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Chapter 9: The Public Mission of the Prophet of Islam

Three years had passed from the time when the Holy Prophet of Islam was divinely assigned to be a prophet, during which time he did his best to secretly guide those who were capable of being guided onto the path of piety and virtue. Whenever he observed a person who had gone astray, being drowned in the pit of idol worship and moral decay, he tried hard to save him. He entered the scene through the gate of affection and benevolence and with his logical, eloquent speeches urged the people to adopt the monotheistic faith of Islam. ¹

But since his faith had to prevail all over the world and be communicated to all human beings, he attempted to make his mission public and open and to declare his aims and plans to all.

The Prophet's Speech On Mount Safa

To promulgate the holy religion of Islam to all Arab tribes and all over the world, God commanded the Holy Prophet to openly declare his prophetic mission and explain to the masses the truth of his faith.²

So he made his way to Mount Safa, stood on a high place, and exclaimed, *'Ya sabaha-hu!'* His voice resounded on the mountain and attracted the attention of the people. Large crowds from various tribes hurried toward him to hear what he was going to say. The Holy Prophet turned to them and said, 'O people! Will you believe me if I tell you that your enemies intend to ambush you at dawn or at night?'

They all answered, 'We have not heard a lie from you throughout your life!'

The Holy Prophet said, 'O people of the Quraysh! I warn you to fear God's punishment. Save yourself from the fire. ³My position is the same as that of the sentry who sees the enemy from afar and warns his people of the danger of their enemies. Does such a person ever lie to his people?' ⁴

Abu Lahab, who feared lest the Prophet's words should impress the people, broke the silence and

addressing him said, 'Give our oath to you? Have you gathered us here to tell us such words?'

Abu Lahab interrupted the Prophet so rudely and did not let him continue his speech. In return for so much insolence, denial of the truth, and cooperation with the idol worshippers and polytheists, God revealed the verse that severely reproves Abu Lahab. 5

'In the Name of' God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Perdition overtake both hands of Abu Lahab and he will perish. His wealth and what he earns will not avail him. He shall soon burn in fire that fames and his wife, the bearer offuel, upon her neck a halter of strongly twisted rope' (111).

The Effect Of The Speech Of The Holy Prophet

The Prophet's logical, eloquent speeches greatly impressed many of the people who heard his words. In most gatherings and public places, people talked about the new faith more than anything else. To those who had suffered from the extortion of the cruel oppressors and were tired of the injustices and inhuman conditions prevailing in Makkah, the celestial words of the Holy Prophet opened a door to the world of hope and prosperity and gave new life to their half-dead bodies. But the selfish malevolent Quraysh chiefs refused to submit to Islam, and, since the Holy Prophet mentioned their deviations and faults at every opportunity, they decided to hinder this spiritual and intellectual revolution by any means possible.

Obviously, the idol worshippers and the oppressive Quraysh chiefs well realized that if idolatry were abolished and all the people worshipped the One God and adopted the gainful religion of Islam, no room would be left for their extortion and oppressive rule.

Therefore, they held a council and started talks on the day's issue, trying to find ways to extinguish the Prophet's revolution.

They reached the conclusion from their talks and exchange of views that they should all go to the house of Abu Talib – a Quraysh chief who was like a father to the Prophet – and ask him to prevent the Prophet from further activities toward propagating his faith by any means he found expedient. For this purpose, they went to Abu Talib, who calmed them down.

The Quraysh Complain To Abu Talib

Again the chiefs of the Quraysh went to Abu Talib's house. Their speaker said to him, 'You possess a high status among us and the Quraysh tribe. You are our chief, our master, and our lord. We all have great respect for your honour and high position. We have already asked you to hinder your nephew. We have told you to stop him from offending the faith of our forefathers, denouncing our idols, thoughts and beliefs. But you have not paid any attention to our demands and have not attempted to stop him. We swear by God that we will not tolerate disrespect toward our gods and denunciation of the faith and

beliefs of our fathers. You must prevent him from doing these things or we will fight both he and you who support him until either you or we are killed'.

Abu Talib tried to solve the problem peacefully, and after they had left the house, he talked to the Prophet about the matter. Addressing Abu Talib, the Holy Prophet of Islam remarked, 'I swear by Almighty God that even if they put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left, and in return, demand of me to quit the propagation of Islam and pursuance of my divine aim, I will never do what they want me to. I am determined to carry on my duty toward God to the last moment of my life, even if it means losing my life. I am strongly determined to attain my goal'.

He left his uncle's house sadly. Abu Talib called him and said, 'I swear by God that I will not quit supporting you and will not let them hurt you'. 6

Once again, the Quraysh attempted to achieve their objectives through Abu Talib. This time they took 'Ammarat ibn Walid to him and said, 'This youth is strong and handsome. We will give him to you to adopt as your own son and in return you must stop supporting your nephew'.

This severely annoyed Abu Talib who gave this answer to their ridiculous request, 'What an unjust proposal! You ask me to take care of your son and give my own son to you to kill him! I swear by God that such a thing will never take place'. 7

The Quraysh Try To Bribe The Holy Prophet

The infidel Quraysh imagined that the Prophet had material or sensual ambitions and that through such ambitions they would be able to induce him to stop his propagation of Islam. With such an intention, they went to him and said, 'If you demand money and wealth, we will make you the wealthiest man among all Arabs. If you are interested in lordship and position, we will make you our absolute chief. If you like sovereignty, we will make you our own sovereign. If you are not able to get over the indisposition you yourself call revelation, we will have the best physician treat you – provided that you quit the propagation of your faith, not create dissension among the people any longer, and not denounce our gods, our thoughts, and the beliefs of our ancestors'.

In answer to those ignorant people, the Holy Prophet said, 'I am neither interested in wealth, nor in lordship nor sovereignty. The One God has assigned me as a Prophet and granted me a Book. I am a Messenger of God and my mission is to warn you of God's severe punishment and give you the tidings of God's reward for the faithful. I have performed my duty. If you follow my instructions, you will achieve prosperity and salvation, and if you refuse to believe in my faith, I will be persistent and resistant until God passes a judgment between me and you'. 8

Finally, the Quraysh chiefs decided that it would be to their advantage if the Prophet would agree to stop denouncing their gods and idols and, in return, they, too, would stop disturbing him. So again they went

to Abu Talib and asked him to talk to the Prophet about their request. The Holy Prophet of Islam answered, 'Shall I not ask them to utter a phrase that is best for them and that brings them prosperity, honour and eternal salvation?'

Abu Jahl said, 'We are ready to utter ten phrases, let alone one single phrase!'

Then they asked the Holy Prophet of Islam what that phrase was. He said, 'There is no god but God!'

This divine strategy severely upset and disappointed the Quraysh chiefs. The obstinate Abu Jahl said, 'Ask for something other than this statement!'

The Holy Prophet of Islam answered with the utmost decisiveness and the strongest determination, 'I will demand nothing other than this, even if you put the sun in my hand'. 9

Realizing that neither blandishments nor threats would work with him and that they could by no means prevent him from pursuing his goal, the infidel Quraysh chiefs decided to treat him most severely.

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2. This phrase was used by the Arabs whenever they wanted to draw the attention of the people to an important issue.

3. Tarikhi Tabari, Vol. 3, p. 1170.

4. Sirih Halabiyih, Vol. 1, p. 311.

5. Tarikhi Tabari, Vol. 3, p. 1170; Manaqib, Vol. I, pp. 43-44.

6. Sirih ibn Hisham, Vol. 1, pp. 265-266.

7. Ibid., pp. 266-267.

8. Sirih ibn Hisham, Vol. 1, pp. 295-1296.

9. Tarikhi Tabari, Vol. 3, p. 1176.

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