl and his minions began to grow in influence as a direct consequence of the groundwork they had laid over the years. Similarly, ‘Abbas, another uncle of the Prophet who represented the Banu Hashim at Dar al-Nadwa, was no longer able to make his voice heard in the face of this prevailing climate. More precisely, from that day forth the Dar al-Nadwa turned into a center of operations where those who joined forces against a “common enemy” took decisions, fabricated lies for the purpose of influencing the masses, and where long-running strategies to defame and discredit God’s Messenger first and foremost, followed by all believers, were discussed and resolved upon.

At a time when the fiercest form of tribal life was led, chieftains took nourishment from the Dar al-Nadwa, and in the prevalent mentality during an Age of Ignorance where the words that fell from their lips were deemed law, others did not have the luxury of having a mind of their own. What the tribal chief said was absolute truth and there was an unnamed dark and brutal caste system. As a result, from that moment virtually all Mecca became a sort of Dar al-Nadwa radiating rancor and hatred; with every kind of violence and policies of suppression such as verbal abuse, insult and invective, censure, oppression, attacks, deathtraps, ultimatums, overthrows, banishments, and various insurrection attempts, Mecca was witness almost each day to a new scenario and stratagem of the Abu Jahl’s of the era. Tension and disturbance was in question almost every day of his thirteen year life in Mecca. Moreover, this tension was not limited merely to those creating the tension, but billowed over the whole community. Thick walls were raised between God’s Messenger and the rest of society and the qualities that were the expression of virtue such as mercy, compassion, gentleness, and mildness, were rendered invisible.

It is a fact that the guide of the believers was not the Meccans but the Messenger of God himself. The lengths to which the Meccans of the era went in evil and maliciousness is important more so in demonstrating how God’s Messenger treated them in spite of everything they did, what method he employed in his attempt to reach out to the Meccans despite the animosity, hatred, rage and violence of all descriptions, and the means he used in transforming the people of the time obsessed with killing into devotees of letting live. For the most part, it is this aspect of

¹² İbn-i Hişâm, *Sîre* 1/200-201; Beyhakî, *Delâil* 2/207-208; İbn-i Kesîr, *Bidâye* 3/69-70. Relevant narrations have been combined.

the matter which holds importance for us with respect to solving our present problems by means of his methodology.

The Sorrowful Messenger

The Messenger of God felt much aggrieved in the face of all that was blindly done despite the manifest nature of the truth and was bent double in sorrow for those flagrantly being dragged into the Fire and for those dragging others, large masses included, in the same direction. God's Messenger made use of every possible opportunity to take them by the hand and in enabling them to attain the shores of salvation; he did not want to leave behind a single person with whom he had not sat down and conversed, to whom he had not extended a hand, and whom he did not take aboard his ship and guide to deliverance. From the fourth year of his Prophethood in particular, when the Message began to be openly conveyed, this course gathered greater speed and the Messenger of God visited everyone who came to Mecca, sitting with them and inviting them to belief. To this end, he sojourned in the markets of Dhu al-Majaz, Majanna, and 'Ukaz, waiting for visiting pilgrims coming to Mecca, addressing everyone with whom he made contact, and wanting to divert from the road to the Fire those blindly falling prey to the idols like moths to a flame. He had a single aim: that each living and breathing servant of God come to know their Creator and thus open the door of eternal salvation by means of His mercy.

This was of course an aim that the Meccans of the day who were concerned with nothing save their own future could not possibly understand, and they immediately stepped into action. Abu Jahl and Abu Lahab emerged as the main actors; in turns they followed in pursuit and did not allow for even a single person to be affected by God's Messenger. More particularly, the then leading player of the abovementioned markets was the Prophet's uncle Abu Lahab. Even if Abu Jahl was nowhere to be seen, he had committed himself to finishing the matter and kept a close trail of his nephew upon his red camel. Presumably Abu Jahl put Abu Lahab forward in such settings due to his being the Prophet's paternal uncle and in so doing tried to create the perception: "How can someone whose own uncle opposes and campaigns against him be trusted?"

They visited everyone that God's Messenger visited and claimed that he — God forbid — was not speaking the truth, wanting to label him as a Sabean¹³ who divined from heavenly bodies. In addition to acknowledging the power of his words, they tried to explain them away as magic and ascribed them to soothsaying.

They knew full well themselves that none of their falsehoods would hold, but what did this matter to the Abu Jahl's? With their misinformation and lies they built a wall around God's Messenger and allowed no one to pass.

A Kinanan merchant relating a similar incident years later vividly reports the matter in the following manner:

¹³ Derived from the root saba'a, which signifies the act of leaving one religion and entering another. The term sabi' is one that is used in reference to worshipers of angels or heavenly bodies. While believing in a sole Creator of the universe, they allege that the overseeing of the world and human beings was left to the charge of heavenly bodies. The Qur'an makes mention of them in one of its verses in juxtaposition with the believers. (2:62) Prophet Abraham was sent to guide them. (En'am, 75 vd.) Belief in astrology and the power of stars in our day are remnants of Sabean belief. (Suat Yıldırım, Bakara 2/62. âyetin meali.) By using this term in relation to the Messenger of God, the Meccans no doubt sought to break his influence over the people and thus discredit him.

“I saw the Messenger of God at the trade fair of Dhu al-Majaz addressing the people saying, ‘O People, say, “There is no deity but God” and be saved.’ Right behind him was Abu Jahl, splattering dirt and dust upon him as he walked, yelling at the top of his voice, and following him at every step. On the one hand he frightened the people saying, ‘O people, let not this man deceive you in regards to your religion for he wants for you to renounce worship of Lat and ‘Uzza’. The Messenger of God, however, paid no mind to him, sought rather to pull away from him, and solemnly went on his way.”¹⁴

Burning with the hope of finding a face acquainted with the truth on the hot grounds of the fair and bearing all kind of trouble to come from others, the Messenger of God did not form judgment on the basis of another’s hatred and enmity and always did as behoved him. In describing the difficulties he endured in striving to affect the heart of yet another person, a merchant from the ‘Amiri tribe details the following:

“During the Age of Ignorance,¹⁵ I heard God’s Messenger say, ‘O people, say “There is no deity but God,” and be saved. Some of those surrounding him and trailing him spat on his blessed face and others threw dirt and dust upon him. Some among them were hurling insults and obscenities at him

when at the middle of the day a small girl came to him with some water in her hand. God’s Messenger took the water and after washing his hands and face turned to the girl and said, ‘Dear daughter, fear not for your father for none can overcome or debase him.’

I asked those beside me who she was and they said, ‘She is Zaynab, the daughter of God’s Messenger.’ She was then a bright-faced young girl approaching her teens.”¹⁶

In those days, going from door to door saying, “O people, say ‘There is no deity but God,’ and be saved,”¹⁷ characterized the foremost attitude and stance of God’s Messenger. Calling people to the reality of God’s Oneness and Unity to which none could object, he presented the commonalities that could receive wide acceptance and did not even put his own self forth as the first threshold (on the path of truth).¹⁸

However, had he said, “Come, O people, There is God! There is life after death! There is reckoning and you will be brought to account for all that you do in your worldly lives,” then he would still have fulfilled his mission. For when describing his position, the Qur’an states that the

¹⁴ Ahmed İbn-i Hanbel, *Müsned* 27/148 (16603); Sâlihî, *Sübûlî’l-Hüdâ* 2/452

¹⁵ By means of this phrase, the narrator presumably ascribes this attribute to himself due to his having still not having shed the ways of the Age of Ignorance, and it is clear that the implication here is the early days of Islam.

¹⁶ Buhârî, *Târih* 8/14; Taberânî, *Kebîr* 20/342 (805)

¹⁷ Ahmed İbn-i Hanbel, *Müsned* 31/342 (19004); Hâkim, *Müstedrek* 1/61 (39); 2/668 (4219); Dârekutnî, *Sünen* 3/462 (2976); Beyhakî, *Kübrâ* 1/123 (358); 6/34 (11096); Taberânî, *Kebîr* 5/61 (4582); 8/314 (8175); 20/343 (806); İbn-i Ebî Şeybe, *Müsned* 2/322 (822); *Musannef* 7/332 (36565); İbn-i Huzeyme, *Sahîh* 1/82 (159); İbn-i Hibbân, *Sahîh* 14/517 (6562)

¹⁸ A similar situation can be seen in his promptings while beside his uncle who was on his deathbed. At a point when the Meccans too prevailed upon him, God’s Messenger said, “O Uncle, say, ‘There is no god but Allah,’ and I will bear witness before God of your having said it.” Buhârî, *Cenâiz* 80 (1360); Müslim, *İmân* 9 (24); Ahmed İbn-i Hanbel, *Müsned* 39/78 (23674)

Messenger's sole mission was to convey the message,¹⁹ and that this in no way implied or included forcing people to accept the message with which he came.²⁰ Despite this, he embarked upon an endeavor well beyond his mission, to save the life of those who made attempts on his life, and to render luminous the darkened worlds of those who would die a death of eternal annihilation, and again as indicated in Qur'an, tormented himself to death with grief in his effort.²¹

And what treatment did he receive in return?

He expected nothing in return.

His close friends and family members who become acquainted with Islam early on supported him in his cause and acted with him in every step along the way. Khadija, for instance, prepared food almost every single day, and 'Ali and Zayd went from street to street inviting the Meccans to dine with them. Even if there was one to put a damper on the occasion each and every time, God's Messenger addressed the mind and reason of the people for whom he organized such banquets and appealed directly to their feeling and hearts. He tried to lighten the mood with gifts and by means of taking the first step himself, cleared one by one the potential stumbling blocks in the path of his addressees. This was repeated to such an extent that the day came when the fortune of wealthy Khadija, acquired through years of engagement in international commerce, was all but spent. In the ten years following the beginning of God's Messenger's Prophethood, there was left no trace of her former wealth. Khadija, who shouldered the three years of exile side by side with God's Messenger and advanced towards her own horizon as a person who lay everything she had out in the way of God. In the Mecca of the day, there were no great shopping centers or entertainment complexes where this money could be spent. Not that this money would ever have been trifled away in such places. Where, then, did this wealth go? It was, no doubt, spent on the stomach of such ungrateful individuals as Walid ibn al-Mughira, 'As ibn al-Wa'il, Abu Jahl, Abu Lahab, 'Uqba ibn Abi Mu'ayt, Utba, and Shayba.

It is all the more interesting that despite all their opposition and vehemence, these Meccans did not turn down this invitation. This means to say that they could not turn a blind eye to the trust-inspiring manner of God's Messenger and, despite their hostility, did not close the door entirely. Had someone not come out each time from among them only to destroy the positive climate that emerged, the hearts of some of them would have softened and they could have been able to use their independent will to stand where they ought to have stood.

But this was not the case. This had not happened even during the time of previous Prophets. So it was not to be in later periods either. That light would suppress darkness was clear, but bearing patiently the period of burden was yet another expression of fulfilling causes and doing what was necessary for a given end. For if everything that day had developed at an extraordinary pace, a model that succeeding generations could hold up as an example could not have emerged. This change and transformation that followed a natural course of development was to leave behind it a tried and tested methodology that could be applied in every age and era, and so it was.

¹⁹ Nûr 24/54; Ra'd 13/40; Gâşiye 88/21

²⁰ Gâşiye 88/22

²¹ Kehf 18/6; Şuarâ 26/3

In return for such sacrifice and effort, the Meccans responded with more intensity each day and constantly took the path of violence. This was, after all, their only alternative where they were unable to produce reasonable justification against the beauty and goodness that God's Messenger brought. These darkened souls who rendered the day darkness for themselves by merely closing their eyes, supposed that they could draw a veil over the sun with brute force. Naturally, this did not happen either.

So, what, then, did happen?

Reading well the growing tension and friction, God's Messenger left to their own devices the Meccans who had lost the capacity to act in a rational manner, until the time they could adopt a more reasonable stance. He had done the same thing before; the Messenger of God did not wish to be a part of the escalating tension, and so as not to cause the Meccans who could not tolerate the presence of his Companions any further vexation, he sent the latter to Abyssinia.

And now he was himself leaving. He had begun sending his Companions to Medina months before, gradually, in order to avoid more disastrous circumstances. And on no occasion in doing so did he fling their lack of acknowledgment for all the sacrifices made for them up in their face, or accuse them of ingratitude. Despite the fact that they had long since deserved much more, he never displayed indifference to a single individual. Just as there was never room in his world for 'kicking someone when they're down,' there was also no room for ruling anyone out completely. Despite the presence of the Helpers in Medine who grew with every passing day, not once did he lose sight of Mecca, and he emigrated on that day with the intention that he would one day take them aboard too. Perhaps for them this meant purification from such negative feelings, a settling of the emotions that until that day had taken their mind and reason until their sway, and in a sense constituted time out for thought and consideration.

As can be seen, it was again God's Messenger who took the first step in resolving the problems of those who constantly created tension. From the outside, this could have been viewed as a step back, but as a result of this step that he had taken on this day, he acquired the opportunity to take new steps in reaching his addressees in their entirety.

And this was exactly what happened. Sent with the purpose of opening doors and building bridges between the people, God's Messenger did not abandon to their own fate the doors that had opened bit by bit and the bridges that were built inch by inch; on the contrary, even when emigrating he declared that he had set off by opening new doors and building new bridges. Even during his emigration he caught the Meccans by surprise time and time again, for he appointed his nephew 'Ali as his proxy in the city, to restore to their rightful owners all that the Meccans had entrusted to him as "The Trustworthy One;" taking every possible risk, he left 'Ali that night, in his own bed.

And then what?

How strange it was that his having left them did not amount to things settling down for the Meccans as they were troubled by even his living and breathing.

And eventually one day, they gathered their armies and advanced upon him to destroy him together with his Companions.