

On the Path of the Beloved ﷺ

The Main Pledge Of Al-'Aqaba

Today, we will continue together where we left off yesterday. The Prophet ﷺ was getting ready for immigration by looking for a suitable tribe that would welcome him and the Muslims. After 26 unsuccessful attempts, he found six young men from Al-Khazraj all geared up to accept him and his message for several reasons. First, they were already told by the Jews in Madinah that this is the time of the seal of Prophets. They were also drained by the war that took place between their tribe and that of Al-Auws and thus were ready to accept change. Finally, having the stubborn chiefs of both tribes passed away gave way for a new open-minded generation to welcome a new standpoint.

It was year 10 after the revelation and the young men told the Prophet that they would go to Madinah granted that they come back next year bringing along representatives from Al-Auws, after they deliver this message to them. In spite of the fact that they were enemies at the time, they were so honest and loyal to the tribe that shared Madinah with them. The eldest of those six young men was Asa'ad Ibn-Zorarah who was then 21 years old, and whose house still exists now in Madinah.

The next year, the six brought along another six; eight of the twelve were from Al-Khazraj while four were from Al-Auws. Throughout the past year, the two tribes managed to improve their relationship. Are you that ready to overcome hatred and conflict between yourself and any of your friends or family members for the sake of Islam? Can you do it to gain Allah's acceptance and to be granted *Jannah* (Paradise)? Actually, this is what today's lecture is all about; the final pact between Muslims, or rather between the Prophet ﷺ and Al-Ansar from Madinah, to aid Islam and to prepare for the immigration to Madinah.

It was year 11 when the delegation of twelve people came to Makkah, and the Prophet agreed on an oath of allegiance with them, known as the First Pledge of al-'Aqaba, to worship no one but Allah ﷻ, to never commit adultery, to never steal anyone's property, to never kill their children, to never falsely accuse anyone, and to always obey him in good deeds. He also sent Mus'ab Ibn-Umayr with them to be the first ambassador in Islam, representing the Prophet ﷺ. Once in Madinah, Mus'ab started playing his role spreading Islam until Sa'ad Ibn-Mu'ath, the leader of Al-Auws, and Usaid Ibn-Hubaib embraced Islam. Moreover, No house in Madinah was short of having at least a Muslim or two in it by the end of that year.

Thus, Islam spread, a year passed, and today's lecture is about year 12. The past 12 years were filled with hardships, fear, pain, persecution, blood shed, and death. Nevertheless, the companions of the Prophet ﷺ remained steadfast to their beliefs and to the truth. Their success was not due to a miracle; it was rather the outcome of thorough planning, deep faith, and a great love for Allah ﷻ. Therefore, like any human experience, their attempts were subject to a fluctuation of outcomes and their success was granted in a gradual way.

We are in the Hajj season of year 12 now, the time when Mus'ab Ibn-Umayr is coming back to Makkah with a delegation representing the Muslims of Madinah. The Prophet ﷺ tried to make use of that season in spite of the fact that it was then the time of worship to the disbelievers. Thus, he turned it into a chance, and turned that chance to a strength point. This is known in Management sciences as SWOT analysis; the method by which you measure Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. That was exactly what the Prophet ﷺ did when he decided to make use of the season when Arabic tribes gather where he is to work with them. The Prophet's victory was due to making use of this chance; pure management science.

The Prophet ﷺ had to carefully plan for that meeting to guarantee the safety of the delegation, which now grew to include 73 people, and to prevent Quraysh from knowing about it, something that could abort the meeting and the whole immigration. Nevertheless, the Prophet ﷺ was very determined to meet them in person and to listen to them, when he could have easily settled with sending them messages through Mus'ab; but that was not the way the Prophet ﷺ dealt with matters. The Prophet ﷺ wanted to meet that brave group of people who believed in him without seeing him and who were risking everything to meet him. Brave they were indeed, and bravery is a human characteristic that if coupled with belief is richly multiplied.

Anyways, the delegation was to join the convoy of disbelievers coming from Madinah and heading to Makkah to perform Hajj. That was a true example of blending in with the society. Isolating yourself from others and living in seclusion cannot be related to Islam. For example, the Prophet ﷺ lived for 13 years in Makkah with the disbelievers making *da'wa*. He had to blend in with them and to touch their hearts with his great manners, and that was common sense to his mission. If a missionary activist feels superior to others he will not be able to gain their acceptance and trust. He can always co-exist while holding on to his beliefs without falling into the sinful acts that others may fall into.

The Muslims then stayed with the non-Muslims throughout the 500-kilometer-long trip and their goodness and righteousness influenced many disbelievers that some of them actually embraced Islam as well. Those were not ordinary people. The first was Al-Baraa' Ibn-Ma'roor, the leader of the tribe and a man over 70. The second was Abdullah Ibn-Hiram, an important companion whose story in the battle of Uhud will touch us deeply.

Before meeting this delegation, the Prophet ﷺ met Mus'ab Ibn-Umayr who delivered to him a report on life in Madinah; the social standards, the political situation, the economical status, the geographic standing, the military power, the Jews' position, etc. Moreover, prior to meeting the delegation, the Prophet ﷺ wanted to meet Al-Bara'a Ibn-Ma'aroor , the leader of the Hajj group. Al-Baraa' was accompanied by Sa'ad Ibn Malik, a poet that would represent the role of media and culture in this day and time. The Prophet ﷺ shook hands with Al-Baraa' and when he was introduced to Sa'ad he said, "The poet?" That was enough to clearly signify the Prophet's appreciation of art and culture. Art, per se, should not be considered as *haram* (a sinful act) as long as it does not propagate any sinful deeds. This should be clear to our media people who should employ this highly influential means in a way that promotes righteousness and spread goodness.

The plan that the Prophet ﷺ devised for the meeting was very thorough. The meeting was to be in the Hajj season, when Makkah is busiest with the convoys to perform Hajj. Moreover, the meeting is to be held at midnight on the last day of Mena, since this is the last day of Hajj and should Quraysh know about the meeting, it will have no time to get them. Furthermore, the delegation was supposed to meet the Prophet ﷺ at Aqaba, where one of the rituals of Hajj is performed and thus nobody would suspect their presence. Three more conditions were that they had to sleep in their tents among those of the disbelievers, that no one wakes up another, and that only two people would come together at a time. Abu-Bakr and Omar were not to attend this meeting since they were to stand at the top of the mountains to watch the place.

Thus, they went out that night, sneaking in like *Qeta* (a bird that leaps on one foot) until they gathered at the designated place waiting for the Prophet ﷺ. To them, this incident remained the most important one in their lives, even more so than the battle of Badr. Why not, when it is the one that made way for Badr, and for the conquest of Makkah later on. Kaab Ibn-Malik says in an authentic hadith narrated by Al-Bukhari, "I witnessed the Al-'Aqaba pledge of allegiance at night with the Prophet when we jointly agreed to support Islam with all our efforts I would not like to have attended the Badr battle instead of that 'Aqaba pledge although Badr is more well-known than it, amongst the people".

When we usually talk about three whole years in a single lecture, today we are going to talk about one night only. Two of those 75 people were women; Nusaiba Bent-Ka'ab and Asmaa Bent-Amr. In spite of the risk such a meeting was posing, the Prophet ﷺ insisted that two must represent the women in Madinah.

When the Prophet ﷺ arrived to meet them, he was accompanied by Al-Abbas his uncle. Though he was not a Muslim at that time, he played the role of Abu-Talib, the Prophet's late protective uncle. He was representing the family now to give a clear message to Al-Ansar that the Prophet's family is still behind him. Thus, when they all sat down, Al-

Abbas started the meeting saying, "O' people of Auws and Khazraj, we were aware of your arrival today. You too should know that we, the sons of Banu-Hashim, protect Muhammad until this day. Therefore, if you wanted him to come where you are, promise to protect him, or else we are capable of protecting him ourselves" Al-Ansar listened to Al-Abbas and requested that the Prophet speaks.

The Prophet ﷺ started his speech by reciting from the Qur'an and by praising Allah . He wanted to touch their hearts before addressing their minds. Then, he asked them to make a pledge on five main issues; to fully obey him, to spend money in good and bad times, to command beneficence and to forbid maleficence, to defend Islam no matter what, and to protect him when he comes to them just like they protect their women and children. Their reply was, "What do we have in return if we promise that?" The Prophet ﷺ looked at them and said one word, "Jannah!. In spite of the fact that life did improve and flourish after the Prophet's immigration to Madinah later on, yet he did not promise that. The Prophet ﷺ never promised them that they will be given any political power, and indeed their role remained symbolical in the history of Islam as none of them became a Caliph or lead an army. Nevertheless, they were promised *Jannah*.

Anas Ibn-Malek reports the following incident in an authentic Muslim hadith saying, "When it was the Day of Hunain ...the polytheists suffered defeat, and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ acquired a large quantity of spoils, and he distributed them among the refugees and the people recently delivered (of Makkah) but did not give anything to Al-Ansar. Al-Ansar said, "In the hour of distress it is we who are called (for help), but the spoils are given to other people besides us" This (remark) reached him the Prophet, and he gathered them in a tent and said, "What is this news that has reached me on your behalf?" They kept silence. Upon this he said, "O people of Ansar, don't you like that people should go away with worldly (riches), and you go away with Muhammad taking him to your houses?" They said, "Yes, happy we are Messenger of Allah" He then said, "If the people were to tread a valley, and the Ansar were to tread a narrow path, I would take the narrow path of the Ansar"

Back to our story, Al-Baraa Ibn-Ma'aroor, who by then embraced Islam, said, "Oh Prophet of Allah, shake my hand. Yes, we swear to He whom Has sent you with the truth that we will protect you like we protect our children and women. Carry on, O Allah's Apostle, as we are the brave people of war who inherited it from our great ancestors".

At that time, one man remained silent and never expressed his opinion until the end. Watching the eldest of his people speak enthusiastically, he, As'ad Ibn-Zurarah (RA), was aware of what his people were going through. Please note that though Ibn-Zurarah is the youngest of the Madinan delegates, he noticed things that older and more experienced ones did not. As'ad Ibn Zurarah had something in mind, but because of the

seriousness of what he wanted to say, he chose not to say it at the beginning in order to avoid changing the course of the discussion.

This great and exceptional meeting took approximately two to three hours. It took the course of a modern organized meeting: First, Al-Abbas gives an introductory speech that takes five minutes. Then, the Prophet ﷺ gives a concise list of conditions. Next, the discussion begins. Al-Baraa' Ibn-Ma'roor started the discussion with his enthusiastic approval of the conditions that the Prophet ﷺ provided.

Abul-Haytham Ibn-Tayhan, a young new Muslim, raised his hand to speak. Anticipating the following ten years he said, "We have strong relationships with the Jews and your arrival might put an end to that. Now, if Allah grants you victory, would you rejoin your people (in Makkah) after we have destroyed our relationship with the Jews?"

The Prophet ﷺ smiled and explained that by that time his blood would be their blood and that his grave would be among theirs. He also promised them that he would make peace with their allies and stand against their enemies. Later on, the Prophet fulfilled his promise and did not move to Makkah after its conquest, but stayed in Madinah instead.

At the Prophet's ﷺ eloquent response, delegates were all fervent and started asking him to hold out his hand so they could pledge allegiance to him. Only then, As'ad Ibn-Zurarah decided to say what he had on his mind before his people approve of such a binding deal, just to make sure that they were aware of what they were doing. He said, "O People, should not you better see first what you are pledging the man to?" Notice here that Ibn-Zurarah used the word "man" for the sake of objectivity. He continued, "You are pledging to him to fight the Arabs and the Persians, the white and the black. If you are going to disappoint him, then you had better leave him now" As'ad Ibn-Zurarah must have gone through scores of experiences to be that deep at this early age. He was telling them that though the Prophet ﷺ is going to live among them and though he promised them *Jannah*, they will suffer, as carrying Allah's messages involves a great deal of sacrifice. His predictions actually took place later on; ten thousand warriors besieged Madinah during the Battle of the Trench and the Madinans also had to fight the Persians and the Romans. Notice how wise As'ad was; the meeting would have failed utterly if he had uttered those words at the beginning.

By that time everything was clear and the delegates fully realized what they were getting into. They thus struggled to reach for the Prophet's ﷺ hand saying, "A successful bargain it is, [because *Jannah* is worth it] a successful bargain it is! We will not withdraw whatsoever" They competed who would pledge first, thinking that the sooner they pledge, the sooner they enter *Jannah*. Would you put your hand in the Prophet's ﷺ hand if you were one of those seventy-five delegates?

This meeting meant that the *Hijrah* of hundreds of Muslims was about to start, therefore, it was necessary to lay the foundation for it. The Prophet ﷺ asked them to nominate twelve chiefs from among them to administer Madinah. Hence, the Prophet ﷺ started ruling Madinah in a democratic manner even before he actually went there by actually holding elections, thus eradicating the Occidents' groundless accusations of despotism in Islam.

The delegates elected nine chiefs from Al-Khazraj and three from Al-Auws. Among those were As'ad Ibn-Zurarah, Al-Baraa' Ibn-Ma'roor, Sa'd Ibn-Mu'ath, Usayd Ibn-Hudhayr, and Abdullah Ibn-Amr Ibn-Hiram, and the Prophet told them that they were responsible for their town.

Unfortunately, the conference does not end here; an unknown man stood atop a mountain and shouted, "O Quraysh, overtake Muhammad and the dissenters. They are declaring war against you" That simply meant that in spite of all the precautions something could have gone wrong and the news about the meeting could have leaked somehow or the other. Again this is a human experience that was liable to either success or failure. Nevertheless, Allah ﷻ does not thwart what is carefully planned with good intentions and sincerity.

In some versions of the story it is said that the Prophet ﷺ said that that man was *Shaytan* (Satan). In other versions it is said that that was an evil man no different from Satan. Anyways, Abbas Ibn-Fadhlah exclaimed, "Let us with our swords kill the dwellers of Mena tonight!" The Prophet ﷺ rejected killing one's people and ordered the delegates to go back and sleep in their tents instead.

The next morning, Quraysh went to every camp and asked its people whether they met the Prophet ﷺ the previous night. They entered the camp of the Madinan pilgrims and the Muslims held their breath and remained silent as the disbelievers of Madinah swore they never met the Prophet ﷺ. It has to be said here that the relations Muslims maintained with the disbelievers literally saved their lives.

After almost all the pilgrims left Makkah, the disbelievers of Quraysh were definite that the "dissenters" were from the Madinan camp. By that time, all the Madinan companions have already left, except for two; Sa'd Ibn-Ubadah and Al-Munther Ibn-Amr. The disbelievers caught them and kept beating them until Al-Abbas came and suggested that they call out the names of the Makkan merchants who have business in Madinah. Abu-Sufian, worried about his business and personal interests in Madinah, hurried to save them and sent them back home.

Afterwards, the Prophet ﷺ held a meeting with the companions in Makkah to tell them about the pledge and ordered them to start migrating to Madinah as Allah ﷻ decreed that. In spite of the fact that he himself was in great danger, the Prophet ﷺ did not migrate until he made sure that all the Muslims migrated safely. The immigration plan

was based on three conditions: leaving Makkah safely, securing the immigration road to Madinah, and preparing Madinah for their arrival.

One of the strategies in planning for the immigration was to mix the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak in each migrating group. Omar Ibn-Al-Khattab (RA), for instance, migrated with twenty of the poor companions in order to guarantee them a secure trip to Madinah and to make the necessary arrangements with the twelve chiefs for the lodging of migrants.

Let us now talk about some of the great stories of the migrants. While Um-Salamah accompanied her husband and son on their way out from Makkah, she was stopped by the disbelievers, taken away from her husband and brought back with her son to Makkah, while her husband had to migrate anyway to avoid persecution. Her husband's family refused to abandon their grandson, and took her son away from her. Though she was later allowed to follow her husband, she could not go and leave her son behind and for a whole year, she kept going to the place where she lost her husband and son to cry until sun set.

A year later, a relative of her husband saw her crying and out of pity asked Abu-Salamah's family to give her back her son and so they did. This year is significant in that it increased Allah's reward for this family. Abu-Salamah died shortly after his family joined him and the Prophet ﷺ married Um-Salamah. Her second marriage could be interpreted as a reward from Allah ﷻ for her perseverance during that year.

As soon as they gave her back her son, she embarked upon her long-awaited trip. When she reached At-Tan'eem, a very noble atheist named 'Uthman Ibn-Talhah met her and gave her his camel to ride and took her all the way to Madinah only to make sure that she gets there safe. This same man was the bearer of Ka'ba's key who one day refused to let the Prophet ﷺ pray in it. We conclude from 'Uthman Ibn-Talhah's story that we should not judge people because of their affiliations, religions or nationalities; rather, they are humans who can neither be completely diabolic, nor pristine. Hence, always try to be objective as you judge people and their actions.

Another great migrant was Suhaib Ar-Rumi (RA). He was a poor Roman when he arrived at Makkah. There, he made a great fortune and later embraced Islam. On the day he set out for Madinah, he took with him ten camels loaded with his money and other possessions, but the disbelievers stopped him and refused to let him go with all this fortune. To fulfill his obligation to Islam, he left the ten loaded camels, the camel he was riding, and even the robe he was wearing over his clothes on their demand. When the Prophet ﷺ heard of that, he hurried to meet him and to congratulate him on his deed. Allah says about this event, **“And of mankind (there is) he who barter himself seeking gracious satisfaction from Allah; and Allah is Ever-Compassionate with (His) bondmen” (2:107).**

Finally, we come to the story of Omar Ibn-Al-Khattab (RA). He slung his bow and arrows across his shoulder, carried his sword, performed tawaf and prayed in the middle of it. Then, he said, "O Quraysh, if any of you wants his mother to lose a son, his wife to become a widow, and his children to become orphans, then let him meet me tomorrow after Fajr prayers behind this valley because I am migrating!" None of them followed him, except for the twenty poor Muslims he was protecting.

That day, 'Ammar Ibn-Yahya was migrating with Omar. Abu-Jahl followed them and told him that his mother swore never to eat nor take a bath until he comes back. Hence, he ran back to her and when he was well away from Omar, Abu-Jahl shackled and imprisoned him for two years, until the following ayah was revealed where Allah ﷻ says, **"Say, (This is addressed to the Prophet) "O My bondmen who have been extravagant against themselves, (i.e., who have committed sins) do not feel despondent of the mercy of Allah! Surely Allah forgives guilty (deeds) all together; surely He, Ever He, is The Ever-Forgiving, The Ever-Merciful."(39:53).**

Omar wrote that ayah on a piece of parchment and sent it to Makkah to 'Ammar his friend who kept weeping upon receiving it until he saw the camel Omar gave him the day they parted. He rode it at once and took off to rejoin the Muslims.

We reached now the point when almost the only Muslims who remained in Makkah were the Prophet ﷺ, Abu-Bakr and Ali (RA), and their households.

The question we end today's lecture with is, would you have held out your hands to the Prophet's in pledge had you been there in Aqaba? Be honest with yourself and think carefully before you answer this one.

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Seerah: Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hisam, Ibn Kathir and Diya al-Nabi were used in the compilation of these lecture notes as well as various books of Hadith.

The selective topics and format is from Amr Khaled's Arabic lecture on Seerah of the Prophet ﷺ with renditions from the "dar al tarjma" convoy.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3oDLD8B-has>

I have included modifications for the sake of readability and clarity.