

Chapter 31: Dangerous Designs of the Jews

The Battle of Badr was a dreadful storm which blew in the heart of the Arabian Peninsula. This was a storm which pulled out many old roots of polytheism and idol-worship. Some of the heroes and champions of Quraysh were killed or were made captives and the others fled away very ignominiously.

The news of Quraysh having been routed spread through Arabia. However, after this storm, there was a sort of lull coupled with fear and disturbance of mind – a lull which was occasioned by reflection about the future general conditions of the Peninsula.

The idolatrous tribes, the rich Jews of Madina and the Jews of Khaybar and Wadiul Qura were very afraid of the ever increasing advancement of the new government and saw their very existence in danger, because they had never believed that the Prophet of Islam would become so strong that he would annihilate the century old strength of Quraysh.

The Jews of Bani Qaynqa' tribe, who lived in Madina and controlled the economy of the city, were more afraid than others, because their life was completely intermingled with that of the Muslims and there was a difference between them and the Jews of Khaybar and Wadiul Qura', who lived outside Madina and away from the zone of authority of the Muslims.

On this account, therefore, the tribe of Qaynqa' became more active than others and started the cold war of propaganda by spreading biting slogans and slanderous verses. Thus they ignored practically the general agreement which was made in the first year of migration.

However, this cold war did not justify that the forces of Islam should give a reply with sharp weapons, because, if a knot can be opened with fingers it should not be necessary to use teeth for the purpose. Furthermore, the Prophet attached much importance to the maintenance of political unity and general law and order.

As a last warning to the Jews the Prophet delivered a fiery speech in the bazaar of Bani Qaynqa'. In this speech he said to the Jews *inter alia*: The fate of Quraysh serves them right. It is a lesson to you as

well. I am afraid that the same misfortune may overtake you.

There are many learned men and religious scholars amongst you. You should verify from them so that they may tell you clearly that I am the Prophet of Allah and that this fact is recorded in your Scripture (the Taurat)".

The obstinate and proud Jews not only did not keep silent after hearing the Prophet's words but replied to him in a very offensive tone and said: "Do you think that we are weak and unaware of the war strategy like Quraysh? You confronted a group who did not know the principles and tactics of fighting. However, the strength of the children of Qaynqa' will become known to you when you meet them in the battlefield".¹

The biting and disrespectful words of Bani Qaynqa' and the singing of slogans and epic poems by the champions of the Jews did not have even the slightest adverse effect on the morale of the Muslims.

However, an ultimatum was served on them in accordance with the principles of Islamic politics and it became clear that this time the knot would have to be opened by other means or else their courage, transgression and oppression would increase day by day. The Prophet, therefore, waited for an opportunity to administer them a severe castigation.

The Fire Of War Kindles With A Spark

At times it so happens that small phenomena lead to great revolutions and social upheavals i.e. an insignificant event leads to great occurrences and the parties resort to the settlement of many other accounts as well (besides that event).

The reason for the commencement of the First World War, which is one of the greatest events of human history, was a small happening, which provided an excuse to the big powers to wage war. The event which served as a cause for the commencement of the said war was the assassination of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, the crown prince of Austria.

This happened on the 28th of June 1914 and after one month and a few days the First World War started with Germany's attack on Belgium. As a result of this ten million persons were killed and another twenty million were wounded.

The Muslims were extremely annoyed at the obstinacy and arrogance of the Jews and were awaiting an offensive act of theirs so that they might rise against them. One day it so happened that an Arab woman came in the Bazaar of Bani Qaynqa' to sell something near the shop of a Jewish goldsmith. She had taken care that nobody should see her face.

The Jews of Bani Qaynqa', however, insisted that she should unveil her face. As she declined to do so the shopkeeper came out of his shop and sewed the lap of her dress on her back. Consequently when

the woman rose after a few moments a part of her body became visible. Thereupon the men (of Bani Qaynqa') ridiculed her.

The question of reputation and honour, which is something vital for every society, enjoyed extraordinary importance amongst the Arabs and especially amongst the nomadic tribes who resorted to bloodshed on account of the slightest aspersion on their honour.

The pitiable condition of the stranger women, therefore, aroused the sense of honour of a Muslim and he killed the Jewish goldsmith. Naturally this act, committed in the area of the Jews themselves, could not pass without a reaction on their part. They therefore, attacked that Muslim en masse and put him to death.

We are not concerned about the fact whether or not the killing of the Jew for his having insulted the woman conformed to principles and reason. However, a Muslim's having been attacked by hundreds of Jews collectively was decidedly very shocking. Hence, the news of the tragic and pitiable murder of a Muslim stirred the moral sense of the Muslims, who determined to set the matters right and to destroy the centre of mischief.

The reciters of epic verses of Bani Qaynqa' realized that the matter had become serious and it was no longer advisable for them to continue their business in the bazaars and streets of Madina. They, therefore, considered it expedient to take refuge, as early as possible, in their houses, which were situated in high and strong forts, and to retreat there in spite of all their recitations of epic poems with great valour!

They also committed a mistake in acting on this scheme. If they had regretted what they had done and had asked for forgiveness they would certainly have been able to reconcile with the Muslims on account of the forgiving nature of the Prophet.

However, to shut themselves in the forts was a sign of continuance of hostilities and enmity. The Prophet ordered the fort of the enemy to be besieged. The Muslim forces encircled the entire fort from one end to the other. The siege continued for fifteen days and entry of provisions into the fort was stopped. Any contact with those people was also prohibited.

The Jews knelt down as a consequence of the economic blockade. They opened the gate of the fort after making requisite signs, surrendered to the Muslim army. They also declared that the decision of the Prophet, whatever it was, should be adhered to.

The Prophet intended to award severe punishment to the obstructionists and the opponents of political unity in Madina. However, he refrained from taking such action on account of the insistence of Abdullah Ubay who was one of the hypocrites of Madina and had ostensibly embraced Islam.

It was, therefore, decided that the Jews should surrender their weapons and wealth and quit Madina as

early as possible and this task should be accomplished under the supervision of an officer named 'Ubada bin Samit. The Jews saw no alternative but to leave Madina for Wadiul Qura' and then to proceed to Azra'at in the region of Syria.

The political unity of Madina was restored once again with the expulsion of the Jews of Qaynqa'. This time the political unity was combined with religious unity also, because, besides the Muslims, no other considerable majority was now visible in Madina and the number of idolatrous Arabs and hypocrites was insignificant as compared with that of the believers.²

Fresh Reports Reach Madina

In small surroundings news usually circulates like lightning from person to person. For this reason news regarding most of the conspiracies and gatherings against the Muslims in every region reached the centre of Islam immediately through impartial travellers or vigilant friends. Furthermore, the Prophet himself was extraordinarily perceptive and nipped most of the conspiracies in the bud.

As soon as a report was received that a tribe was planning to collect arms and men he immediately dispatched a force to curb the spirit of the enemy, or went personally at top speed, with an appropriate force, and besieged the area of the enemy and frustrated his plans. Here is a brief account of some of the 'ghazwahs' (battles in which the Prophet participated) which took place in the second year of migration.

1. Ghazwatul Kadar

The central region of Bani Salim tribe was called Kadar. A report was received in Madina that the people of that tribe were planning to collect arms to attack the centre of Islam. As and when the Prophet of Islam went out of Madina he appointed another person as his representative and entrusted the governmental matters to him. This time he appointed Ibn Umme Maktum to deputize for him in Madina, and himself went, with a force, to the central region of Kadar.

However, the enemies had scattered before the arrival of the Muslims. The Prophet however, returned to Madina without any fighting but for his own satisfaction he again sent an army to the same spot under the command of an officer named Ghalib Abdullah. The army in question returned victorious after a small skirmish in which three of their men were killed.³

2. Ghazwatus Saweq

The Arabs of the Age of Ignorance made strange vows. For example, Abu Sufyan had vowed after the Battle of Badr that until he had taken revenge for the murder of the Quraysh upon the Muslims, he would not go near his wife. To fulfil his vow he was obliged to conduct an attack. He marched with two hundred men and, at the insistence of Salam bin Mushkam, the chief of the Jewish tribe of Bani al-Nuzayr, who

lived out of Madina, he killed a Muslim and set fire to a palm-grove in the region of 'Ariz'.

A man immediately reported the incident to Madina. The Prophet came out of Madina and pursued the enemy up to a certain distance. However, Abu Sufyan and his warriors fled away. On the way the enemies left behind some bags of 'saweeq' (a food prepared with flour and palm-dates). The Muslims took possession of these bags and gave this ghazwah the name of 'Ghazwatus Saweq'.⁴

Ghazwah Zil Amr

A report was received in Madina that the people of the tribe named 'Ghatfan' had gathered together and intended conquering Madina. The Prophet with 450 men rose to face the enemies. The enemies became panicky and took refuge in the mountains. In the meantime there was a heavy downpour and the clothes of the Prophet became wet.

He therefore, went at a distance from the army. There he took off his clothes and spread them on a tree, and sat down under the shade. The enemies were observing the movements of the Prophet. A warrior from amongst them took advantage of the situation. He came down from the mountain with a naked sword and standing by the side of the Prophet said with a harsh voice: "Who can save you today from my sharp sword?" The Prophet replied loudly: "Allah".

This word had such an effect on that man that he began to tremble with fear, and the sword fell down involuntarily from his hand. The Prophet stood up immediately, picked up the sword, attacked him and said: "Who can save you from me now?" As the man was an idolater and knew that his wooden gods were incapable of defending him at that crucial moment he replied: "None".

Historians say that the man embraced Islam there and then, but this action of his was not on account of fear, because he remained steadfast in his faith. The reason for his adopting Islam was the waking up within him of his pure nature, because his unexpected and miraculous defeat turned his mind to the other world and he realized that the Prophet had connections with that world.

The Prophet took him at his word (regarding his embracing Islam) and returned his sword to him. After going a bit forward he returned and surrendered his sword to the Prophet, and said: "As you are the leader of this reformatory army, you are much more entitled to own this weapon".⁵

Quraysh Change Their Trade Route

The coast of the Red Sea had become dangerous (for Quraysh) on account of the Islamic army and the people who had concluded pacts with the Muslims. Once again, therefore, Quraysh held consultations and studied the situation.

They said among themselves: "If our trade is suspended we will gradually lose our capital and will consequently have to surrender to the Muslims. And in case we remain engaged in trade we have no

hope of success, because the Muslims usually confiscate our merchandise en route".

One of them suggested that they should go to Syria via Iraq and his suggestion was accepted unanimously. Arrangements were, therefore, made to send a caravan along with the merchandise. Abu Sufyan and Safwan Umayyah personally supervised the caravan and a man named 'Furat Hayyan', who belonged to the tribe of Bani Bakr, acted as their guide.

Maqrizi writes: "A man belonging to Madina observed the proceedings. On his return to Madina he mentioned the fact to a friend of his. The Prophet became aware of the fact soon and dispatched an army towards the route of the caravan under the command of an officer named Zayd Harith. By capturing two men and confiscating the merchandise they prevented the enemies from pursuing their journey."⁶

[1.](#) Mughazi-i Waqidi, vol. I, page 176.

[2.](#) Mughazi, vol. I, pp. 177–179 and Tabaqat-i Kubra, vol. II, pp. 27–38.

[3.](#) Mughazi, vol. I, page 182 and Tabaqat-i Kubra, vol. II, page 30.

[4.](#) Mughazi-i Waqidi, vol. I, page 181.

[5.](#) Manaqib, vol. I, page 164 and Mughazi-i Waqidi, vol. I, pp. 194–196.

[6.](#) al Imta', page 112.

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