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## Chapter 34: The Jews Quit the Zone of Islam

The hypocrites and the Jews of Madina were very happy on account of the defeat of the Muslims and the annihilation of their missionary force. They were awaiting an opportunity to create disturbances in Madina and to make the tribes residing outside Madina realize that there was no unity in the city so that the young State of Islam might be toppled down by means of attacks by the external enemies.

In order to gain information about the intentions and the way of thinking of the Jews belonging to Bani Nuzayr tribe the Prophet visited their fortress along with some of his companions. However, the apparent object of the Prophet's meeting Bani Nuzayr was to obtain assistance from them in the matter of payment of blood-money for the two men who had been killed by 'Amr bin Umayyah, because the tribe of Bani Nuzayr were living under the protection of the Islamic State and it was only proper that on such an occasion they should contribute towards the compensation which was due to be paid.

Moreover they had also concluded treaties with the Muslims as well as with the tribe of Bani 'Amir and the tribes which had concluded mutual treaties always assisted each other on such occasions.

The Prophet dismounted opposite the gate of the fortress and mentioned the purpose of his visit to the chiefs of the tribe. They received him warmly and promised to contribute towards the blood-money. Then, while addressing the Prophet with his patronymic, Abul Qasim, they requested him to enter the fortress and spend the day with them. The Prophet did not, however, accede to their request and, as quoted by some historians, he only dismounted opposite the fortress and after taking his seat in the shade of the wall of the fortress along with his companions began conversing with the chiefs of Bani Nuzayr. <sup>1</sup>

The Prophet felt that this glib talking was coupled with a chain of mysterious activities. There was heavy movement of people in the precincts of the place where the Prophet was seated. Whispering in one another's ears which creates suspicion and pessimism was abundant. In fact the chiefs of Bani Nuzayr had decided to take the Prophet unawares. They had appointed one of their men named 'Amr Hajjash to ascend the roof and kill the Prophet by throwing a big stone on his head.

Fortunately their plan was frustrated. Their evil plots and designs were divulged on account of their activities, and, as quoted by Waqidi, the Prophet learned about the conspiracy of the Jews through Divine revelation.

He left that place in such a manner that the Jews thought that he was going on account of some business and would return. In fact the Prophet decided to go to Madina direct and did not inform even his companions about his decision. They also kept waiting for his return, but it was all in vain.

The Jews of Bani Nuzayr were greatly perturbed. They thought that the Prophet had probably become aware of their plot and would, therefore, accord them severe chastisement. They also thought within themselves: "Now that the Prophet is beyond our reach we may take revenge on his companions". But then the thought crossed their mind immediately that in that event the matter would become very serious and the Prophet would certainly take revenge on them.

At this juncture the Prophet's companions decided to follow him and to find out his whereabouts. They had not yet gone far away from the fortress when they met a man who told them that the Prophet had already arrived in Madina. They visited him and became aware of the design of the Jews which had also been confirmed by revelation.<sup>2</sup>

## **How To Deal With This Crime?**

Now what should have been the duty of the Prophet with regard to this band? These were the people who enjoyed privileges granted by the Islamic State and whose property and honour were protected by the Muslim soldiers! They were a community who witnessed clear signs of prophethood in the Prophet and read in their own books about the proofs of his prophethood and the evidence of his truthfulness.

What was the proper way to deal with this group of people who, in spite of enjoying all the privileges, plotted against his life and decided to assassinate him instead of showing hospitality? What were the demands of justice in this behalf? And what should have been done so that such incidents were not repeated in future?

The way to solve the problem was the same which the Prophet adopted. He ordered all the soldiers to remain alert. Then he called Muhammad bin Maslamah, a member of the Aws tribe, and ordered him to convey the message to the chiefs of Bani Nuzayr as early as possible. He contacted the chiefs of Bani Nuzayr and said to them: "The exalted leader of Islam has sent you a message through me that you should quit this place as early as possible and within ten days at the latest, because you have acted in a deceitful manner. And if you do not depart from this region within ten days your blood will be shed".

They were dejected on hearing this message and every one of them held others responsible for the developments. One of their leaders suggested that all of them should embrace Islam. This suggestion was, however, not accepted by the obstinate majority. They felt a strange helplessness.

Eventually they turned to Muhammad bin Maslamah and said to him: 'O Muhammad! You belong to the tribe of Aws and before the arrival of the Prophet of Islam we had a defence pact with your tribe. Why are you on war terms with us now?' In reply he said with perfect valour which behoves every Muslim: "That time has passed. Now the hearts have changed".

The basis of Prophet's determination was the very pact which the Muslims had concluded with the tribes of the Jews in the early days and which had been signed by Hay bin Akhtab on behalf of Bani Nuzayr. We have already reproduced the text of this pact in early pages and quote here an extract from it:

"The Prophet concludes a pact with every one of the three groups (Bani Nuzayr, Bani Qaynuqa'a and Bani Qurayzah) that they will not take any steps against the Prophet of Allah and his companions and will not harm him with their hands or tongue. As and when any one of these tribes acts contrary to the text of the pact the Prophet will be free to shed their blood, to confiscate their property and to captivate their women and children".

## **Crocodile Tears**

At this juncture also the orientalists have shed crocodile tears in sympathy with the treacherous Jews, who violated the pacts and have said that the action of the Prophet was not consonant with equity and justice.

The deception and cavilling practiced by the orientalists is to hide the facts, because the reference to the text of the pact shows that the punishment imposed by the Prophet was much lighter than that stipulated in the pact.

Nowadays hundreds of crimes and oppressions take place in the east and west at the hands of the masters of these very orientalists and none of them raises the least objection to them. However, when the Prophet of Islam awards even lesser punishment to a group of conspirators than that agreed on earlier, some writers who analyse the event with various personal motives, raise a hue and cry against it.

## **Role Of The Hypocrites**

The most dangerous enemies of Islam were the group of hypocrites who were wearing a mask of friendship on their faces and Abdullah Ubayy and Malik bin Ubayy Nawfal etc. were their ring leaders. They immediately sent a message to the leaders of Bani Nuzayr that they (the hypocrites) would help them with two thousand warriors and their allies, i.e. the tribes of Bani Qurayzah and Ghatfan, would also not leave them alone.

This false promise encouraged the Jews, and, though they had decided in the beginning to surrender and quit the place, they now changed their decision. They shut the gates of their fortresses and, having equipped themselves with ammunition would defend themselves at any cost from the towers and would

not willfully allow the army of Islam to assume control of their gardens and farms.

One of the leaders of Bani Nuzayr (Salem bin Mushkam) considered the promise of Abdullah to be futile and said: "It is expedient for us to depart". However, Hay bin Akhtab advised them to remain firm and steadfast.

The Prophet became aware of the message sent by Abdullah to the Jews. He appointed Ibn Umme Maktum to be his representative in Madina and with *Takbir* (Allah is Great) on his lips moved to besiege the fortress of Bani Nuzayr. He made the area between Bani Qurayzah and Bani Nuzayr his encampment place and thus cut off the liaison between the two tribes.

According to Ibn Hisham,<sup>3</sup> the fortress was besieged for one day and one night and according to some others it was besieged for fifteen days. However, the Jews became more steadfast and perseverant. The Prophet ordered that the date palm trees around the fortress might be cut down so that the cause for the Jews coveting the territory might be removed once and for all.

At this moment the cries of the Jews became loud from within the fortress and all of them said: "O Abul Qasim! (addressing the Prophet) You have always prohibited your soldiers from cutting the trees! Why are you doing this thing now?" However, the reason for resorting to this action was as mentioned above.

Eventually the Jews submitted to their fate and said: "We are prepared to be exiled, provided that we are permitted to take away our belongings with us". The Prophet agreed that they might carry away their belongings, except the weapons which they had to surrender to the Muslims.

The greedy Jews made their best efforts to take away their property, so much so that they pulled out the doors of their houses to take them away and then destroyed the buildings. Some of them proceeded to Khayber and others to Syria. Two from amongst them embraced Islam.

In order to hide their defeat the vanquished and helpless Jews left Madina beating drums and singing songs. Hence, they wanted to give an impression that they were not at all unhappy to leave the place.

## **The Farms Of Bani Nuzayr Are Distributed Among The Muhajirs**

According to the Holy Qur'an (Surah al-Hashr, 59:6) the booty which the Muslims acquired without fighting belonged to the Prophet and he could spend it for the welfare of Islam and the Muslims, as he deemed fit.

The Prophet considered it proper to distribute the farms, water reserves and gardens (left behind by Bani Nuzayr) amongst the Muhajirs, because, since their migration from Makkah, they were hard up and in fact they were dependent upon the Ansar of Madina and were their guests. Sa'd bin Mu'az and Sa'd bin 'Ubadah also supported this view.

Hence, the entire property was distributed amongst the Muhajirs and none from amongst the Ansar got any share except Sahl bin Hunayf and Abu Dujanah, who were extremely poor. In this way the financial position of the Muslims improved generally. A costly sword, which previously belonged to one of the chiefs of Bani Nuzayr, was given to Sa'd Mu'az.

This event took place in the month of Rabi'ul Awwal of fourth year of migration when Surah al-Hashr was also revealed to mention the causes of this event and to invite the attention of the Muslims.

Most of the historians of Islam believe that no bloodshed took place in this event. However, the late Shaykh Mufid<sup>4</sup> says that during the night of this conquest a brief skirmish did take place and ten Jews were killed and their death provided a basis for the surrender of the Jewish forces.

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1. Mughazi says that the Prophet arrived in their meeting (vol. I, page 364).
  2. Mughazi-i Waqidi, vol. I, page 365.
  3. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. II, page 191.
  4. al-Irshad, pp.47-48.

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