

Chapter 39: The Events of the Fifth and Sixth Years of Migration

The fifth year of migration had not yet come to an end when the attack by the tribes was repelled and the revolt of Bani Qurayzah was also suppressed. Madina and its environs came entirely under the control of the Muslims. The foundations of the young State of Islam became firm and relative tranquillity began to prevail in the Islamic territories.

This tranquillity was, however, temporary. It was necessary that the Prophet should keep watch over the affairs of the enemies and should nip all conspiracies against Islam in the bud with the help of the forces available.

The tranquillity in the surroundings provided an opportunity to punish some of those persons who had sparked off the Battle of Ahzab and had gone out of the control of the Muslims after the tribes had decamped. Hay bin Akhtab, who was one of those, who made the first move towards the battle of Bani Qurayzah, but his comrade Sallam bin Abil Haqiq was residing in Khayber.

It was an established fact that this dangerous man would not sit still until he had instigated the tribes once again to rise against the Muslims, especially because the Arab idolaters were ready to wage a war against Islam and if the expenses of war were guaranteed the conditions of the Battle of Ahzab could be renewed.

Taking these matters into account the Prophet appointed the brave men of Khazraj to get rid of this impudent and spiteful element. This was, however, subject to the condition that they should not molest his family. The warriors of Khazraj arrived in Khayber at night and fastened from outside the gates of the houses adjoining that of Sallam, so that if there was any noise his neighbours might not be able to come out of their houses.

Then by means of a stair-case they reached the first floor of the house where Sallam was residing. They knocked at the door. His wife came out and enquired as to who they were. They replied: "We are Arabs

and have some business with the chief. We need grains".

She was deceived by this introduction, opened the door without verification, and guided them to the room of Sallam, who had just then gone to bed. In order to prevent every sort of hue and cry they entered the room immediately, shut the door, and put an end to the life of a dangerous and mischievous element, who had deprived the Muslims of their peace of mind for quite a long time. Then they came downstairs at once and hid themselves in the place of entrance of water outside the fort.

The cries of Sallam's wife awakened the neighbours, and all of them pursued the warriors of Khazraj, holding lamps in their hands. However, although they searched a good deal but could not find any trace of them and eventually returned to their homes. The bravery of Muslims was at such a high pitch that one of them volunteered to go amongst the Jews incognito and find out the result of what they (i.e. the Muslims) had done, because they were under the impression that Sallam was still alive.

He joined the circle of the Jews when they were surrounding Sallam, and his wife was giving the details of the incident. Suddenly she looked at the face of Sallam and said: "By the Lord of the Jews! He is dead". He (i.e. the Muslim who had gone to collect information) then returned and informed his companions about the state of affairs. They, therefore, quitted their hiding place and proceeded to Madina. There they informed the Prophet of what had happened.¹

A Band Of Quraysh Proceeds To Ethiopia

A band of far-sighted Quraysh, who were very much frightened on account of the ever-increasing advancement of Islam, proceeded to Ethiopia to settle there. They thought that, if Muhammad eventually gained mastery over the Peninsula, they should be already safe in Ethiopia and, if Quraysh were victorious, they would return to their homes.

Amr bin As was a member of the band which left the Hijaz for Ethiopia with many presents. Their arrival coincided with the arrival of the representative of the Prophet named 'Amr bin Umayyah, who had brought a message of the Prophet regarding Ja'far bin Abi Talib and other Muhajirs. In order to gain favour of the chiefs of Quraysh 'Amr bin As said to his companions: "I am going to seek an audience with the King of Ethiopia along with my particular presents and shall seek his permission to behead the representative of Muhammad".

He arrived in the royal court and made a curtsey to the king according to the old custom. The king spoke to him kindly and said: "Have you brought any gift for me from your land?" He replied: "Yes, your Majesty". He then presented the gifts and said, "The man who had just now taken leave of your Majesty is the representative of a man who has killed our elders and warriors. It will be a matter of great satisfaction for us if I am permitted to cut off his head as a measure of revenge".

The words of 'Amr bin As made the Negus very angry, so much so that he involuntarily slapped his own

face so forcefully that it almost broke his nose. Then he said in a fit of rage: "Are you asking me to surrender to you the representative of a man, on whom the Archangel Jibreel descends, as it used to descend on Prophet Musa, so that you may kill him? By Allah! He is true and shall be victorious over his enemies".

'Amr bin As says: "On hearing these words I became inclined to the religion of Prophet Muhammad but didn't disclose this thing to my friends".²

Prevention Of Repetition Of Bitter Events

The bitter and unpleasant event of Raji', as a consequence of which the families of 'Azal and Qarah, who belonged to the tribe of Bani Lihyan, had killed the members of the missionary party of Islam in a cruel and cowardly manner and even arrested two persons alive and sold them to the authorities of Quraysh, who hanged them as a measure of revenge, had deeply grieved the Muslims and brought the journeys of missionary groups to a stand-still.

Now that all the obstacles had been removed from the path of the Muslims and the disturbances caused by the tribes and the Jews had also been suppressed, the Prophet of Islam considered it expedient to chastise Bani Lihyan so that other tribes might become aware of their duties and might not molest the missionary groups of Islam.

In the fifth month of the sixth year of migration the Prophet left Madina appointing Ibn Umme Maktum as his representative. He did not inform anyone of his intentions as he feared that Quraysh and Bani Lihyan might become aware of his plan.

He, therefore, adopted the northern route which went up to Syria, and after covering some distance changed his path and encamped in Gharan which was the territory of Bani Lihyan. However, the enemies had become aware of his intention and had taken refuge in the hills. This armed attack and the humiliation of the enemies had its psychological effect and they were extremely frightened and overawed.

In order to achieve his end the Prophet undertook a military manoeuvre and personally marched, with two hundred men, from Gharan to Asfan, which is situated near Makkah. Then he sent ten persons to the border of Makkah (Kira'ul Ghamim) in the capacity of an exploratory unit in such a manner that the movements of the soldiers of Islam and their display of strength could be known to Quraysh. Thereafter he gave them orders to decamp and all proceeded to Madina.

Jabir bin Abdullah says that after return from this battle the Prophet said: "I seek Allah's refuge from the sufferings of journey, the toils of transport and the unpleasant events in the material and family life of man".³

Battle Of Zi Qarad

Only a few days after the Prophet returned to Madina 'Uyainah bin Hisn Fazari plundered a herd of camels, which was grazing in the pastures of Madina, killed their herdsman and made a Muslim woman captive and took her away with him. Salamah Aslami, who had come out of Madina for hunting, saw this occurrence. He at once came to the mound of Sala' and called the Muslims for help and said: "Wa Sabaha" (Arabs used to utter this sentence when they needed help). Then he pursued the plunderers and, by shooting arrows, prevented them from fleeing.

The Prophet was the first person to hear Salamah crying for help. He immediately dispatched some of his companions to pursue the plunderers. A skirmish took place between them. In it two Muslims and three persons of the opposite party were killed. The Muslims were however successful in recovering a large part of the camels from them as well as in getting the Muslim woman freed.

The enemy, however, took refuge in the region of the Ghatfan tribes. The Prophet stayed at a place called 'Zi Qarad' for a day and a night. Although the mounted soldiers of Madina insisted that the enemy should be pursued, the Prophet did not consider it expedient to do so and returned to Madina.⁴

Unpermissible Vow

The Muslim woman who had been freed came before the Prophet and said: "When I was being taken away as captive along with this camel (she pointed to a camel which belonged to the Prophet) I vowed that if I got rid of the enemy I would slaughter this camel". The Prophet said to her with a charming smile on his lips:

"What a bad recompense you have decided to give to the camel! It procured your freedom and you are going to kill it? Then he made the matter more clear and said: "A vow which involves a sin or which is made with regard to something which belongs to another person is not permissible. You dedicated by your vow a camel which belonged to me. Hence, it is not necessary for you to act upon your vow".⁵

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1. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. II, pp. 274 – 275.
 2. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. II, pp. 276 – 277.
 3. Tarikh-i Tabari, vol. II, page 254 and Mughazi, vol. II, page 535.
 4. Tarikh-i Tabari, vol. II, page 255; Mughazi-i Waqidi, vol. II. pp. 537 – 549.
 5. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. II, page 280; Tabaqat-i Kubra, vol. III, p. 133.

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