

## Chapter 38: The Last Stage of Mischief

During the first year of his arrival in Madina the Prophet drew up a vital document and a basic law for Madina and its suburbs to put an end to factions and internal differences and the Jews and the tribes of Aws and Khazraj generally agreed to defend this region. The articles and all the particulars of this document have already been studied by the readers.

Besides this he also concluded another pact with the Jews of Madina. It was endorsed generally by different groups of the Jews. It was agreed that if they did any harm to the Prophet or to his companions or supplied arms or animals of riding to their enemies the Prophet would be free to execute them confiscate their property and captivate their women and children.

The agreement was, however, violated and ignored by all groups of the Jews in different ways. Bani Qaynuqa killed a Muslim. Bani Nuzayr plotted to kill the Prophet and he, therefore, compelled them to leave their country and go out of the zone of the Muslims. As regards Bani Qurayzah, they co-operated wholeheartedly with the army of the Arabs to harm Islam. Now let us see how the Prophet chastised and punished Bani Qurayzah.

Before the day dawned the last unit of the tribes left the territory of Madina under extreme fear. Notwithstanding the fact that the signs of fatigue and weariness were apparent in the faces of the Muslims, the Prophet was ordered by Allah to settle the affair of Bani Qurayzah. The mu'azzin called the people to prayers and the Prophet offered noon prayers along with the Muslims. Then the mu'azzin announced under the orders of the Prophet: "The Muslims should offer their afternoon prayers in the area of Bani Qurayzah".

Then the Prophet gave the standard to Ali. Brave soldiers marched off under his command and besieged the fortress of Bani Qurayzah. The watch-man reported the movements of the army of Islam to the inmates of the fortress. The gates of the fortress were closed immediately but cold war commenced with the arrival of the army of Islam.

The Jews of Bani Qurayzah abused the Prophet from the windows and the towers of the fortress. The

standard-bearer of the army, Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, proceeded to Madina to prevent the Prophet from coming near the fortress so that he might not hear the indecent words of the Jews.

The Prophet, however, told Ali that if they (the Jews) saw him they would refrain from using abusive language. He, therefore, came near the fortress and spoke to them somewhat harshly and said: "Did the Almighty not humiliate you?"

This sort of harshness and vehemence on the part of the Prophet was unprecedented for the Jews. In order to pacify the Prophet, therefore, they said immediately: "O Abul Qasim! You were not a hot-tempered person!"

These words stimulated the sentiments of the Prophet so much that he turned back involuntarily and his cloak fell down from his shoulder. 1

## **Consultations By The Jews Within The Fortress**

Hay bin Akhtab Nuzayri, who had sparked off the Battle of Ahzab participated in these discussions, because, according to the promise made by him with Ka'b As'ad, the chief of Bani Qurayzah, he did not go to Khayber after the dispersion of the tribes and instead came to the fortress of Bani Qurayzah. The chief of the community put up three proposals and requested the people to accept any one of them. He said:

1. "All of us should embrace Islam, because the Prophethood of Muhammad is an established fact and proved to all, and the Taurat also confirms it.
2. We should kill our women and children and then come out of the fortress and fight with the Muslims with a free hand. If we are killed we have nothing to worry and if we are victorious we can acquire women and children once again.
3. This night is the night preceding Saturday. Muhammad and his companions must be thinking that the Jews don't do anything on the night preceding Saturday and on Saturday. Hence we should take advantage of their negligence and attack them at night".

The consultative body rejected all the three proposals and said: "we shall not renounce our religion and the Taurat, and our lives also will not be pleasant after our women and children (are killed). As regards the third proposal it cannot be acted upon in view of our religious beliefs, because if we do so we may become subjected to Divine wrath in the same manner in which former communities had to face God's punishment on account of their not having accorded due respect to Saturday". 2

The speeches of the members of the consultative body are best guides for us to understand their mentality. Their rejection of the first proposal shows that they were an obstinate and inimical people, because if they really believed in the prophethood, (as stated by their chief) their opposition to him

meant nothing except obstinacy.

As regards the second proposal the conversation which took place among them shows that they were a cruel and hard-hearted people, because killing of innocent women and children is not possible without acute hard-heartedness. It deserves attention that the members of the consultative body rejected this proposal on account of the fact that their lives would not be pleasant without the women and the children.

Not even one person enquired as to what offence these helpless persons had committed on account of which they should be put to death and how could they, their kind and benevolent fathers, do such an act when the Prophet would never kill them if he gained control over them.

The third proposal shows that they had not properly assessed the spiritual strength of the Prophet and his knowledge of military arts and principles of defence, and thought that the Prophet of Islam would not take necessary precautions during the night and day of Saturday –and that too about an enemy like the Jews who are well-known for their deceit and cunning.

The study of the incident of Ahzab proves that there were only a few clever and wise persons amongst this community, or else they could protect their existence in a diplomatic manner without aligning themselves with any party (i.e. Islam or infidelity). In fact they could remain on-lookers of the fight between the Prophet and the army of the Arabs and, whichever party succeeded, their existence and supremacy would have been ensured.

Unfortunately, however, they were deceived by the glib-tonguedness of Hay bin Akhtab and they aligned themselves with the army of the Arabs, and their misfortune became acute when, after co-operating with the Arab army for a month, they declined to assist Quraysh and, while surrendering to the design of Na'im bin Mas'ud, sent a message to Quraysh that they would not assist them against the Prophet unless they handed over to them some of their noble persons as hostages.

At this moment these stupid persons completely lost their good sense. They did not realize that, on the one hand, they had risen up against the Prophet and if, on the other hand, they cut off their relations with Quraysh and, if the Arab army felt weak and returned to their homes abandoning warfare, they (Bani Qurayzah) would be at the mercy of the Muslims.

If they had chalked out a proper political plan they should have, immediately, on breaking off their relations with the Arab army, expressed regret for having violated their pact with the Muslims, so that they should have remained safe from the danger of their (Muslims) probable victory. However, they fell prey to ill luck, for they cut off their relations with Quraysh and did not also join the Muslims.

After the departure of the Arab army the Prophet could not afford to leave Bani Qurayzah to themselves, because it was probable that they (the Arab army) might come once again at some appropriate time, with sufficient equipment, to conquer Madina and endanger the very existence of Islam with the

cooperation of Bani Qurayzah, who were the key to the victory and defeat of Islam and were considered to be its internal enemies. For this reason the solution of the problem of Bani Qurayzah and settlement of their affair was a vital matter for the Muslims.

## **Betrayal By Abu Lubabah**

After having been besieged, the Jews of Bani Qurayzah requested the Prophet to send Abu Lubabah of Aws tribe to them so that they might consult him. Abu Lubabah had already concluded an agreement of friendship with Bani Qurayzah. When he arrived in the fortress the women and men gathered round him wailing and said: "Is it proper that we should surrender without any pre-conditions?" Abu Lubabah said: "Yes".

However, he made a sign with his hand towards his throat which meant that if they did so they would be executed. Abu Lubabah knew that the Prophet would not tolerate the existence of this community which was the most dangerous enemy of Islam. However, he regretted very much to have betrayed the higher interests of Islam and of the Muslims and to have divulged their secrets.

He, therefore, came out of the fortress trembling and disturbed, and went straight to the mosque. There he tied himself to one of the pillars of the mosque and made a vow that if Allah did not forgive him he would spend the rest of his life in the same condition.

The exegetes say that this verse was revealed with regard to the betrayal by Abu Lubabah:

***Believers, do not be dishonest to Allah and the Messenger or knowingly betray your trust. (Surah al-Anfal, 8:27)***

The news about Abu Lubabah reached the Prophet. He said: "If he had come to me before making a vow, I would have prayed for his forgiveness and Allah would have forgiven him, but now he should wait till he is forgiven by Allah".

His wife used to come at the time of prayers and untied the rope with which he had tied himself to the pillar. And after he had offered his prayers she tied him to the pillar again.

After six days the Archangel Jibreel came early in the morning with the following verse when the Prophet was in the house of Umme Salamah:

***Some of them have already confessed their sins and have mixed virtuous deeds with sinful ones. Perhaps Allah will forgive them. Allah is All-forgiving and All-merciful. (Surah al-Taubah, 9:102)***

The eyes of Umme Salamah fell on the face of the Prophet, while he had a smile on his lips. The Prophet said to her:

"Allah has forgiven Abu Lubabah's sin. Get up and convey this good news (to the people)". When the

Prophet's wife informed the people of this good news they rushed to untie him but Abu Lubabah said: "It would be appropriate if the Prophet himself removes my cords". Later, the Prophet arrived in the mosque to offer morning prayers and set him free.<sup>3</sup>

The story of Abu Lubabah is instructive. His mistake was due to his injudicious sentiments. Wailings of treacherous men and women deprived him of his power of self-control and he divulged the secrets of the Muslims. However, the strength of faith and fear of Allah was even greater than that and he repented of what he had done in such a way that the thought of betrayal should never cross his mind again.

## **The Fate Of The Fifth Group**

One day Shas bin Qays descended from the fortress in the capacity of a representative of the Jews and contacted the Prophet. He requested the Prophet to permit the tribe of Bani Qurayzah to pick up their belongings like other Jews and quit Madina.

The Prophet did not, however, accept his suggestion and said: "They should surrender unconditionally". Shas amended his suggestion and said: "Bani Qurayzah are prepared to surrender their property to the Muslims and to leave Madina". The Prophet declined to accept that suggestion also.<sup>4</sup>

The reason for the Prophet's not agreeing to these suggestions was absolutely clear, because it was quite probable that, like the tribe of Bani Nuzayr, these people, too, while they were beyond the reach of the Muslims, might have confronted the Muslims in a very dangerous way, in collaboration with the forces of idolatrous Arabs and might have become the cause of more bloodshed. For this reason, therefore, the Prophet did not agree with Shas, who returned and made the position known to his high-ups.

Bani Qurayzah eventually decided to surrender to the Muslims without any conditions or, as stated by some historians, to accept as final the decision of Sa'd Mu'az, with whom they had already concluded a pact. In view of this the gates of the fortress were opened by them. The Commander of the Faithful, therefore, entered the fortress with a special corps and disarmed all the Jews. He then detained them in one of the houses of Bani Najjar till their fate was finally decided.

As the Jews of Bani Qaynuqa', who had been arrested in the past by the Muslim army, had been forgiven on the intercession of Bani Khazraj and especially of Abdullah Ubayy and the Prophet had refrained from shedding their blood, the people of Bani Aws also pressed the Prophet, with a view to vie with Bani Khazraj, that as Bani Qurayzah had concluded a pact with them he might forgive them.

The Prophet did not, however, concede to their request and said: "I leave the decision to Sa'd Mu'az, your elder and the chief of Bani Aws. Whatever he says will be acceptable to me". All those present sincerely accepted this offer of the Prophet. Moreover, Bani Qurayzah themselves had also agreed to abide by the decision of Sa'd Mu'az. As quoted by Ibn Hisham and Shaykh Mufid, the Jews of Bani

Qurayzah had sent a message to the Prophet that Sa'd Mu'az should arbitrate their case.<sup>5</sup>

In those days Sa'd Mu'az's hand had been wounded by an arrow-shot and he was confined to bed for its treatment in the tent of a woman named Zamidah, who was expert in surgery. The Prophet used to go there occasionally to enquire after his health. The young men of Bani Aws got up and brought the chief of their tribe before the Prophet with special ceremonies.

When Sa'd arrived the Prophet said: "All of you should pay respect to your chief". All those present stood up as a mark of respect to Sa'd. Those who had accompanied Sa'd had also requested him repeatedly on the way that he should do good to Bani Qurayzah and save them from death.

However, as opposed to all this insistence, he gave his decision that all their soldiers should be put to death, their property should be distributed (amongst the Muslims) and their women and children should be made captives.<sup>6</sup>

## **A Study Of Sa'd Mu'az's Judiciousness**

There is no doubt about the fact that if the sentiments of a judge overcome his intellect and reason the judicial machinery is disturbed and the entire order in the society gets topsy-turvy. Sentiments are like false hunger which displays harmful and undesirable things to be useful and profitable, whereas, by acting upon such sentiments the interests of thousands of persons including the welfare of the whole society are violated.

The sentiments and feelings of Sa'd Mu'az, the heartrending scene of the women and children of Bani Qurayzah, the tragic condition of their men who were under detention and the general thinking of Bani Aws who seriously insisted that the judge should ignore their offence—all these things demanded that the judge appointed by both the parties should base his judgement on the interests of a minority (Bani Qurayzah) in preference to the interests of a majority (the Muslims in general) and should acquit the criminals of Bani Qurayzah on some excuse or, at least, reduce their punishment as much as possible or to act upon one of the suggestions mentioned above.

However, logic, reason, freedom and independence as a judge, and regard for public interest guided him towards a path which he eventually adopted and gave his decision for the execution of the soldiers, confiscation of their property and captivity of their women and children. His judgement was delivered keeping in view the following arguments:

1. Some time earlier the Jews of Bani Qurayzah had concluded a pact with the Prophet stipulating that if they rose in opposition to the interests of Islam and the Muslims or assisted the enemies of Islam and created disturbance or instigated people to rise against the Muslims they (the Muslims) would be at liberty to kill them. The judge was of the view that if he punished them according to the terms of that pact he would not be acting against the principles of justice.

2. These people had, in violation of the pact, kept Madina in a state of insecurity for quite some time under the shadow of the spears of the Arab forces and had poured into the houses of the Muslims to intimidate them. And if the Prophet had not taken precautionary measures and had not sent a unit from the army headquarters to the inner parts of the city to maintain law and order it was quite possible that Bani Qurayzah might have succeeded in the execution of their plan.

In that event they would have killed the Muslims, confiscated their property and captivated their women and children. Sa'd Mu'az thought that as he gave a similar judgement against them he would not be acting against truth and justice.

3. Sa'd Mu'az, who was the chief of Aws tribe, had concluded a pact with Bani Qurayzah and they had very good and friendly mutual relations. It is, therefore, possible that he was aware of the penal laws of the Jews.

The text of the Taurat of the Jews is this: "When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it: And when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the Lord thy God hath given thee". (Book of Deuteronomy, chapter 20: 10–14).

Possibly Sa'd thought that if he, who had been nominated as judge by both the parties, punished the transgressors according to their own religious laws, he would not be doing anything other than the administration of justice.

4. We think that the greatest reason for Sa'd Mu'az giving his decision was that he had seen with his own eyes that the Prophet had excused the people of Bani Qaynuqa' on the intercession of Bani Khazraj and had contented himself with only banishing them from the environments of Madina.

These people had not yet vacated the Islamic territories fully when Ka'b Ashraf went to Makkah and shed crocodile tears for those who had been killed in the Battle of Badr and did not rest till he had prepared Quraysh for war. As a consequence of this the Battle of Uhud took place. In that battle seventy soldiers of Islam were martyred.

Similarly Bani Nuzayr were forgiven by the Prophet. In response to this kind gesture, however, they formed a military alliance and brought about the Battle of Ahzab. And, but for the ingeniousness of the Prophet and the plan of digging the ditch, Islam would have been destroyed, and thousands of Muslims would have been killed.

Sa'd Mu'az visualized all these events. Past experiences did not permit him to succumb to sentiments,

because there was no doubt about the fact that this time they would form a more extensive alliance and would endanger the security of the centre of Islam by instigating the Arab forces to rise against the Muslims as well as by chalking out other schemes. He, therefore, considered the existence of this group to be totally harmful for the Muslim society.

If these reasons had not been there it would have been very important for Sa'd Mu'az to respect the public views on the subject, because the chief of a tribe needs most the support of his people, and to annoy them and to reject their recommendations and requests is very harmful for him. However, he considered all these requests to be opposed to the interests of the Muslims and consequently obeyed the dictates of reason and logic.

A testimony of his deep foresight and rational judgement is that when they (the Jews) were being taken away for execution they spoke out what they had in their hearts. The eyes of the war-monger Hay bin Akhtab fell at that time on the Prophet and he said: "I don't regret my being inimical towards you. However, he, whom Allah wishes to humiliate, is humiliated".<sup>7</sup> Then he turned to the people and said: "Don't be anxious on account of the Command of Allah. Allah has finally destined suffering and humiliation for Bani Israel".

From amongst the women one of them was put to death, because she had killed a Muslim by flinging a stone of the handmill at him. And out of those condemned to death one person viz. Zubayr Bata was forgiven on the recommendation of a Muslim named Thabit bin Qays; even his women and children were set free and his property was also returned to him. Four persons from amongst Bani Qurayzah embraced Islam.

The war booty was distributed amongst the Muslims after deducting out of it one-fifth, which fell to the share of the Finance Department of Islam. The mounted soldiers were given three shares each and the infantrymen one share each. The Prophet gave one-fifth of the booty to Zayd with instructions that he should go to Najd and procure horses, arms and war provisions from its sale-proceeds.

---

1. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, v. II, p. 234; Tarikh-i Tabari v. II pp.245-246.

2. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. II, page 235.

3. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. II, page 237.

4. Mughazi-i Waqidi, vol. II, page 501.

5. Irshad Mufid, page 50.

6. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. II, p. 240; Mughazi-i Waqidi, vol. II, p. 510.

7. Tarikh-i Tabari, vol. II, page 250.

---

**Source URL:**

<https://www.al-islam.org/the-message-ayatullah-jafar-subhani/chapter-38-last-stage-mischief>