

The Second Year of the Hijra

The first expedition that Muhammad Mustafa led in person, was the Ghazwa (campaign) of Waddan. He appointed Saad ibn Ubadah as governor of Medina, and took a group of his followers to Waddan, a village between Medina and Makkah. A caravan of the Quraysh was reported to have halted there. But the caravan had left Waddan before the arrival of the Muslims. They, therefore, rested for a few days and then returned to Medina.

In the seventh month (Rajab) of the second year of Hijra, i.e., fifteen months after the migration from Makkah, the Apostle sent seven men under the command of his cousin, Abdullah ibn Jahash, to Nakhla, an oasis in the south, where they had to watch the movements of a certain caravan of the Quraysh.

In Nakhla, Abdullah found a small caravan of the Quraysh which was returning to Makkah. The caravaneers were Amr bin al-Hadhrami, Uthman bin Abdullah bin al-Mughira, and his brother, Naufal, and Hakam bin Kaisan. Abdullah attacked them and seized their goods. Amr bin al-Hadhrami was killed; Uthman and Hakam were captured; and Naufal succeeded in escaping.

This expedition is considered important because it was the first time when there was a clash between the Muslims and the pagans. It was also the first time when there was bloodshed between them, and the Muslims captured booty from them.

Abdullah ibn Jahash and his party returned to Medina with their prisoners and the spoils of war. Of the two prisoners, Hakam bin Kaisan accepted Islam and stayed in Medina. Uthman bin Abdullah was ransomed by his folks, and he went to Makkah.

Change of Qibla – February 11, A.D. 624

During the first sixteen months after the Hijra (Migration), the Qibla of the Muslims for prayers was Jerusalem (they faced Jerusalem when saying their prayers). Then the Apostle of God received *Wahi* (Revelation) commanding him to change the orientation point from Jerusalem in the north to Makkah in the south.

Dr. Montgomery Watt and John Christopher have given their "reasons" for the change in the direction of Qibla. They say that in the beginning, the Prophet had hoped that facing Jerusalem when praying, would cause the hearts of the Jews of Yathrib to incline toward him, and they would acknowledge him as a Messenger of God. But he noticed, they further say, that though he faced Jerusalem, when praying, the Jews remained skeptical of his truthfulness and sincerity. Then they add that after 16 months, the Prophet gave up the hope of converting the Jews to Islam.

According to Dr. Montgomery Watt and John Christopher and some other orientalist, once the Prophet lost hope of winning the Jews to Islam, he lost interest in them, and he decided to focus attention on the Arabs. The change of Qibla, they assert, was a gesture to please the Arabs.

We do not know if the Jews were displeased or if the Arabs were pleased with the change of Qibla. We, in fact, do not even know which Arabs, according to Dr. Watt, the Prophet was trying to please – the Arabs of Medina or the Arabs of Makkah!

The Arabs of Medina had accepted Islam and they obeyed the Prophet. For them the important thing was to obey him since he was the Interpreter of God's message to mankind. They faced Makkah when praying and didn't ask any questions why Qibla was changed.

The Arabs of Makkah were still idolaters. They also heard the news of the change of Qibla from Jerusalem to Makkah. But there is no evidence that any of them, pleased and flattered by this change, came to Medina and volunteered to become Muslims. They remained what they were whether the Qibla was Jerusalem or Makkah.

The Muslim explanation is simple and logical; God commanded His slave, Muhammad, to change the Qibla, and he obeyed. The command to change the Qibla was given in verse 144 of the second chapter of Al-Qur'an al-Majid.

In Sha'aban (8th month) of the second year of Hijra, fasting during the month of Ramadan (9th month) was made mandatory for the Muslims. They, therefore, fasted during the following month. At the end of the month of fasting, they were required to pay *Zakat-al-Fitr*, a special poor-tax.

In the same year, another tax, *Zakat-ul-Mal*, was imposed upon the Muslims. This tax is assessed at the rate of 2.5 per cent of a Muslim's wealth. In the times of the Prophet, this tax was paid into the *Bayt-ul-Mal* or public treasury, and was spent on the welfare of the poor and the sick members of the community. But if there is no *Bayt-ul-Mal*, the Muslims must pay it to the deserving poor, the widows, the orphans and those members of the community who have no means of supporting themselves.

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