

Islam Spreads

The fall of Mecca was the signal for an unprecedented rush to accept Islam. As 'Amr ibn Salamah, a foster son and companion of the Prophet, stated:

"The Arabs were waiting for the Quraish to accept Islam. They used to say that Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) must be left to his people. If he would emerge victorious over them, he is undoubtedly a true prophet. When Mecca was conquered, all the tribes hastened to accept Islam."

Zakah collectors were sent into the territories that came under the Muslims' control. These officials not only demonstrated great fairness in collecting the *zakah* and *jizyah*, but also preached effectively to the people, for most of them were pious and God-fearing people. After the fall of Mecca, teachers were sent in all directions to bring the people to God's way, and they met with so much success that hosts upon hosts flocked to the Prophet. It is about such mass conversions that the Qur'an has stated:

When there comes assistance from Allah and victory, and you see men entering the religion of Allah in companies. (Qur'an, 110:1-2).

After the order was issued prohibiting the polytheists from entering the Sacred Mosque, the entire Hijaz was Muslim.

By the 10th of Hijra, the influence of Islam had reached Yemen, Bahrain, Yamama, Oman, Iraq, and Syria. The Chief of the Daws, a tribe in Yemen, had accepted Islam even before the emigration. In 8 A.H., Khalid was sent to Yemen to preach Islam but could not make much headway. Then 'Ali went there and read the epistle of the Prophet; the entire tribe of Harridan accepted Islam. In 10 A.H., Wabr was deputed to contact the leading Persians residing in Yemen. Firoz Dailami, Markabood and Wahb ibn Munabbih accepted Islam through him. Ma'adh ibn Jabal and Abu Musa al-Ash'ari were also sent to Yemen with the following instructions:

"Be polite, not harsh; give glad tidings to the people and condemn them not. Work together. When you

meet people who already follow some religion, preach to them about the Oneness of God and (my) Messengership; if they accept, tell them that God has enjoined prayers five times in a day and night. If they agree to do so, tell them that *zakah* is also obligatory upon those who can afford to pay in order to help the poor. If they give *zakah* do not pick out only things of better quality. Beware of the curse and the supplication of victims, for they reach straight to God."

Their efforts met with considerable success. Meanwhile, Khalid was inviting people to the faith in Najran and the tribe of Abdul-Madan came forward to accept it.

In 8 A.H., Munqir ibn Habn of the tribe of 'Abdul-Qais of Bahrain visited Medina and accepted Islam. Through his efforts and those of his father, their tribe entered the fold and sent a deputation of fourteen persons to the Prophet. In the same year, 'Ala al-Hadhrami was sent to Bahrain to preach to the people. He succeeded in converting its governor, Mundhir ibn Sawa and the public followed suit.

Similarly, Abu Zaid al-Ansari and 'Amr ibn al-'Aas were sent to Oman in 8 A.H. with letters from the Prophet to its chieftains Ubaid and Jaifar. When the chieftains accepted Islam, the whole tribe of Azd responded favorably to the invitation. [The original letter has now been discovered, and its photo was published in the *Light* magazine (Dar-es-salaam), of June 1978].

By 9 A.H., Islam was gaining some adherents in Syria. Its governor, Farwah, became Muslim. When the Roman emperor learned about it, Farwah was guillotined. He died with a couplet on his lips saying: "Convey my message to the Muslim leaders that I sacrifice my body and honor in the way of God."

As Islam started spreading to the farthest corners of Arabia, a large number of deputations from different tribes began pouring into Medina. Ibn Ishaq has given details of fifteen of them. Ibn Sa'd describes seventy deputations, and the same number is mentioned by al-Damyati, al Mughaltai and Zainuddin al-Iraqi. Hafiz Ibn Qaiyyim and al-Qastalani have critically verified the accounts of these deputations and have themselves given details of thirty-four others.

It was thus, and thus alone, that Islam gradually spread. During a short period of time, it blazed in radiant splendor over the continents.

An Expedition to Tabuk (Rajab, 9 A.H.)

The indecisive battle at Mu'ta had stirred a considerable chagrin to the Roman emperor, Heraclius. Elated by his victories over the Persians and apprehensive of the growing power of the Muslims, he directed his feudatories to collect a huge force to invade Arabia. The tribes of Lakhm, Hudham, Amela and Ghassan gathered to help the Roman army. When news of this preparation reached Medina through

a trade caravan, it caused a great deal of anxiety among the Muslims.

How alarmed they were can be judged from one incident: A neighbor of 'Umar knocked at his door in the night. When 'Umar came out and inquired what the matter was, the visitor said a calamity had befallen. 'Umar asked whether the Ghassanids had come. The visitor was perturbed over another matter but the attack of the Ghassanids was considered so imminent that Umar's first thought went to it. In order to meet this danger, the Prophet hastily collected a force of 30,000 volunteers with 10,000 horses among them.

In spite of the severe famine that had overtaken Najd and Hijaz and the intense heat of the weather, his people rallied around him. Those who were in a position to do so generously donated large sums of money to meet the expenses of the expedition and to buy weapons and armor to those who could not afford to buy them. This was the first occasion when an appeal for public donations was made, and many Muslims responded generously.

An old and very poor woman brought a small quantity of dates as her contribution. Some hypocrites ridiculed her, but the Holy Prophet said that her contribution was more precious in the sight of Allah than that of many people who had contributed only to show off.

The Holy Prophet left 'Ali as his deputy in Medina. 'Ali exclaimed with dismay, "Are you leaving me behind?" The Prophet said, "'Ali! Are you not satisfied that you have the same position in relation to me as Aaron had with Moses, except that there is no prophet after me?" The Prophet thereby meant that as Moses had left Aaron behind to look after his people when he went to receive the Commandments, he was likewise leaving 'Ali behind as his deputy to look after the affairs of the Muslims during his absence.

The Prophet marched at the head of this force to Tabuk, a place situated midway between Medina and Damascus. There, they came to know, to their relief, that the news of the Ghassanids' attack was incorrect. Having stayed for twenty-four days at Tabuk, the Muslim army returned to Medina.

The Prophet had marched to Tabuk in order to forestall the Ghassanids and the Byzantines, but a certain Western historian has surmised that the aim of this expedition was expansion, viz. to capture the trade routes leading to the more prosperous towns of Syria. Had this been so, there was no sense in returning to Medina without even attempting to fulfill that object after having taken all the trouble and the expenditure over the expedition during the most inconvenient time of the year. But these detractors have their own mission to fulfill.

The Year of the Deputations

During the ninth year of the Hijra, a large number of deputations from far-flung non-Muslim tribes came to the Prophet to accept Islam. They had been impressed by the record of the Muslims, and the news of

his being a true prophet was fast spreading. Among these tribes were the people of Ta'if who had once driven the Prophet out of their city and whose siege after the battle of Hunain had been lifted by the Muslims.

In order to preach the doctrines of Islam, teachers were sent to different provinces. They were directed by the Prophet to "deal gently with the people, and not to be harsh, cheer them, and condemn them not. And you will meet with many People of the Book who will question you: 'What is the key to heaven?' Tell them that it (the key to heaven) is to testify to the Unity of God, and to do good deeds."

The tribe of Tay was, however, creating some obstacles. 'Ali was deputed with a small force to discipline them. The chief of the tribe, 'Adi son of Hatim, fled but his sister and some of his principal clansmen fell into 'Ali's hands. Having had regard for the great benevolence and generosity of her father, Hatim, the Prophet set the daughter free, along with all the captives, giving them many gifts. They were so touched by this generous treatment that the entire tribe, including its chief 'Adi, accepted Islam.

Pagans Forbidden from Visiting the Ka'bah

Towards the end of that year, an order was issued prohibiting non-believers from entering the Ka'bah or performing idolatrous rites and degrading ceremonies of their cults within its sacred precincts.

It is recorded that first Abu Bakr was sent with Chapter AlBara'ah to proclaim it before the pagans. But Gabriel said to the Holy Prophet:

"Except for the person who is from thy own house, nobody can ably preach it."

So he called 'Ali and charged him with the duty of preaching the relevant ayats of Al-Bara'ah. Abu Bakr, therefore, returned to the Prophet and asked him:

"O Messenger of Allah! Did you receive any decree from Allah against me?"

The Prophet replied by saying:

"No, but the Lord ordered that either I or someone from my own house should preach it."

At the time of the pilgrimage, this proclamation was read out by 'Ali:

"No idolater shall after this year perform the pilgrimage; no one shall circle (the Ka'bah) naked. Whoever has a treaty with the Prophet, it shall continue to be binding till its termination. For the rest, four months

are allowed to everyone to return to his territories. Thereafter, there will be no obligation on the Prophet except towards those with whom treaties have been concluded."

Mubahalah (Imprecation)

In the same year, an envoy was sent to Najran to invite that Christian tribe to Islam. They consulted among themselves and selected a committee of fourteen persons to go and study the life and habits of the Prophet and make a report. Out of them, three were considered to be leaders in all affairs. One of the latter was named 'Abdul-Masih 'Aqib. Another was called Sayyid and the third was named Abul-Harith.

When the deputation reached Medina, they dressed themselves in silk garments, put on gold rings; then went to the mosque. All of them greeted the Prophet traditionally, but the Prophet did not respond, turning his face away from them. They left the mosque and approached 'Uthman and 'Abdur Rahman ibn 'Awf complaining: "Your Prophet wrote us inviting us here, but when we came to him and greeted him, he neither reciprocated our greeting nor said a word to us. Now what do you advise us to do? Should we go back or wait here?"

'Uthman and 'Abdur Rahman ibn 'Awf sought 'Ali's advice. 'Ali said, "These people should first remove the silk clothes and gold rings. Then they should go and see the Prophet." When they did as they were advised, the Prophet responded to their greetings and said, "By the Lord Who has appointed me as His own Messenger, when they first came to me, they were accompanied by Satan." Thereafter, the Prophet preached to them and invited them to accept Islam. They asked him: "What is your opinion about Jesus?" The Prophet said, "You may rest today in this city and, after being refreshed, you will receive the reply to all of your questions from me."

The next day, the Prophet recited before them these Qur'anic verse:

Surely the likeness of Isa (Jesus) with Allah is as the likeness of Adam: He created him from dust then said to him, 'Be, and he was. The truth is from your Lord, so be not of the doubters. (Qur'an, 3:59-60)

They did not accept the words of the Lord and insisted on their own belief. Then the following verse was revealed:

But whoever disputes with you in this matter after what has come to you of the knowledge, say: Come! Let us call our sons and your sons, and your women and our women, and ourselves and yourselves, then let us pray earnestly and bring about the curse of Allah on the liars. (Qur'an, 3:61)

They sought a day's respite and privately solicited 'Aqib's advice. He said:

"By God! You know that Muhammad is the Messenger of the Lord and that he has given a clear and appreciable verdict. Do not enter into a maledictory trial with him or else *you* should be destroyed. If *you* wish to remain adhering to your religion, accept to pay the *jizyah* and make a pact."

On the next day, therefore, they came out on one side and on the other the Prophet came out of his house carrying Husain in his arms as Hasan was walking by his side holding his finger. Behind him was Fatimah and behind her 'Ali. Praise be to Allah! What a time it was! What an atmosphere! How good a witness and how glorious the witnessed!

In short, the Prophet confronted the Christian delegates and said to Hasan, Husain, Fatimah and 'Ali:

"When I curse them, you say Amen'together."

When the Christians saw the five holy Purified ones, they were awe-struck. Abul-Harith, who was the wisest of them all, said:

"My people! At this moment, we are looking at such personalities that if they pray to God, they can move mountains. Abstain from this maledictory conflict (*Mubahalah*) or else you should be destroyed and no Christian will remain on the face of the earth."

They pleaded to the Prophet:

"O Abul-Qasim! We shall not have a malediction with you."

The Prophet invited them to accept Islam. They declined and said that they were prepared for a treaty that they would present two thousand pieces of garments each costing 40 dirhams every year. According to another tradition, it is stated that they also agreed to give 30 horses, 30 camels, 30 coats of mail and 30 lances every year. Thus, a settlement was made.

When the Christians of Najran refrained from entering into a maledictory conflict against the Prophet, he said:

"By the Lord who has appointed me as his Messenger in truth, had they chosen the malediction, there would have been a shower of fire upon them in this very field."

Says Jabir:

"The verse (Chap. 3, verse 61) was revealed in reference to this contest. In this verse, the word "selves" refers to the Prophet and 'Ali; the word "sons" refers to Hasan and Husain, and the word "women" refers to Fatimah."

In the *Tarikh of Tabari*, it is stated that during the 10th year of Hijrah, the Prophet sent 'Ali to Yemen. Prior to that, he had sent Khalid ibn al-Walid in order to call the people of Yemen to Islam, but nobody accepted Islam. Then the Prophet sent 'Ali and authorized him that he might, if he so desired, dismiss Khalid or anyone else from his party.

So, 'Ali went to Yemen and read the Prophet's statement to the people there. As a result, in one day, all members of the clan of Hamadan were converted to Islam. 'Ali informed the Prophet of this success whereupon the Prophet said, "Peace be upon the Hamdanites!" Thereafter, all Yemenites entered into the folds of Islam. 'Ali again informed the Prophet of the progress which he had made. The Prophet was so overjoyed; he offered a *sajdah* (prostration) to thank Allah.

During this year, the Prophet deputed 'Ali to go to receive the *jizya* from the Najranites. 'Ali obeyed the orders and joined the Prophet only during the Farewell Hajj (pilgrimage) as, on the 25th of Dhul-'qadah, the Prophet had left Medina for Hajj.

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