

The New Horizons of Islam

Yathrib was a town in an oasis about 250 miles in the north of Makkah. In A.D. 620, six Yathribites visited Makkah for pilgrimage. A fortuitous meeting with Muhammad led to their conversion to Islam. They told him that they had left Yathrib in a state of simmer and that it could erupt anytime into warfare. But they expressed the hope that God would restore peace to their city through His Messenger. They also promised to return to Makkah and to meet him in the following year.

This was the beginning of Islam in Yathrib.

When these six new Muslims returned to Yathrib, they talked with their folks and friends about Islam, and found them willing, even eager to listen. A year later, when the season of pilgrimage arrived, twelve citizens of Yathrib, including the original six, visited Makkah. Among them there were two women also.

They met the Apostle of God at Aqaba. He briefed them on the Articles of Faith in Islam, and all of them accepted Islam. At the same time, they also gave him their pledge of loyalty. This is called *the First Pledge of Aqaba*.

These Muslims solemnly assured the Apostle of God that:

they would never associate partners with Allah,

they would not worship anyone except Him;

they would never rob or steal;

they would never kill their female infants;

they would never revile others;

they would never defame women;

they would always be chaste and pure;

they would obey Allah and His Apostle;

and they would be faithful to him at all times.

The neophytes requested the Apostle of God to send some teacher with them to Yathrib to teach them Qur'an and the precepts of Islam. He sent Mas'ab ibn Umayr, one of his uncles (Mas'ab was the cousin of his father), with the group to propagate Islam in Yathrib. Mas'ab's mission was successful, and many families in Yathrib accepted Islam.

This was the first time that Muhammad Mustafa had chosen an official. Professor Margoliouth says that Mas'ab ibn Umayr was the first choice of an official in Islam.

The Second Pledge of Aqaba

In A.D. 622, seventy-five citizens of Yathrib came to Makkah in the season of the pilgrimage. The Apostle gave them audience at the same spot at Aqaba where he had met the group of twelve the year before. These 75 men and women also accepted Islam. They gave him their pledge of loyalty, and invited him to Yathrib.

The Apostle's uncle, Abbas ibn Abdul Muttalib, was with him on this occasion. He is reported to have said to the "hosts" from Yathrib: "Muhammad is held in high esteem by his own people. If you can stand by him through thick and thin, take him with you to Yathrib; if not, then abandon the whole idea."

One of the leaders of the Yathribites was Bera'a ibn Ma'roor. He said: "When we were children, our favorite toys were swords and spears." Another chief, Abul Haithum, interrupted him, and said: "O Messenger of God! What will happen when Islam becomes great and strong? Will you then leave Yathrib and return to Makkah?"

Muhammad Mustafa smiled and said: "No. Your blood is my blood and my blood is your blood. From this day you are mine and I am yours, and I shall never part company with you."

The Yathribite Muslims were satisfied by the assurance given to them by Muhammad Mustafa, and they returned to Yathrib to spread Islam among their folks. Islam began to make steady progress in Yathrib. When it appeared that the new faith had found a haven in that city, the Apostle suggested to the victims of persecution in Makkah to emigrate there. Following his suggestion, Muslims began to leave Makkah, in small groups, and to settle in their new homes in Yathrib.

The Second Pledge of Aqaba is a landmark in the history of Islam. It was the "anchor" on which the frail vessel of Islam came to rest at last, after being buffeted for thirteen years in the turbulent seas of paganism in Arabia.

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